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Press Release

Second Taxi Driver Shot and Killed During Shift in Last Month in San Diego, California

On October 30, 2011, taxi driver Jalaludin Hamrah, 39 years old, was shot and killed during his shift. He had planned to turn in his key and leave the taxi industry that night. He is the second driver shot and killed in the past month in San Diego, CA.

On the same day, two UTWSD drivers reported beatings by passengers. One driver was punched in the face and lost a \$60 fare and cell phone; the other driver was robbed of a \$50 fare on 58th and University. The passenger told the second driver, "I have already killed two people before; if you say anything, I will kill you." Over the weekend of October 9th, 2011, a driver who had recently left the San Diego taxi industry committed suicide.

"We can no longer tolerate the brutality against taxi drivers in the San Diego taxi industry," insists former driver Abdulazziz Muse. "I left the taxi industry because of the unfair and abusive working conditions."

On October 5, 2011, taxi drivers rallied at San Diego's City Hall to address their safety concerns in response to the murder of, Mir Sadat Sahou, 68 years old, during his shift in La Jolla, CA. Our drivers labor 12-to-16 hours shifts without guaranteed income or healthcare or accident insurance for themselves, and are vulnerable to injury from assaults and accidents at a higher rate than any other workforce. The Department of Labor reports taxi driving as the most dangerous job in the country, with drivers 60 times more likely to be killed and 80 times more likely to be robbed than other U.S. workers.

Over the past month, UTWSD members and local supporters have been lobbying the Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) for a responsible safety policy, including optional protective barriers, cameras, and formal grievance process for safety violations. Every day, drivers receive police and MTS tickets for minor rule infractions such as not giving customers a receipt, or improper driver appearance, or standing 12 feet away from their vehicle without any relief from unsafe working conditions. Meanwhile, three drivers in August have been blacklisted from the industry for attending a public forum on safety issues. Councilwoman Marti Emerald, Chair of the Taxi Advisory Committee initiated a discussion of taxi driver safety at its most recent meeting last week.

As a result of murders where drivers were being set on fire and killed in Las Vegas, Nevada, cities began to research and use protective measures such as cameras to protect both their drivers and passengers. Mir Sadat Sahou and Jalaludin Hamrah's deaths are tragic examples of the urgent need for taxi safety protections for drivers and passengers here in San Diego County.

Further information: Mikaiil Hussein cell: 619-721-4565 email: mikaiil.hussein@utwspd.com