

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN  
AND FOR BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA

*Administrative Order No. 2021-60-Gen*

**RULES GOVERNING MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC  
DURING COURT PROCEEDINGS IN *STATE V. NIKOLAS JACOB CRUZ***

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- (a) Pursuant to Article V, section 2(d) of the Florida Constitution, and section 43.26, Florida Statutes, the chief judge of each judicial circuit is charged with the authority and the power to do everything necessary to promote the prompt and efficient administration of justice.
- (b) Florida Rule of General Practice and Judicial Administration 2.215(b)(3) states the chief judge “shall, considering available resources, ensure the efficient and proper administration of all courts within [this] circuit.”
- (c) Special interest and/or high visibility proceedings require procedures and special accommodations to ensure full access to public judicial proceedings without compromising the right of any litigant to a fair and orderly trial.
- (d) Seventeenth Judicial Circuit Administrative Order 2018-14-Crim designates *State of Florida v. Nikolas Jacob Cruz*, Case No. 18-001958CF10A, a high-profile case.
- (e) In accordance with the authority vested in the Chief Judge pursuant to Article V, section 2(d) of the Florida Constitution, section 43.26, Florida Statutes and Florida Rule of General Practice and Judicial Administration 2.215, it is hereby **ORDERED** as follows:

**(1) Courtroom Seating.**

- a. **Seating for Families and Victims:** Seating will be prioritized for members of the defendant’s family, victims, and family members of victims, and the Broward Sheriff’s Office shall ensure the placement of these individuals in the rows of seats nearest to the front of the courtroom.
- b. **Media Seating:** The Court will strive to provide access for the following media personnel:

- i. one (1) person from each of the local television and radio stations (NBC-6, CBS-4, WSVN-7, WPLG-10, Telemundo 51, WLRN)
- ii. two (2) members from the local print media (Sun Sentinel), which includes a still photographer to act as the pool photographer;
- iii. one (1) member of a national media outlet to be selected at random based on the names submitted.

Those designated by their outlet for access to the courtroom must display appropriate media credentials at all times. Additional members of the media will be permitted in the courtroom as space permits.

- c. **Public Seating:** Members of the public may be seated anywhere other than those seats reserved as provided above. Seating will be on a first-come first-served basis. Members of the public who cannot find a seat in a pew shall not be permitted in the courtroom. No members of the public and/or media shall be permitted to stand in the back of the courtroom.
- d. **Seating in front of the bar:** No one other than the defendant and his attorneys and assistants, and attorneys from the State Attorney's office and assistants shall be permitted to sit in the chairs in front of the bar and located behind the counsel table(s) without express prior authorization by the Court.

## **(2) Rules Governing the Media.**

### **a. Use of Electronic Devices within the Courtroom:**

- i. **Cellular telephones and other similar electronic devices.** Members of the media within the courtroom may utilize cellular telephones for texting, organizational functions, research and writing functions, and other data transmission functions, except as otherwise provided herein. Cellular telephones and other similar electronic devices cannot be used to record or send photographs, video, or audio. All cellular telephones must be placed in either silent or vibrate mode. All Bluetooth and similar wireless devices must be turned off, removed from the wearer and secured out of sight.

ii. **Laptop computers and other similar electronic devices.**

Members of the media within the courtroom may utilize laptop computers or similar electronic devices provided the devices operate silently on the user's lap and do not require additional seating space. No laptop computer or other similar electronic device shall be used to record or send photographs, video, or audio. Use of a laptop computer or other similar device shall be used solely to record and transmit text data entered by the user. Only laptop computers or similar devices with virtual or silent keyboards are permitted and they must operate on battery power. Cabling of extension cords and power supplies is prohibited. Other devices equipped with virtual keyboards such as tablets (e.g., iPads and similar electronic devices) may be utilized for text recording and transmission.

- b. **Media Overflow Room:** A space designated by Court Administration prior to the commencement of the proceedings will serve as the media overflow room. The designation of such a room is wholly dependent on available space within the courthouse. Media will be permitted access to the overflow room, if one is so designated and subject to availability of space.
- c. **Media Interviews:** No media interviews or "live shots" are permitted in the courthouse except in the media overflow room, if one is designated. One (1) pool hallway camera will be permitted immediately outside the courtroom in a location designated by Court Administration.

**(3) Rules Governing Spectators.**

- a. Quiet and order shall be maintained at all times. Audible comments of any kind during the court proceedings or provocative or uncivil behavior within the courthouse will not be tolerated. There shall be no gestures, facial expressions, or the like, suggesting approval or disapproval during the proceedings.
- b. Members of the public, including media, are expected to dress in a manner consistent with the decorum of a judicial proceeding. There shall be no clothing or displays relating to the proceeding in the

courtroom. This includes pins, t-shirts, ribbons, signs or other like objects. No chewing gum and no food or drink is permitted in the courtroom at any time.

- c. **Court Security Authority:** Any spectator who creates a visual or auditory disturbance of the court proceedings may be removed from the courtroom and/or the building at the discretion of staff of the Broward Sheriff's Office. The Broward Sheriff's Office may quiet or disperse members of the public so they do not hinder other members of the public and court staff from having access to the offices and courtrooms in the courthouse.
- (4) Any person violating this Administrative Order will be subject to the discipline of the Court, including but not limited to, the Court's contempt authority, immediate removal from the courtroom, prohibition from returning to the courtroom and a possible ban from courthouse access.
- (5) Copies of this Administrative Order shall be displayed outside the courtroom designated for this proceeding and any room designated by Court Administration for media overflow.
- (6) This Administrative Order is a companion to and shall not be read to invalidate, supersede or vacate the Circuit's existing administrative orders governing the media and the use of cellular telephones and other electronic devices in courtrooms and court proceedings. To the extent this Administrative Order conflicts with any existing administrative order, this Administrative Order shall prevail.

**DONE AND ORDERED** in Chambers, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, this 19th day of October, 2021.

/s/ Jack Tuter  
Jack Tuter, Chief Judge