

**September 9, 2022**  
**For Immediate Release**

**Contact:** [Steve Walker](#) (619) 843-7977  
[Tanya Sierra](#) (619) 531-3315  
*En Español* [Barbara Medina](#) (619) 531-3305

# **Convicted Killer Sentenced in 2015 Murder of 18-year-old Mistaken for Gang Member**

## *Case Had Gone Cold Until DA Revisited Investigation*

San Diego County District Attorney Summer Stephan announced today that defendant Roger Hernandez, 34, who was convicted in April of murder, has been sentenced to 67 years-to-life in prison for killing 18-year-old Juan Muñoz, Jr. in 2015. Muñoz was murdered as he was returning from buying soft drinks and snacks when he crossed paths with gang members.

In October 2015, Roger Hernandez and Luis Karam chased down Muñoz, thinking he was a rival gang member. When the teen stopped at a stop sign on the same block where his friends were fixing a car, Karam pulled in front of his car preventing Muñoz from being able to drive away. Hernandez got out of the car and issued a gang challenge. Before Muñoz could answer, Hernandez repeatedly fired into the car with a .45 caliber semiautomatic handgun. Hernandez shot Muñoz multiple times through the arm, shoulder, and neck, killing him.

In 2018, the case had gone cold when the DA's Office revisited the case. Working with National City Police, prosecutors and DA investigators they were able to narrow in on two suspects and develop additional evidence.

Hernandez was arrested for the murder in November 2018. One week later, U.S. Marshals Fugitive Task Force attempted to arrest co-defendant Karam, but he fled. When caught, he attempted to take his own life, but survived and was ultimately taken into custody. Karam was sentenced to 20 years in state prison in July after pleading guilty to voluntary manslaughter, admitting to an allegation that the killing was done for the benefit of a criminal street gang and that a deadly weapon was used during the offense.

“This innocent young victim was hunted by violent gang members and was tragically in the wrong place at the wrong time,” DA Stephan said. “A measure of justice has finally been delivered to the family of Juan Muñoz, Jr. We will continue to fight to keep every neighborhood safe from crime and address gang violence through prosecution and prevention.”

This latest gang-related sentencing comes as law enforcement officials are grappling with an increase in gang-related shootings and the ongoing proliferation of firearms – in particular, so-

called untraceable “ghost guns.” DA Gang prosecutions increased from 368 in 2020 to 465 in 2021.

Juan Muñoz’ parents, Elizabeth and Juan Sr., have channeled their grief into activism over the years, including focusing on addressing mental health issues and trauma resulting from violence.

# # #

**About the San Diego County District Attorney’s Office**

*The San Diego County DA’s Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue fair and equal justice, and support victims daily across San Diego County.*