

**NEWS SERVICE**  
**JOHN BURRIS PRESS CONFERENCE**  
**Thursday, July 15th at 1:00 PM**

**Civil Rights Attorney John Burris Announces Federal Civil Rights And Wrongful Death Lawsuit Against Stanislaus County Sheriff's Department Over Malicious Killing Of A Beloved Father Experiencing Homelessness And Mental Illness.**

*These officers wrongfully shot and killed an obviously mentally impaired homeless man. Instead of de-escalating the situation the officers were needlessly aggressive and confrontational, firing multiple gunshots into Mr. Gonzalez Jr.*

**-Civil Rights Attorney John L. Burris**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**What:** Press conference announcing the filing of a federal lawsuit on behalf of Eloy Gonzalez, Jr., who was shot to death by Stanislaus County Sheriff's Department deputies on September 27th, 2020.

**Where:** 800 Business Park Drive, Modesto, CA 95357

**Who:** Attorneys John Burris and Ben Nisenbaum, and the family of Eloy Gonzalez, Jr.

**When:** 1:00 PM, Thursday, July 15th, 2021

**Modesto, CA**---On the morning of September 27th, 2020, the Stanislaus County Sheriff's Department received a call about a silent burglary alarm near the 800 Block of Business Park Drive in Modesto, CA. While responding to the call, sheriff's deputies came across Mr. Eloy Gonzalez, Jr., a 41-year-old homeless man, sitting alongside an exterior wall of a building in a make-shift cardboard shelter. There was no indication that Eloy Gonzalez, Jr. had committed any crime whatsoever, nor had he threatened anyone.

Immediately upon encountering Eloy Gonzalez, Jr., the deputies started yelling profanities and threats at him. Mr. Gonzalez, exhibiting confusion at the deputies' inflammatory and combative behavior, showed them his empty hands and calmly asked what was going on. Despite no indication of any threat, the deputies continued to berate Mr. Gonzalez and escalate the situation. Multiple additional deputies arrived at the scene, including a K-9 unit, and they continued to yell at Mr. Gonzalez. At no point did the deputies attempt to use de-escalation tactics. Instead of backing away from Mr. Gonzalez, who was surrounded, the deputies slowly encroached on him, irrationally compressing the zone of safety and time.

After multiple minutes of Mr. Gonzalez attempting to calmly communicate with deputies who were aggressively screaming at him, the deputies became violent. One deputy fired a beanbag shotgun at Mr.

Gonzalez, and then almost immediately, multiple additional deputies rushed to tackle him while continuing their verbal assaults. Deputies Brandon Silva and Chad Lewis then fired multiple fatal gunshots at Mr. Gonzalez, even though he had already been tackled and restrained by multiple other deputies.

Stanislaus County Sheriff's Department deputies needlessly killed a man who deserved empathy, not violence. At one point during the confrontation, a deputy told Mr. Gonzalez that he would be arrested if he did not comply, to which Mr. Gonzalez responded, "Well you're going to have to explain that to the President." Despite multiple signals that Mr. Gonzalez may not have understood the reality of what was happening and was exhibiting diminished mental capacity, sheriff's deputies continued to escalate the situation to the point of irreversible harm. The deputies were required to take Mr. Gonzalez's mental impairment into consideration, and utterly failed to do so, they irrationally escalating their use of force to lethal force. John Burris said that "***These officers wrongfully shot and killed an obviously mentally impaired homeless man. Instead of de-escalating the situation the officers were needlessly aggressive and confrontational, firing multiple gunshots into Mr. Gonzalez Jr.***"

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Eloy Gonzalez, Jr. was a beloved father, brother, and son. He leaves behind a devastated family, including his 17-year-old daughter, Heaven, with whom he shared a special bond. Despite Eloy's struggles with mental illness and homelessness, his love and support for Heaven was unwavering.

For additional information, contact John Burris.

**Lee Houskeeper**

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