

**\*\*\*MEDIA ADVISORY\*\*\***

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**As Deaths Mount on Rikers Island, Elected Officials and Impacted People Demand That District Attorneys End Cash Bail Practices**

*Officials say that prosecutors seeking bail in virtually every eligible case is driving the crisis on Rikers, leading to torture and death*

**NEW YORK**— A contingent of elected officials will gather outside the office of Manhattan District Attorney Cy Vance’s office on Wednesday, October 6, at 10 AM to demand a change to the cash bail practices that are driving the crisis on Rikers Island. The elected officials will join public defenders, community organizers and impacted individuals in speaking about the ongoing harm caused by bail practices of each of the five District Attorney offices.

The rally attendees will deliver an [open letter](#) signed by 14 legislators to the District Attorneys demanding that prosecutors end their cash bail practices and stop sending New Yorkers accused of crimes to a potential death sentence on Rikers Island. Since April 2020, the number of people held pretrial on Rikers has surged from 2718 to 4578, a number driven primarily by the District Attorney seeking bail in virtually every eligible case.

The press conference comes after many of the officials witnessed arraignment practices firsthand in courtrooms throughout the city over the past week.

12 people have died in DOC custody this year in what elected officials [called](#) “torturous, inhumane” conditions following a visit to Rikers last month. Those conditions are [fueled](#) by a skyrocketing pre-trial jail population of roughly 4,600 people, the vast majority who are held because district attorneys seek cash bail in virtually every eligible case.

**When:** Press conference: Wednesday, October 6 at 10 AM

**Where:** Manhattan District Attorney’s Office (1 Hogan Pl)

**Who:** Speakers at the press conference include:

- **Senator Alessandra Biaggi**
- **Senator Robert Jackson**
- **Assemblymember Harvey Epstein**
- **Assemblymember Emily Gallagher**
- **Assemblymember Zohran Mamdani**
- **Assemblymember Marcela Mitaynes**
- **Assemblymember Amanda Septimo**
- **Assemblymember Kenny Burgos**
- **Alice Frontier**, Managing Director, Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem
- **Min. Dr. Victoria A. Philips**, Jails Action Coalition
- **Roger Clark**, VOCAL/HALT
- **Henry Robinson**, Katal Center for Equity, Health, and Justice
- **Marvin Mayfield**, Center for Community Alternatives

**What:** The deaths and dramatic degradation in conditions on Rikers Island have coincided with an explosion of the jail population over the past year. The population has surged from a low of 3800 in April 2020 to over 6000 last month. The overwhelming majority of those people are incarcerated pretrial on cash bail: around 4,600 of the 5,644 people currently in DOC custody are presumed innocent and awaiting their day in court.

The pretrial population has persisted in the face of the mounting jail crisis. Over the past month, as the death toll on Rikers rose, pretrial detention numbers have [remained](#) stagnant. This enormous pretrial population -- all people who would be free if they were simply wealthy enough to pay bail -- is driven entirely by the requests of District Attorneys and the decisions of judges. Those decisions leave thousands of poor New Yorkers -- overwhelmingly Black and brown -- to endure torture and risk death every day.

District attorneys and [judges](#) can decide at any time to drastically reduce the suffering on Rikers Island. Prosecutors can decide not to seek bail in every eligible case at [no cost](#) to public safety (in fact it is illegal to consider "dangerousness" when setting bail), and can decline to oppose defense motions to release those currently held in deadly conditions on Rikers. Elected officials will demand that they do so at the press conference.

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