



**Brooklyn** (BDS)  
**Defenders**

**The Bronx  
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PUBLIC DEFENSE



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**\*\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\*\***

***New York City Public Defenders' Joint Statement on the Crisis on  
Rikers and the Need for Receivership***

**(NEW YORK, NY) – New York County Defender Services, The Bronx Defenders, Brooklyn Defender Services, Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, and Queens Defenders** issued the following joint statement regarding the ongoing humanitarian crisis on Rikers Island and the urgent need to close Rikers once and for all:

“For years, we’ve watched New York City jails plunge deeper and deeper into an abyss of chaos and unimaginable cruelty. Yet what we have witnessed in the last two years is alarming beyond measure. The City’s commitment to basic transparency and accountability has evaporated. The Department of Correction has thwarted legally mandated city and federal oversight. And Commissioner Molina has thumbed his nose at the public’s right to know what is happening to their fellow New Yorkers who continue to languish and die in New York City jails.

It is clearer to us now, more than ever, that Rikers Island must close immediately. While stakeholders and oversight bodies have deliberated, issued scathing reports, and pleaded for reform, the individuals we represent in these facilities continue to suffer outrageous violence, abuse, and neglect. On far too many occasions, our clients have paid for this callous disregard of duty with their lives. We therefore call for the immediate appointment of a federal receiver.

We do not make this call lightly. Caging people pre-trial is fundamentally at odds with the presumption of innocence, is inherently harmful, and we should do everything we can to end it. New York City's public defenders will continue to fight to free the people we represent and close Rikers Island once and for all. But we cannot abandon the thousands of people we serve who are currently incarcerated and who will continue to experience harm, suffer abuse, and die.

Our support for a receiver is not unconditional. A receiver must restore a basic level of transparency and accountability, address the deep-seated culture of corruption and disregard for the health and safety of those currently detained, abide by all laws prohibiting collusion with ICE, and prioritize decarceration and the closing of Rikers Island.

Reversing a crisis of this magnitude will undoubtedly take an extraordinary effort from not just the appointed receiver, but from advocates and stakeholders as well. We are ready to do our part to ensure the immediate protection of the people we represent, while eliminating all obstacles that threaten the closure of Rikers Island. A federal receiver can help with both goals, but only with the strong commitments we have outlined.”

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