

THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

Justice in Every Borough.

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Contact:

Redmond Haskins
The Legal Aid Society
rhaskins@legal-aid.org
(929) 441-2384

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

Legal Aid Decries Death of Isaabdul Karim, 11th New Yorker to Pass Away this Year While Incarcerated at Rikers Island

(NEW YORK, NY) - **The Legal Aid Society** decried the passing of Isaabdul Karim, a client who died last night while incarcerated at Rikers Island. Mr. Karim is the 11th New Yorker this year to die in custody at a local jail. He was incarcerated at Rikers Island's North Infirmery Command (NIC), held solely on the basis of non-criminal, technical violations of parole - marijuana use and failing to make an office report.

Tina Luongo, Attorney-In-Charge of the Criminal Defense Practice at The Legal Aid Society, said - "We are heartbroken and outraged to learn that Isaabdul Karim, a father of two young children, passed away last night at Rikers Island.

"Mr. Karim suffered from a host of medical issues for which he required a wheelchair. Adding to this, Mr. Karim contracted COVID-19 while mired in intake for ten days, and he was denied access to his medications and critical medical care. He should have been in the community with his family, friends and network, not in a jail plagued by an ongoing humanitarian crisis.

"Technical violations - including marijuana use and failing to report, the non-criminal charges that led to Mr. Karim's remand - should not amount to a death sentence, and New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) Commissioner Anthony Annucci has much to answer for.

"In signing the Less Is More Act on Friday, Governor Hochul indicated that she would have enacted all provisions of Less Is More immediately if she could have. We demand that DOCCS heed the Governor's call to action and lift all technical parole warrants immediately, as well as lift warrants in cases where people are held on parole violations and low bail."

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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 145 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