



July 29, 2020

Sheriff Alex Villanueva
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
211 W. Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Sheriff Villanueva,

For decades, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department has been rife with corruption, abuse of power, and impunity. When you took office, many hoped you would work to repair the wreckage that your predecessors, including now-imprisoned former Sheriff Lee Baca, left behind. Instead, from the moment you were elected and sought to reinstate Carl Mandoyan and other deputies fired for domestic violence, dishonesty, and other serious misconduct, you have utterly failed to fulfill your campaign promises to reform the department. You have dramatically exacerbated its problems by undermining basic mechanisms of accountability and civilian oversight at every turn.¹ This historic moment demands that you recognize when it is time for you to go—and the time is now.

Your failure of leadership is exemplified by your stonewalling an independent investigation in the June 18 killing by your department of 18-year-old Andres Guardado.² Although two autopsies—including one by the L.A. County Medical Examiner-Coroner—concluded that he perished after being shot five times in the back by a sheriff's deputy with a history of misconduct, you have refused to cooperate with an independent investigation by the Office of the Inspector General.³ Like others killed at the hands of law enforcement, Andres

¹ See, e.g., *Editorial: L.A. County thought it was getting a progressive sheriff. Instead, like Trump, Alex Villanueva is painting political adversaries as criminals*, L.A. TIMES (Aug. 16, 2019 11:57 AM), available at <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2019-08-16/amateur-moves-la-county-sheriff-alex-villanueva>; Maya Lau, *Chief watchdog questions L.A. County Sheriff Villanueva's decision to rehire fired deputy*, L.A. TIMES (July 9, 2019 4:37 PM), available at <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-deputy-mandoyan-inspector-general-20190709-story.html>; Matt Stiles & Maya Lau, *Judge overturns Sheriff Villanueva's rehiring of a fired L.A. County deputy*, L.A. TIMES (Aug. 19, 2019 6:00 PM), available at <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2019-08-19/la-me-sheriff-villanueva-supervisors-court>.

² See, e.g., Alene Tchekmedyan, *Sheriff asks attorney general to monitor shooting while stonewalling inspector general*, L.A. TIMES (June 25, 2020 6:00 AM), available at <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-06-25/sheriff-villanueva-attorney-general-shootings>.

³ See, e.g., Alene Tchekmedyan, *Coroner: Andres Guardado was shot five times in the back. Sheriff condemns disclosure*, L.A. TIMES (July 10, 2020 9:25 AM), available at <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-07-10/andres-guardado-coroner-autopsy>; Alene Tchekmedyan, *Sheriff's deputy who fatally shot Andres Guardado faced earlier allegations*, L.A. TIMES (June 25, 2020 9:19 PM), available at <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-06-25/deputy-andres-guardado-shooting-identified>.

Guardado was not just a statistic. He was the son of longtime UNITE HERE Local 11 member Cristobal Guardado. His family and our community deserve answers, not obstruction.

Your mishandling of the killing of Andres Guardado reflects a pattern of abuse, secrecy, and thwarted accountability that has marred your tenure. You have allowed the systematic harassment of grieving families of community members whom deputies have killed—in retaliation against their seeking the truth about their deaths and justice.⁴ You have completely failed to disclose records of deputy misconduct to which families and the public are entitled, prompting the ACLU of Southern California and the L.A. Times to bring suit against you.⁵ You have repeatedly defied the Sheriff's Civilian Oversight Commission's subpoenas—as well as the will of the people of Los Angeles who overwhelmingly voted for Measure R.⁶ In violation of your department's own policies, you have killed active misconduct investigations involving criminal allegations such as child abuse, domestic violence, and rape of a woman in custody.⁷ You have initiated a criminal investigation of the Inspector General for attempting to carry out his duties of oversight of your department.⁸ And federal authorities have initiated investigations of your department, an extraordinary step.⁹

Through your actions, you have lost the trust you may have had when you were elected. It is clear that you cannot lead the Sheriff's Department through the process of much-needed transformative work during these historic times. Therefore, we call upon you to resign your office immediately.

⁴ See, e.g., Alene Tchekmedyan, *'It's like torture': Families report deputy harassment to sheriff watchdog*, L.A. TIMES (Nov. 19, 2019 6:53 PM), available at <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2019-11-19/sheriff-deputy-harassment-investigation>; Sam Levin, *Los Angeles sheriff's department faces a reckoning after another police shooting*, THE GUARDIAN (July 1, 2020 3:00 AM), available at <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jul/01/los-angeles-sheriffs-department-reckoning-police-shootings>.

⁵ See, e.g., Alene Tchekmedyan, *For families of those killed by deputies, a long wait for answers*, L.A. TIMES (Dec. 2, 2019 6:00 AM), available at <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2019-12-02/families-sue-sheriffs-department-shooting-records>; Alene Tchekmedyan, *Times sues L.A. County sheriff over withholding records on deputy misconduct*, L.A. TIMES (June. 30, 2020 8:22 PM), available at <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-06-30/la-times-lawsuit-deputy-misconduct-records>.

⁶ See, e.g., *Editorial: Effective sheriff oversight still a work in progress*, L.A. TIMES (June 29, 2020, 3:00 AM), available at <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2020-06-29/villanueva-subpoena-tested-in-court>; Alene Tchekmedyan, *On heels of Sheriff's Department scandal, L.A. County voters overwhelmingly back stronger oversight*, L.A. TIMES (Mar. 5, 2020 5:00 AM), available at <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-03-05/voters-support-measure-r-oversight-sheriffs-department>.

⁷ See, e.g., Maya Lau, *Sheriff's Department killing more misconduct investigations under Villanueva, report finds*, L.A. TIMES (Apr. 12, 2019 10:25 AM), available at <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-sheriff-internal-investigations-inactivate-20190411-story.html>; Letter from Rodrigo A. Castro-Silva, Interim Inspector General, to Board of Supervisors re Report-back on LASD Internal Administrative Investigations and Dispositions of Disciplinary Actions (Apr. 11, 2019), available at https://oig.lacounty.gov/Portals/OIG/Reports/4-11-19ReportBack_1.pdf?ver=2019-04-12-141500-803.

⁸ Maya Lau, *L.A. County sheriff's top watchdog is under investigation — by the L.A. County sheriff*, L.A. TIMES (Aug. 14, 2019 12:34 PM), available at <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2019-08-14/la-county-sheriffs-department-launches-investigation-against-its-chief-watchdog>.

⁹ See, e.g., Kelly McCleary et al., *FBI will investigate deadly police-involved shooting of California teen*, CNN (July 17, 2020 2:22 PM), <https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/17/us/andres-guardado-death-fbi-investigation/index.html>; Maya Lau & Joel Rubin, *FBI investigating tattooed deputy gangs in Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department*, L.A. TIMES (July 11, 2019 6:39 AM), available at <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-fbi-investigating-sheriff-20190711-story.html>.

Sincerely,

UNITE-HERE Local 11
Black Lives Matter – Los Angeles
Check the Sheriff
JusticeLA
ACLU of Southern California
Clergy & Laity United for Economic Justice

[ADDITIONAL SIGNATORIES]

Cc: Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors