

THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

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

Legal Aid Responds to Mayor Adams' Comments on Agreement Reached Last Year Overhauling NYPD's Policing of Protests

(NEW YORK, NY) – **The Legal Aid Society** released the following joint statement in response to Mayor Eric Adams' comments on [*Payne et. al. v. de Blasio et. al.*](#), a settlement reached last September that significantly overhauls the New York City Police Department's (NYPD) policing of protests:

“The NYPD continues to violate the spirit of this historic settlement and delay its implementation by preemptively and needlessly deploying outsized force to peaceful protests, including militarized units like the Strategic Response Group. This escalates tensions with protestors and puts them in danger.

“Just this past weekend, pro-Palestine demonstrators in Bay Ridge were met with violence from NYPD personnel brandishing tactical gear, wielding batons, and employing brute force. Multiple protestors sustained injuries, and even credentialed members of the press were arrested for merely performing their jobs to cover the demonstration. The officers who used excessive force must be held to account and disciplined. This pattern of violence against pro-Palestine protesters also raises concerns about the City's disparate treatment of speakers based on their message.

“This dangerous response is yet another reason for Mayor Adams to immediately implement all phases of the *Payne* settlement to protect New Yorkers' constitutional right to free speech and to protest - which he purports to value - and to eliminate the potential of further police violence before more people suffer harm or someone loses their life.”

Background

In September 2023, New York Attorney General Letitia James (OAG), The Legal Aid Society (LAS), and the NYCLU announced a landmark agreement with the NYPD, the nation's largest and most influential police force, that holds the Department to its oath to protect New Yorkers' right to protest. This [agreement](#) resolved lawsuits for injunctive relief filed by Attorney General James, LAS, NYCLU, and other private lawsuits over NYPD's wrongful arrests and excessive use of force against protesters during the summer of 2020. As a result of the

agreement, the NYPD will be required to change how it deploys officers to public demonstrations and document those deployments more fully.

An oversight committee comprised of OAG, the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (DOI), New York City Office of Corporation Counsel, the new First Amendment Activity (FAA) Senior Executive, and two representatives from LAS, NYCLU, and the private cases will oversee and monitor NYPD's implementation and compliance with the new reforms over a multi-year period.

On February 7th, the Court [approved the settlement](#), thwarting the Police Benevolent Association's motion to stop the agreement from going into effect. Despite this, the PBA sought to stay the decision while it appealed, which the Court [denied](#) on April 9th.

Read the settlement here: <https://www.nyclu.org/en/cases/payne-et-al-v-de-blasio-et-al>

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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. www.legalaidnyc.org