

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 06, 2022

Merrick Garland
U.S. Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Garland:

We write to you today to urge the Department of Justice (DOJ) to investigate the horrific, unprompted shooting of two undocumented immigrants in West Texas as a hate crime.

On the evening of Tuesday, September 27, 2022, two undocumented migrants – Jesús Sepúlveda Martínez and Berenice Casias Carrillo – were [shot](#), along a roadway. Mr. Sepulveda, aged 22, died at the scene while Ms. Casias, who was treated at an El Paso hospital, is currently recovering. Witness accounts of the shooting reveal that the incident appears to have been unprompted. The shooting occurred after Michael Sheppard and his brother, Mark Sheppard, who were traveling in a vehicle when they first passed a small group of migrants at a water tank, doubled back to the migrants' location and shouted profanities at the group. Though it remains unclear which of the two brothers shot at the migrants, both Sheppard brothers have been arrested and charged with manslaughter.

Further investigation into the Sheppards reveals that Michael Sheppard is a now-former warden at the Sierra Blanca ICE detention facility in West Texas and has a documented [history](#) of abusive and racist behavior toward people in his custody. His most egregious [documented](#) abuses were toward a group of African asylum seekers in 2018; reports indicate the African migrants were “pepper-sprayed, beaten, threatened, taunted with racial slurs, and subjected to sexual abuse by officials answering to Sheppard and in some cases Sheppard himself” while in custody at the Sierra Blanca facility.

We are thankful to the Hudspeth County sheriff's office for their quick response to this incident, which led to the other injured migrant being taken to a hospital for medical attention and the Texas Rangers arresting the Sheppard brothers on Wednesday evening.

This attack on a group of migrants stopping for a water break is just the most recent manifestation of the rising racist and xenophobic sentiments for those who have come to the United States seeking a better life. As the United States continues to see increased arrivals of migrants at the southern border and with news coverage being devoted to the recent political

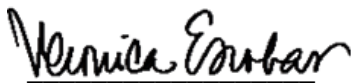
stunts by the Governors of Texas and Florida, partisan news personalities have been using this information to peddle lies and stoke fear of immigrants in the American people.

This attack also comes at a time when once-fringe white supremacist propaganda is being embraced and regurgitated by Republican leadership, boosting resentment, hatred, and, in this case, violence against migrants.

While we understand that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is aiding the investigation into this incident, we write to urge the Department to take concrete steps to ensure that this incident is investigated as a hate crime, especially considering Michael Sheppard's history of racism and abuse toward immigrants.

We thank you for your attention to this matter and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress

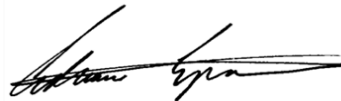
_____/s/_____
André Carson
Member of Congress



Jesús "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



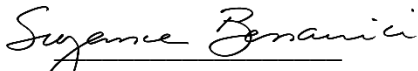
Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Al Green
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____

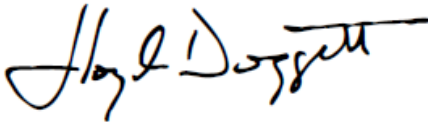
Cori Bush
Member of Congress



Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



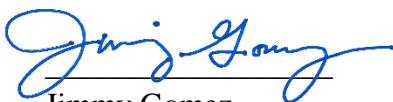
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



Raul Ruiz, MD
Member of Congress



Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress