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

Statement in Response to Reporting on DOC Employees Constructing Secret Areas at Closed Jail on Rikers Island

Employees Stole Hundreds of Thousands of Taxpayer Dollars, Money that Could Have Been Used to Improve Jail Conditions for Incarcerated New Yorkers

Today's Reporting Further Underscores DOC's Gross Mismanagement of Funds and Supervision

(NEW YORK, NY) – Mary Lynne Werlwas, Director of the Prisoners' Rights Project at The Legal Aid Society, issued the following statement in response to reporting in the [New York Daily News](#) on secret areas constructed by New York City Department of Correction (DOC) employees at a closed jail on Rikers Island:

“While the depth of corruption and lawlessness in the Department of Correction revealed by this report is extreme, even more troubling is that City officials have known about this for years and held nobody accountable. The construction of a rogue bunker from stolen equipment in the heart of Rikers Island is a declaration of war on authority - and the perpetrators got away with it.

“While incarcerated people suffer in heat emergencies in non-air conditioned cells, facilities are crumbling from lack of repair, and programming is cut for budget reasons, staff were hiding taxpayer funded supplies behind hidden walls. Corruption by law enforcement and civil rights abuses have gone hand in hand forever, but the brazenness of this scheme and its tolerance by authorities is astounding.”

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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 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. <https://www.legalaidnyc.org>