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

***Statement on the Death of Dashawn Jenkins at Rikers Island, Marking the Fifth Death at the Jail***

(NEW YORK, NY) - The Legal Aid Society and Queens Defenders released the following statement in response to the [reporting](#) of the death of Dashawn Jenkins at Rikers Island, the fifth death at the jail this year:

“We are deeply saddened to hear of the death of Dashawn Jenkins at Rikers Island last night. We express our sincere condolences to his family and loved ones. Dashawn Jenkins was only 27 years old.

“His untimely death, just one day after his 27th birthday, makes this tragedy all the more devastating and demands an immediate, swift, and independent investigation. With every devastating loss, City Hall and DOC leadership continually refuse to provide counsel, the client's family, and the public with even the most basic details of what occurred. This ongoing lack of transparency is not only callous but also intolerable.

“This tragic incident is a stark reminder of the ongoing human rights crisis unfolding at Rikers Island, which houses more people with mental illness than any psychiatric hospital in the entire city, and should the Governor’s misguided attempt to repeal New York’s modernized and successful discovery law come to pass, more New Yorkers will be condemned to a facility already engulfed in a full-fledged humanitarian crisis.

“This is the fifth Rikers Island-related death this year. This needless loss of a young life underscores the urgent need for the immediate appointment of an independent body, such as a receivership, to take over the City’s jail system.”

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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 nearly 150 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](http://www.legalaidnyc.org)*