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

Legal Aid Decries Death Of Another Client, Hector Rodriguez, at Rikers Island

(NEW YORK, NY) – **The Legal Aid Society** announced the death of another client, Hector Rodriguez, who passed away last month while serving a one-year sentence at Rikers Island. Due to a decades-old conviction, Mr. Rodriguez, age 60, was required to register his home address with the State of New York by appearing in person at a monitoring facility every 90 days, as required by New York State’s punitive Sex Offender Registration Act (SORA) Laws.

The Manhattan District Attorney’s Office charged Mr. Rodriguez for failing to verify address - a SORA technicality - in October, 2019. He was convicted this past March and sentenced to a jail term in City custody. He received a one-year definite sentence but would have been released after eight months with good time credit.

Eric Williams, Legal Aid Staff Attorney who previously represented Mr. Rodriguez, said “After successfully completing parole supervision, Mr. Rodriguez was incarcerated and sentenced to one-year for an offense that amounts to a technical SORA violation, a jail term aggressively sought by the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office.

Similar to our broken parole system, New York’s SORA laws make re-entry virtually impossible, and a technical violation such as failing to verify an address, in the absence of any other criminal conduct, could lead to a death sentence. Tragically, that is precisely what happened to Mr. Rodriguez, spending his final days at Rikers Island in a cage.

Our hearts ache for Mr. Rodriguez, his family and community during this difficult time. Prosecutors could have easily spared Mr. Rodriguez from this fate but deliberately chose not to. As New Yorkers continue to protest NYPD brutality and racism, let us not forget the role of prosecutors in perpetuating a system that has long preyed on New Yorkers of color and the underserved.”

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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. www.legalaidnyc.org