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## ***NYC Public Defenders and National Lawyers Guild-NYC Call on NYC District Attorneys to Dismiss and Decline to Prosecute All Social Distancing and Protest-Related Arrests***

**(NEW YORK, NY) - The Legal Aid Society, Brooklyn Defender Services, The Bronx Defenders, New York County Defender Services, Queens Defenders, Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, and the National Lawyers Guild - NYC Chapter** sent a [letter](#) today to the five NYC District Attorneys demanding that they dismiss and decline to prosecute *all* criminal cases arising from arrests related to or made during the recent protests for racial justice, as well as *all* criminal cases related to or arising from the enforcement of executive orders during the COVID-19 public health crisis, including all such matters that resulted in summonses, desk appearance tickets, and criminal arraignment.

The letter states:

*“Over the last few weeks, we have seen an inflection point in our reckoning with this country’s white supremacist history. The deaths of Black people killed at the hands of police officers have led to unprecedented calls for police accountability and a wholesale reimagining of the role of the police. In the midst of a health pandemic that has both highlighted and exacerbated the harms caused by centuries of institutionalized racism, New Yorkers have taken to the streets to protest not only recent instances of police brutality, but also a legacy of deep structural racism. In many instances, the New York City Police Department met these protests with the same violence and brutality that gave rise to them in the first place. Since late-May, the NYPD has arrested thousands of people in response to these protests. Most of these people were incarcerated for hours without food or water, and many nursing injuries, before being released with a summons or desk appearance ticket directing them to appear in court in September or October. Hundreds more were held at central booking for arraignment and now face prosecutions by your offices. The recent protests erupted following weeks of controversial policing of social distancing enforcement measures that disproportionately impacted Black and Latinx communities.*

*The blatant misconduct of NYPD officers in response to the protests was on full view in viral videos and documented through witness accounts, personal observations, and written testimony. The NYPD’s conduct calls into question the viability of criminal prosecutions arising from these arrests. A letter signed by 50 Bronx Assistant District Attorneys directly questions the integrity of these arrests: “Nearly every ADA represented in this letter has encountered an incident in the complaint room where an officer has used unwarranted force.” An investigation into the NYPD’s response to the protests has been initiated by the Office of the Attorney General.*

*As the primary defenders and legal services providers for the city, and in partnership with volunteer attorneys from the NYC Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild, we write to demand that you dismiss and decline to prosecute all criminal cases arising from arrests related to or made during the recent protests for racial justice, including those that resulted in summonses, desk appearance tickets, and criminal arraignment....*

*...[W]e also request that you dismiss all criminal cases related to or arising from the enforcement of executive orders during the COVID-19 public health crisis.”*

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