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NYC Public Defenders, Public Advocate Williams, and Immigrant & Civil Rights Groups Laud Court Ruling That Continues to Block ICE's Return to Rikers

Ruling Follows Amicus Brief Filed and Argued in Support of City Council's Challenge to Mayor Adams' Executive Order 50

(NEW YORK, NY) - A coalition of New York City public defender offices, immigrant and civil rights organizations, other advocacy groups, and New York City Public Advocate Jumaane Williams hailed a court [ruling](#) today issuing a preliminary injunction that continues to block U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) return to Rikers Island, as sought under the Adams Administration's Executive Order 50.

Last month, the groups submitted a [joint amicus brief](#) in support of the New York City Council's lawsuit, urging the court to block the order and warning that it would cause immediate and irreparable harm to incarcerated immigrants, their families, and entire communities across New York City.

The groups argue that Executive Order 50 dangerously undermines New York City's sanctuary laws and facilitates collusion between city agencies and federal immigration enforcement. The organizations draw on extensive evidence — from past abuses by ICE on Rikers to the federal government's current pattern of unconstitutional mass deportations — to demonstrate the grave risk of renewed harm.

They detail how ICE's prior activities at Rikers violated due process and targeted New Yorkers based on racial and national origin profiling. The coalition warns that the current federal administration has gone even further, deporting individuals without hearings under the Alien Enemies Act— including to countries like El Salvador, where deportees face abuse and indefinite detention in notorious prisons.

ICE's return would also exploit the city's data systems, family visitation records, and phone surveillance to fuel deportations, particularly of Latinx youth and survivors of trauma who may qualify for immigration relief.

The amici further cite the documented history of collusion between the New York City Department of Correction and ICE, including transfers into ICE custody without judicial warrants and the sharing of confidential information — despite laws expressly forbidding it.

"This preliminary injunction is a critical victory for all New Yorkers amidst an unprecedented, nationwide assault on immigrant families and their communities, and it is a strong rebuke of the Adams Administration's unlawful and dangerous Executive Order 50," said **Meghna Philip, Director of the Criminal Defense Practice's Special**

Litigation Unit at The Legal Aid Society. “The Executive Order is a clear violation of New York City’s sanctuary protections and would have opened the door to racial profiling, wrongful deportations, and constitutional violations on Rikers Island. The court’s decision helps ensure that ICE stays out of our city jails and that the rights and dignity of all New Yorkers are upheld.”

“The court’s decision today rightfully rejects Mayor Adams’ attempt to let ICE have free rein in our jails,” said **Rosa Cohen-Cruz, Immigration Policy Director at The Bronx Defenders.** “As public defenders, we joined in amicus on this case because we have seen firsthand the extreme harm caused to New Yorkers when DOC is allowed to collude with ICE. We applaud the City Council for standing firmly against the Mayor’s blatant attempt to circumvent city law and we will continue to stand with them in defense of the people we represent.”

“Our city must not be a pipeline to deportation,” said **Rex Chen, Supervising Counsel for Immigrant Rights at LatinoJustice PRLDEF.** “ICE’s return to Rikers would reactivate a dangerous system of racial profiling, due process violations, and family separation that especially target Black and Brown immigrant communities. No one should be punished simply because of where they were born.”

“Today’s court decision upholds the dignity of immigrant New Yorkers, which is enshrined in our Sanctuary City laws” said **Tania Mattos, Executive Director of UnLocal.** “Despite Mayor Adams’ attempt, New York City has no interest in moving backwards. ICE has no business on Rikers and we thank the City Council for holding the line.”

“The return of ICE to Rikers under Executive Order 50 would subject New Yorkers to unlawful profiling, surveillance, arrest, and deportation, undermining our city’s critical sanctuary protections,” said **Lucas Marquez, Director of Civil Rights and Law Reform at Brooklyn Defenders.** “Today’s ruling is a critical step in upholding the rights of all New Yorkers and in fighting against the separation of families and further fracturing of our communities.”

“Today’s court decision recognizes that Executive Order 50 would have dangerous implications for all New Yorkers, and especially Black, Latinx and other immigrants of color, by upending a decade of progress,” said **Yasmine Farhang, Director of Advocacy at the Immigrant Defense Project.** “We stand with the City Council in taking action to bar Mayor Adams and his administration from giving ICE unfettered access to immigrants in city jail, and we stand with all the defender, immigration, civil rights and anti-violence organizations whose voices were heard as amici in this case.”

“We are grateful for the counsel’s effort to prevent the unlawful detention of immigrant New Yorkers. The court’s decision not only protects the rights of those detained at Rikers - they have safeguarded the sanctuary protections vital to our immigrant community. We must continue to fight back against these efforts to break apart our communities,” said **Piyali Basak, Managing Director of the Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem.**

“We applaud the court’s decision to grant a preliminary injunction keeping ICE out of Rikers. I’ve seen firsthand how deeply this kind of collaboration harms immigrant youth. It compounds fear, disrupts lives, and makes it harder for young people to access the legal protections they’re entitled to. This ruling is a critical step toward upholding due process and rejecting the criminalization of immigrant communities,” said **Sierra Kraft, Executive Director of the ICARE Coalition.**

“Today’s decision affirms that the Adams Administration’s invitation to ICE into Rikers not only violates sanctuary city laws but also represents the alarming nationwide trend toward the erosion of due process,” said **Jodi Ziesemer, Co-Director of New York Legal Assistance Group’s Immigrant Protection Unit.** “The erosion of immigrants’ rights is the erosion of everyone’s rights, and when the government violates their rights based on assumptions about who does and does not belong here, we are all in danger.”

The amicus brief is filed by The Legal Aid Society, in partnership with New York City Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, The Bronx Defenders, Brooklyn Defender Services, Immigrant Children Advocates’ Relief Effort,

Immigrant Defense Project, LatinoJustice PRLDEF, Make the Road New York, New York Civil Liberties Union, Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, New York County Defender Service, New York Legal Assistance Group, New York Immigration Coalition, Queens Defenders, and UnLocal.

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