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San Bernardino County gang prosecutor resigns after probe into social media rants

By ALEJANDRA REYES-VELARDE
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Michael Selyem, a lead gang prosecutor in San Bernardino County, was placed on administrative leave for a series of offensive social media posts. (Jennifer Cappuccio Maher / San Bernardino Sun)

A lead gang prosecutor in the San Bernardino County district attorney's office has resigned, six months after an investigation was launched into offensive comments he made on social media.

Michael Selyem stepped down on Jan. 2, according to an announcement Tuesday from the district attorney's office.

As part of an agreement with the county, Selyem will be paid through April 26, the San Bernardino Sun reported. His annual pay is \$155,168.

The district attorney's office began investigating Selyem in late June after the office received complaints about rants targeting U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Los Angeles), former First Lady Michelle Obama, Mexican immigrants and the victim of a police shooting. Selyem was placed on administrative leave July 9.

In a news conference at the time, former Dist. Atty. Michael Ramos said he was offended by Selyem's postings.

"As the district attorney, I was really concerned with comments regarding officer-involved shootings, because we handle those cases, as you know, on a daily basis," Ramos said. "To make any comments ... impacts the ability for us to ensure the integrity of this office."

The Sun, which first reported the investigation into Selyem's comments, detailed his remarks. He described Waters as "loud-mouthed," using a sexist slur, adding "you would think someone would have shot [her] by now"

The newspaper also reported that Selyem wrote in a profanity-laced online argument that a civilian shot by police "got exactly what he deserved. ... You reap what you sow."

The Sun noted another post under Selyem's name on Facebook included a meme of a smiling Mexican man wearing a sombrero with the words "Mexican word of the day: Hide."

Selyem joined the district attorney's office 12 years ago. Following the investigation, an assistant district attorney was assigned to look at cases he had handled in the

gang unit, although Ramos said at the time there was no indication Selyem showed any bias in his cases.

The county's current district attorney, Jason Anderson, who was sworn in Tuesday, could not immediately be reached for comment.

Kimberly Fuller, a spokeswoman with the district attorney's office, said she did not know whether any disciplinary action was taken against Selyem or why it took six months for him and the county to reach an agreement on his departure.

On Wednesday, San Bernardino County Public Defender G. Christopher Gardner said he felt an ethical duty to review cases his attorneys handled that were prosecuted by Selyem. Public defenders reviewed nearly 500 cases spanning several years but found no issues, Gardner said.

"We asked attorneys [to review] some cases they had in the past with him," Gardner said. "We didn't see any issues where we thought our clients suffered because of his racist views."

Spokesman David Wert said San Bernardino County was not commenting on Selyem's resignation.

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Alejandra Reyes-Velarde



Alejandra Reyes-Velarde started as a Metpro reporter at the Los Angeles Times in 2017. She previously wrote for the San Francisco Business Times and covered local news and crime for the Sacramento Bee. She received her bachelor's degree in communication studies from UCLA, where she worked at the student-run Daily Bruin. Originally from Duarte, Calif., Reyes is a native Spanish speaker.

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