



City of Palm Springs

Office of the City Council

Mayor Christy Holstege • Mayor Pro Tem Lisa Middleton
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November 8, 2021

VIA U.S. MAIL AND ELECTRONIC MAIL

Office of the Attorney General
State of California Department of Justice
1300 "I" Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-2919

Susan Slager, Deputy Attorney General
Civil Rights Enforcement Section
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Michael Newman, Senior Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Enforcement Section
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Dear Attorney General Bonta,

We contact you to strongly encourage your consideration of the ACLU, Starting Over Inc., and numerous other regional community organizations' [recent request for an investigation](#) into the Riverside County Sheriff's Department (RSD) and its leader, Chad Bianco ("the organizational request").

As Palm Springs residents and elected officials, we have observed and experienced the Department's patterns of violence toward and disregard for the wellbeing of our communities, both in our communities and inside of our jail system.

For example, during the height of the pandemic and prior to any vaccine availability, RSD and Bianco publicly opposed efforts to release persons detained for minor infractions to avoid COVID19 exposure. RSD and Bianco further refused to enforce public health mandates, ridiculing them online and instructing residents not to report social distancing violations. Sheriff Bianco has also repeatedly [stated the department will "continue its policy of not enforcing public health orders,"](#) "refusing [to assign deputies to enforce the state's mask mandate and rejecting Gov. Gavin Newsom's stay-at-home orders, calling them a violation of 'constitutional rights.'](#)" Sheriff Bianco has further stated he refuses to enforce federal vaccination requirements for employees, despite outbreaks in jails and among RSD staff, including the deaths of two deputies, one working in a correctional facility. [A federal court also found in 2020 that the Riverside County Sheriff's Department failed to provide proper health care in jails amid the coronavirus pandemic](#) and failed to provide a comprehensive plan to address the pandemic in jails after a lawsuit from the non-profit Prison Law Office.

Overall, RSD and Bianco have shirked their responsibility to enforce state and local laws and mandates, leaving our communities at risk for increased spread of the COVID-19 virus, potentially lengthening the pandemic in our region, and leading to inconsistent enforcement and compliance throughout the County, endangering our residents.

Bianco's statement and enforcement choices have communicated to the public that he himself will pick and choose which laws to enforce based on his own personal beliefs.

Most recently, revelations regarding Chad Bianco's association with and membership in the Oath Keepers and the Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association place him even more explicitly in the ranks of [sheriffs who proudly defy state and federal laws](#), driven often by racially-charged values and conspiracy theories.

Our constituents are directly impacted by RSD's conduct, which affects not only residents of cities and jurisdictions directly serviced by RSD (i.e. County and contract cities) or relying on RSD's services, but also, and importantly, *all* of our residents and neighbors, who cross fluid regional jurisdictional boundaries multiple times daily.

The content of the organizational request, which we have seen and felt in our own experiences and those of our residents, merits urgent investigation to limit further harm to our communities and to ensure that RSD and Bianco are held accountable to their duties to protect and serve.

We greatly respect the Attorney General's independence and judgment and ask that you determine the appropriate investigation and come to a conclusion as to the facts in the matter. If you have any questions regarding our support, please do not hesitate to contact the City Manager, Justin Clifton, at (760) 322-8362 or email citymanager@palmspringsca.gov.

Sincerely,


Christy Holstege, Mayor


Lisa Middleton, Mayor Pro Tem


Grace Garner, Council Member


Geoff Kors, Council Member


Dennis Woods, Council Member