



**Office of the New York State
Attorney General**

**Letitia James
Attorney General**

March 6, 2026

Honorable Timothy M. Kennedy
423 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Kennedy:

I write in response to your letter calling for an investigation into the tragic death of Nurul Amin Shah Alam in Buffalo, New York. This was an unspeakable tragedy that never should have occurred. Mr. Shah Alam fled genocide and came to this country in search of safety and opportunity. Instead, his life was tragically cut short. No one who comes here seeking refuge should be callously abandoned in harm's way. Although there are significant questions outstanding, I firmly agree with the need for transparency and accountability. In that spirit, I want to share with you a status update in my office's work.

As has been widely reported in the media, Mr. Shah Alam was arrested a little over a year ago, on February 15, 2025. He remained continuously in the custody of the Erie County Jail from his arrest until he was released on Thursday, February 19, 2026. Ten days earlier, on February 9, he pleaded guilty to two misdemeanors. Although the longest sentence one can receive for a misdemeanor is one year, he was not sentenced to time served and released. As a result, he continued to be held in jail on bail pending sentence. As part of our Office of Special Investigation preliminary assessment, we are seeking to determine the circumstances of his release on February 19.

Based on the information currently available, we believe Mr. Shah Alam was in the custody of a federal agency as of approximately 4:30 p.m. on February 19, though that time has not yet been confirmed. According to widely published security video, at approximately 8:30 p.m. that evening, a van believed to be driven by federal agents transported Mr. Shah Alam to the parking lot of a Tim Horton's coffee shop on the 2200 block of Niagara Street. The video appears to show Mr. Shah Alam exiting the van, after which the vehicle immediately drove away.

Five days later, on February 24, Mr. Shah Alam was found dead on a street near the former HSBC Arena (now KeyBank Center), approximately five miles from the Tim Horton's location. We are working with the Buffalo Police Department to canvass for additional witnesses and surveillance footage that may shed light on Mr. Shah Alam's movements between the time he was left in the parking lot and the time his body was found.

CBP has been quoted in the press as stating that agents determined Mr. Shah Alam “was not amenable to removal,” and that he was offered and accepted a “courtesy ride” to what was described as a warm, safe location near his last known address. There is no reason to credit that account on the basis of known facts. Our information indicates that Mr. Shah Alam did not speak English, that the Rohingya dialect he spoke is exceedingly rare, and that the Tim Horton’s location in question was closed for the night. The federal authorities’ unreliable account only raises further questions.

My office is continuing to gather and review facts as to any state or local involvement in this tragedy. With respect to federal actors, we stand ready to support and cooperate fully with any appropriate federal investigation, whether by Congress, the U.S. Department of Justice, or any other competent authority.

More broadly, this tragedy underscores the urgent need for clarity in the relationship between state and federal immigration enforcement. As you know, there is ongoing work in Albany to advance legislation designed to protect New Yorkers’ civil rights and ensure that state and local resources are not used in ways that undermine due process or public safety. We are also reviewing additional statutory mechanisms to hold federal officials accountable when their actions fall outside the law. My office is in active conversation with the Governor’s office and members of the Legislature regarding proposals that would strengthen protections for New Yorkers while respecting constitutional boundaries between state and federal authority.

The loss of life under these circumstances demands a searching and independent assessment of what occurred. I share your belief that the public deserves answers. I also agree that a close examination of release and transfer protocols of vulnerable individuals from law enforcement custody is warranted. My office will continue to pursue the facts wherever they lead and will provide additional information as it becomes available.

Respectfully,



Letitia James
Attorney General
State of New York