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

***STATEMENT ON LATEST NUNEZ INDEPENDENT
FEDERAL MONITOR REPORT ON ABUSE IN NEW YORK
CITY JAILS***

(NEW YORK, NY) – Mary Lynne Werlwas, Director of the Prisoners’ Rights Project at The Legal Aid Society, released the below statement responding to a report issued today from Steve J. Martin, independent Federal Court-appointed Monitor in *Nunez v. City of New York et. al.*, concerning misuse of force in New York City jails. The independent Monitor was appointed by the Court after Legal Aid, private firms and the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York settled a lawsuit against the City demanding that the New York City Department of Correction (DOC) meaningfully address the scourge of excessive force that has long been entrenched at Rikers Island and other City jails:

“The report describes a failed state. Wardens take little or no responsibility for what happens in their jails. Officers initiate conflict with people in custody that leads to violence. Leaders are not called to task for failing to manage insubordinate and hostile staff. Jails fail at basic correctional tasks like locking cell doors. There has been a complete breakdown in investigating misconduct and use of force: in over 2,000 use of force incidents, the City blew the deadline to any impose discipline for staff misconduct without even finishing a simple investigation. Staff impunity is reinforced by the absence of real discipline; indeed, only one staff member was terminated from tenured employment since Nunez settled four years ago. The hard work of the many people, officers and civilians alike, who seek to make the jails safer is undermined by the normalization of incompetence and abuse.

The report documents that Mayor Bill de Blasio and Commissioner Brann’s team at DOC have failed to implement the reforms the Mayor has championed. The success of one part of the

Nunez consent judgment – comprehensive video surveillance that shows the true nature of staff brutality — demonstrates the persistent violence and hostility towards incarcerated people.

The City’s efforts to close Rikers — not just the buildings, but the culture — will fail if it cannot gain basic control of the violence in the jails before exporting it to borough facilities. In this moment of promised reform, the toxicity described in this report sounds loud alarms. The City must close Rikers Island. But if the Department does not professionalize its operations now, it will not see better results and safer jails.”

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The Legal Aid Society exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For over 140 years, we have protected, defended, and advocated for those who have struggled in silence for far too long. Every day, in every