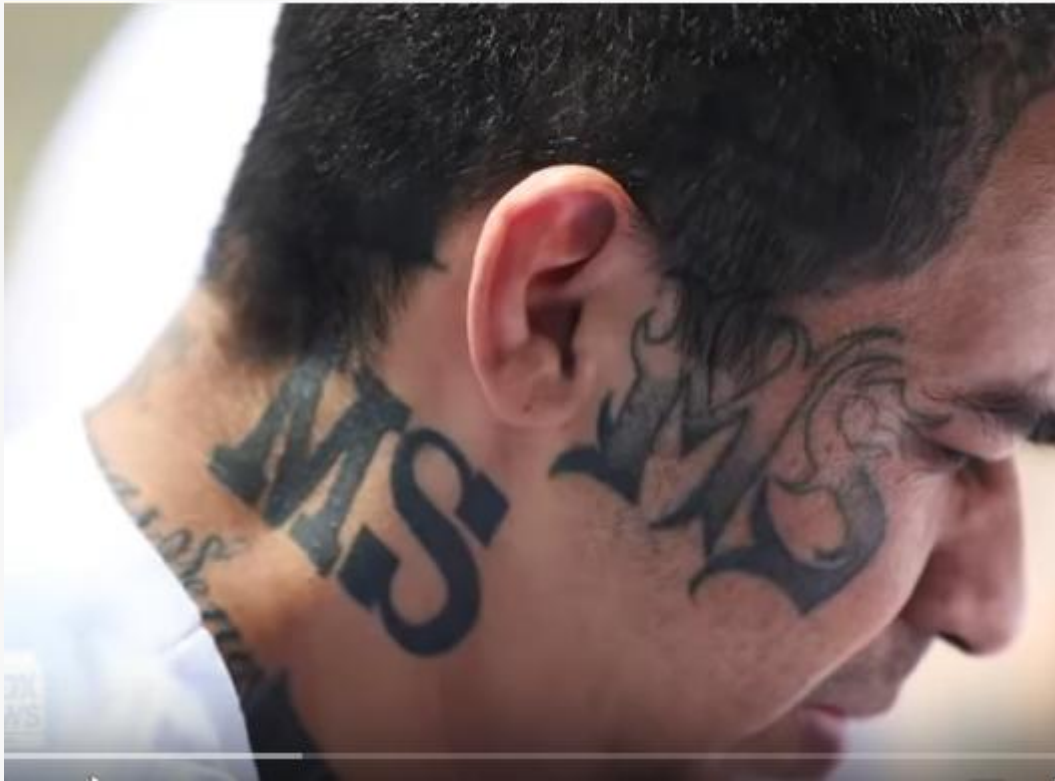


Witness Against MS-13 Murdered After his Identity was Released To Defense Attorneys

written by GEG | February 14, 2020



New York: Wilmer Maldonado Rodriguez was scheduled to testify against MS-13 gang members but was beaten to death in his front yard. This happened in the wake of New York's new criminal-justice laws that require prosecutors to turn over witnesses' names to defense attorneys fifteen days ahead of trial. A judge can issue a protective order to shield witnesses' identities all the way to the eve of the trial, and that is what happened in this case. However, when the trial date was postponed, no one thought to also extend the date of the protective order so, Rodriguez was exposed well in advance of the trial. Law enforcement has placed the blame for Rodriguez's murder squarely at the feet of Democratic lawmakers who passed the new law. -GEG

Wilmer Maldonado Rodriguez was murdered after a judge released his identity under the state's new criminal justice laws.

New Cassel, NY – A man who was scheduled to testify against MS-13 gang members was murdered outside his home because of New York's new criminal justice reforms that now require prosecutors to turn over witnesses' names 15 days ahead of trial. Although many people have been focused on the failure of the new bail reform laws the state put into effect that are releasing violent and repeat offenders back onto the streets without bail, the changes to New York's discovery law have just as dire consequences, [The New York Times](#) reported.

New York had been one of 10 states that allowed prosecutors to withhold a witness' identity from the defense until the eve of trial.

But under new laws, key witness and evidence must be shared within 15 days of a

suspect's arraignment.

There are exceptions to the rule – a judge can shield witnesses' identities with a protective order – but in the case of 36-year-old Wilmer Maldonado Rodriguez, a judge ordered his identity to be revealed in December of 2019, according to The New York Times.

Rodriguez, in October of 2018, intervened when he saw two boys being threatened by members of MS-13.

The gang members then proceeded to beat the good Samaritan in the head with a bat and stab him repeatedly, The New York Times reported.

Officials said that despite having almost lost his life for a good deed, Rodriguez was willing to testify against his MS-13 attackers.

But then Nassau County Court Judge Helene F. Gugerty ordered that his identity be given to defense attorneys last month, effectively signing Rodriguez's death warrant.

He was found beaten to death in his yard on Sunday, The New York Times reported.

Nassau County District Attorney Madeline Singas said that being forced to identify Rodriguez ahead of the trial may have cost him his life.

"This courageous man was prepared to testify against alleged assailants at an upcoming trial, but he was brutally beaten to death before he could," Singas said in a statement. "This case underscores the importance of safeguarding the identities of witnesses and victims of crime and our hearts are with Mr. Maldonado's family and friends as we grieve his loss."

Nassau County Police Commissioner Patrick Ryder filled in some of the details of what happened after the judge ordered prosecutors to turn Rodriguez's name over to the defense, The New York Times reported.

Commissioner Ryder said the trial was initially scheduled for Jan. 6 but had been delayed, and that a "pattern of intimidation" against Rodriguez had started then.

He told [Newsday](#) that Rodriguez was assaulted and another victim was shot at after their names were released to the defendants' attorneys.

"That protective order, because of the new changes in the law, was lifted," the commissioner said. "We don't know if the defense counsel turned that info over to the defendants."

Defense attorneys were quick to push back, according to Newsday.

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