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January 19, 2021

DA Press Release 21-02

Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer Urges Calm and Warns Against Unlawful Activity Ahead of January 20, 2021

After the Civil unrest observed at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, law enforcement groups throughout the United States have prepared for potential protests and the possibility of violence toward government institutions and policymakers. Ahead of January 20, Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer is urging the community to remain calm and avoid participation in any violent or armed protests that go beyond the right to peaceably assemble.

The District Attorney also wants to remind the community that unlawful actions, regardless of the ideology behind them or whether they occur during a protest, remain unlawful actions. From May through December of 2020, illegal actions committed by individuals from all sides of the political spectrum have resulted in significant criminal charges being brought. The Kern County District Attorney's Office filed complaints in **twenty-one criminal cases**, including 11 felony and 10 misdemeanor cases connected to protests in 2020. Even now, additional requests for prosecution related to the 2020 political and civil unrest continue to be reviewed for potential criminal charges.

Violence against any member of the community will not be tolerated. California Penal Code Section 409 requires participants to disperse and leave the area if an unlawful assembly, due to criminal activity, has been declared by law enforcement officials. The cessation of activity in a declared unlawful assembly is an important tool for law enforcement officials to protect the health and safety of any protestors as well as the community at large.

District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer stated, "During 2020 we saw unacceptable levels of criminality centered around various sides of political protest. As a result, this office filed more than 21 criminal cases against participants who engaged in criminal activity associated with political protests. Criminality directed toward any side of the political landscape will not be tolerated, and criminal consequences will follow illegal activities. Political protests are not a license to commit crimes."