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

***Legal Aid Files Emergency Lawsuit To Free 108 New Yorkers Illegally Detained
Pre-Arraignment By NYPD***

***These New Yorkers Have Been Detained For Days In Clear Violation Of New
York's 24 Hour Arrest-To-Arraignment Requirement***

(NEW YORK, NY) - The Legal Aid Society filed an emergency [lawsuit](#) against the New York City Police Department (NYPD) tonight in New York State Supreme Court on behalf of 108 New Yorkers currently detained illegally, many since this past Saturday, in Manhattan in violation of New York's 24 hour arrest-to-arraignment requirement.

The 24-hour arrest-to-arraignment requirement, which The Legal Aid Society secured in the landmark lawsuit *Roundtree v. Brown*, challenged the protracted delays newly arrested persons experienced prior to being brought before a judge and resulted in significant improvements in the criminal justice system by setting a 24-hour standard from arrest to arraignment.

The NYPD's behavior is reminiscent of the 2004 Republican National Convention, when officers detained and illegally held thousands of protesters. The Legal Aid Society filed a similar lawsuit then and successfully secured the protesters' release. The current situation is an even greater concern, as every individual detained and held by the police is at risk for COVID-19 exposure.

"This flagrant violation of law by the New York City Police Department appears to be designed to retaliate against New Yorkers protesting police brutality," said **Tina Luongo, Attorney-in-Charge of the Criminal Defense Practice at The Legal Aid Society**. "Under the new pretrial reforms, the overwhelming majority of these charges require that people be released on their own recognizance to fight their cases later in court. Instead, these New Yorkers are now being held illegally, deprived of due process and needlessly subjected to increased risk of contracting COVID-19, endangering each of them as well as the entire community. We demand the release of these people at once."

"New Yorkers have risen up against police brutality, and this latest, brazen violation of the law by the New York City Police Department is yet another manifestation of the injustice and impunity our communities are working to end," said **Alice Fontier, Managing Director of Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem**. "There is no defensible reason for our neighbors to be held like this: it is an illegal attempt to reassert NYPD's supremacy over the people of New York. We, and our neighbors, are not taking it anymore. We demand the immediate release of those held, and stand in solidarity with those who continue to build a more just world."

Legal Director Sergio De La Pava of New York County Defender Services said, "The NYPD is using their power to illegally detain protesters in violation of their statutory and constitutional rights. New York has a twenty-four hour arrest-to-arraignment requirement. Additionally, bail reforms enacted in January of this year greatly expanded the use of appearance tickets in place of custodial arrests. Despite these clear mandates, hundreds of protesters are currently being unlawfully detained in a manner that can only be interpreted as punitive and retaliatory. New Yorkers in great numbers are exercising their constitutional right to protest endemic police brutality and disproportionate enforcement, especially as they affect our vulnerable communities of color. The NYPD's illegitimate response only serves to highlight the importance of their message. The time to release the protesters is now; going forward we demand that appearance tickets be issued where mandated by law. We stand ready to defend in court our fellow New Yorkers' right to lawfully protest injustice."

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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 borough, The Legal Aid Society changes the lives of our clients and helps improve our communities.

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