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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
STATEMENT FROM KATHLEEN MEIXNER**

Tucson, AZ (June 24, 2024) – A judge today sentenced Murad Dervish to natural life in prison after a jury last month found him guilty of first-degree premeditated murder in the death of Thomas Meixner.

Tom’s widow, Kathleen Meixner, said, “The man who took my husband’s life will spend the rest of his life in prison – but that doesn’t bring Tom back. My sons will never see their father again in this life. The University of Arizona lost a treasured professor. The community lost a brilliant scientist. But most importantly – this sentence does not prevent the next tragedy when absolutely nothing has changed in a society that allowed a man with a violent history to have a gun in the first place. My family deserved better, and the next family deserves better. **We need a Red Flag law now.**”

“I spoke in the courtroom today about accountability - taking responsibility for one’s actions and learning from mistakes. Our family recognizes that accountability goes beyond a life sentence for Tom’s murderer. It involves taking a close look at what happened before, during, and after this tragedy and acknowledging mistakes in order to learn from them, and to prevent this from happening to other innocent victims and their families. Additionally, accountability means determining how to provide the best care and resources for victims. This type of reflection should lead to solutions moving forward.”

“If you see something, say something’ is a crucial first step, but it is not enough to keep our community safe. That’s the lesson the University of Arizona administration, University of Arizona Police Department, Tucson Police Department, the Pima County Attorney’s Office, and the Constable’s office should learn from this tragedy.”

“Many courageous people tried to do just that – they saw something and they said something. A private gun seller did that when he forwarded Dervish’s threatening messages to the Tucson Police Department. My family and I thank him for perhaps giving us a few more months with Tom and possibly preventing others from being targeted and killed. **But it wasn’t enough.**”

“The student survivor, who Dervish had harassed, saw something and said something when she reported to the University of Arizona Police Department that the department was in grave danger. My family and I are grateful for her courage. **But it wasn’t enough.**”

“A Dean of Students saw something and said something when Dervish sent violent and hateful emails. She asked UAPD to send a charge request to the Pima County Attorney’s Office. **But it wasn’t enough.**”

“Dr. Attalah in the Hydrology and Atmospheric Sciences (HAS) department reported his concerns repeatedly. So did Dr. Chris Castro – who even went so far as to obtain an Order of Protection against Dervish which the Constable’s office never served. Dr. Castro requested that the Pima County Attorney’s Office charge Dervish. It is difficult for me to express fully my gratitude to both of them for their determination to protect their department, and resilience throughout this process. **But it wasn’t enough.**”

“**These reports mean nothing if they are not taken seriously or acted upon.** So how do we move forward?”

“Arizona does not have Red Flag laws, which can prevent guns from being in the hands of people who might hurt themselves or others if a judge finds there is a credible danger based on evidence presented. I thank Senator Kyrsten Sinema, who graciously met with my family and me a few months after we lost Tom. She was working on implementing the Bipartisan Safer Communities legislation in communities around the country. If the Arizona legislature would establish Red Flag laws, federal funding would be available to implement safety and mental health programs in our state and cities.”

“**Enhanced training of employees at UAPD, TPD, PCAO, and the Constable’s office is absolutely necessary for connecting the dots when community members see something and say something.** This can help ensure that threats are properly and strongly communicated, charged correctly, and reviewed promptly.”

“I appreciate that former Representative Gabrielle Giffords met with my family and me after Tom’s death and held our hands. I am inspired by the incredible work of Giffords.org for supporting victims of gun violence and for their advocacy as it relates to common sense gun reforms. Gabby’s strength to lead an organization which is dedicated to promoting safety in our community is inspirational. The work she and her team are doing is powerful. We live in a state where Murad Dervish was able to purchase a semi-automatic weapon in a private sale in a parking lot, despite being a prohibited possessor. The person who sold him the weapon was unbelievably reckless and cannot be held criminally liable due to Arizona’s lack of regulations around the sale of guns. That seller could have asked one simple question of Dervish which could have prevented my husband’s death, ‘Would you agree to a background check, which I require as a part of this gun sale?’

The seller could have added \$20 to the price of the gun sale to cover the background check. Dervish would never have agreed due to his violent history, and he would not have bought a gun that day. **I implore gun owners who intend to sell weapons to be accountable to our entire community by asking questions of buyers and insisting on background checks.**”

“My family and I are grateful for the steps already taken. It was critically important that the University of Arizona’s Faculty Senate leadership formed a ‘Safety for All’ committee to review broad issues of safety at the University of Arizona. UA President Robert Robbins hired the PAX Group, LLC, nationally recognized security experts, to review the before, during, and after stages of the University’s response to the threats against and death of Tom. These reports show that in hindsight, all entities did not act optimally. They further outlined recommendations for the University moving forward. I am heartened by the fact that Steve Patterson, the University of Arizona’s Chief Officer of Public Safety, has invited me to be a part of the conversation about campus safety moving forward, and has shared with me the meaningful progress which has been made on the thirty-three PAX Group recommendations so far. I wholeheartedly want to be a part of keeping the momentum going because there are many things that can be done to keep the campus and greater Tucson community safer without having to build walls around institutions. He has shared with me that Threat Assessment and Management director, Jessica Semmann, is making efforts to improve communication between the University and the law enforcement agencies in Tucson, which is a huge development in connecting the dots that are necessary to determine an individual’s risk to act violently, and to follow through with a plan to address dangerous threats.”

“Ron Barber generously met with my family and me after Tom died. His empathy and profound understanding of tragic violence and loss give him a unique ability to console and support victims through their grief, and for that I am grateful. This type of radical empathy is what is needed for all victims. **I call on the University of Arizona to give that type of empathy and support to the Hydrology and Atmospheric Sciences Department.** The Department remains in the Harshbarger building, the scene of this horrific tragedy. The UA financial crisis has resulted in funding cuts to this world-class Department. The Department needs special consideration in the wake of this tragedy. A new building space and funding for new employees would provide the Department with an opportunity to heal and thrive moving forward, while honoring Tom’s legacy.”

“Finally, I encourage everyone in our community to **‘Live like Tom.’** Tom was a grassroots volunteer for encouraging our citizens to do their civic duty and vote in every election. He would make phone calls and knock on doors, reminding people to mail in their ballots. It was amazing to me with everything he had going on in his life between family, work, and other service to the community, he always made sure to volunteer in this way. **We can honor Tom by informing ourselves about these critical safety issues, choosing candidates who support Red Flag laws and common sense gun legislation, and calling on our representatives to demand action.** We can honor his memory by registering to vote and mailing in our ballots.”

“As the University of Arizona, law enforcement agencies, governmental representatives, and fellow citizens consider this tragedy, I would like us to remember what he said to his colleague on the day he was murdered, “sometimes you have to do the things you don’t want to do, but you do it because you have to be strong for the people around you that you care about.” I plan to keep the momentum going for the safety of our community and for the victims in our tragedy, and I invite institutions in our community to do the same. **My family and I thank from the depths of our hearts the multitude of people who have been strong for us, and for honoring the memory of Thomas Meixner.**”