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Busting the Durable Myth That U.S. Self-Defense Law Uniquely Fails to Protect Human Life



Self-defense, the "first civil right," continues to be among criminal law's most controversial, enduring, and intuitively understood topics.^[1] The February 2020 murder of Ahmaud Arbery,^[2] the November 2021 Wisconsin trial of Kyle Rittenhouse,^[3] the January 2023 shooting of a masked robber in a Houston taqueria,^[4] and the February 2023 second-degree murder charges lodged against 73-year-old Arizona rancher George Alan Kelly for killing an allegedly trespassing migrant near the U.S.-Mexico border^[5] all have helped bring to full boil the long-simmering national debate about where the state's monopoly on force should end and the individual's right to rely on self-preferential force should begin.

After each of these incidents, members of the legal commentariat followed the familiar practice of swiftly offering their takes on all aspects of these flashpoint cases. Much of what they said about these cases, for good reason, sparked spirited discussion.

Click here to read the full article in the [Oxford University Comparative Law Forum](#).

Authors