



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Kevin Perez (818) 669-2535

Monday, April 4, 2016

#JusticeForQueerLives Rally to Lift The San Fernando Valley After Family Tragedy in North Hills

NORTH HILLS, CA – On Monday April 4th, Somos Familia Valle —the San Fernando Valley Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) and straight ally movement— will be holding a peaceful rally to advocate for family acceptance towards all LGBTQ children as well as to demand an end to discrimination and violence in Valley neighborhoods. The 6 p.m. rally, titled **#JusticeForQueerLives**, will be held on the corner of Nordhoff St and Sepulveda Blvd, a few blocks away from the house where the Issa family tragedy occurred last Tuesday.

According to the District Attorney’s office, 29-year-old Amir Issa was shot to death by his father, Shehada Issa, because of his son’s “sexual orientation and because of the [father’s] perception of that status and the victim’s association with a person and a group of that status.” The heartbreaking family tragedy included the discovery of the bloodied body of Amir’s mother, 68 year-old Rabihah Issa, on the bathroom floor inside their house. Amir’s father had allegedly threatened to kill his son on prior occasions because Amir was gay. Shehada Issa is being held with no bail.

“As someone who is part of North Hills and the LGBTQ community, I feel there needs to be more family acceptance and no more violence in our communities,” said Geoffrey Vasquez, member of Somos Familia Valle. “Growing up in the Valley, I have learned of many people’s experiences with bullying and mental health issues. I am grateful for the acceptance of my loved ones, but I feel very sad for Amir and his family. Nobody wants to picture homophobia and gun violence happening to anyone in our neighborhoods. We all deserve respect and dignity,” he added.

“For many of us it is not easy to come out to our family and friends in fear of being rejected or injured. I don’t want to constantly have in the back of my head the names of queer and trans people whom I may see next in the newspaper because of lack of acceptance and safety,” said Jesus Arciga, Arleta member of Somos Familia Valle. “We all deserve a San Fernando Valley where we can feel safe, where LGBTQ people, our parents, and friends can celebrate one another and advance with no judgement or violence.”

“Let us not forget that just a few months ago we lost Yazmin, a transgender neighbor in Van Nuys. She was stabbed to death in her apartment. Now, we are mourning the loss of our gay neighbor Amir and his mother at their home in North Hills. In less than two years, two LGBTQ people have been killed in the San Fernando Valley. We may not be able to bring them back to life; however, together we can reflect and commit ourselves to advocate for a more accepting, forgiving, and healthier Valley for all,” said Ronnie Veliz, Somos Familia Valle organizer. “There are going to be things that we are not going to agree on, but family saves lives, family does not end lives.”

*Somos Familia Valle is the San Fernando Valley LGBTQ and straight ally movement
seeking to build a healthier, braver, and safer Valley for all.*

www.somosfamiliavalle.org

###