



SHUT RIKERS NOW

New Yorkers are deeply concerned about the crisis on Rikers Island. The conditions at New York City's massive jail complex are horrific and life-threatening for human beings – the people incarcerated and those who work there.¹ Violence is rampant.² Racism and other types of bias are deeply entrenched.³ And though Black and Latinx people constitute about half of the city's population, they represent almost 90 percent of jail admissions.⁴

Most people on Rikers Island haven't been convicted: They're being held in jail *pretrial* while considered innocent because, unlike those who have money, they can't afford bail.⁵ *This is wrong.*

Rikers has become the city's largest mental health facility. More than 55 percent of people incarcerated there have been diagnosed with a mental health condition, yet they have little or no access to meaningful care while they are locked up. This is *inhumane, unjust, and unacceptable*.⁶

Under Mayor Eric Adams, conditions at Rikers have gotten worse. Violence at Rikers is out of control. At least 45 people have died in the city jail system since Adams became mayor in 2022.⁷ The DOC is plagued by crises and scandals, exacerbating harms to people in its jails. This has only gotten worse under Mayor Adams. The DOC has repeatedly refused to release information to the public and skirt accountability.^{8,9} Conditions are so bad at Rikers that a federal court has held the city in contempt and is poised to appoint an independent federal receiver to oversee Rikers and improve conditions there.

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MAYOR ADAMS IS WORKING TO KEEP RIKERS OPEN—FOREVER.

Under Mayor Adams, the city is no longer on track to shut Rikers down. In 2017, under pressure by community groups and other advocates who organized for many years, Bill de Blasio, then mayor, announced that New York City would close Rikers. In 2019, the city council passed a package of bills that would shutter the jail complex by 2026.¹⁰ In October 2020, the City Planning Commission changed the closure date to 2027.¹¹ When first running for mayor, Adams said he was committed to shutting down Rikers. But shortly after taking office, Adams stated that there needs to be a “plan B” for the city’s plan to shutter the notorious jail complex;¹² in January 2025, Adams again trashed the city law to close Rikers as an example of “not real policies.”¹³ Instead of following the law to close Rikers, Mayor Adams is working to keep open:

- ✖ **Mayor Adams has missed or ignored the legal and process benchmarks required to close Rikers.** For instance, the DOC must transfer unused land to other city agencies every six months (July and December) until 2027. Under Mayor Adams, no lands transfers have occurred.¹⁴
- ✖ **The 2027 Closure Plan calls for reducing the number of people in jail, but under Adams, the jail population is going up.** As of September 16, 2025, more than 7,220 people were incarcerated in city jails – an increase of nearly 35 percent since Mayor Adams took office in 2022.¹⁵ That means 1,820 more people behind bars – most of whom are Black, brown, and low-income people.
- ✖ **The 2027 Closure Plan requires investing in vital alternatives to incarceration and reentry programming, but Adams has cut budgets for those services.** And he has instead invested billions in police and incarceration, part of his jails-first approach.¹⁶
- ✖ **The financial and human costs of Mayor Adams’s “jail first” approach are catastrophic.** The cost of incarceration at Rikers is more than \$500,000 a person per year, which is \$1,390 a day. ¹⁷ The forecast reported for the DOC budget in fiscal year 2025 is \$2.6 billion.¹⁸ In his initial 2025 budget, Adams proposed deep cuts to essential services including libraries, prekindergarten programs, and re-entry services while spending billions on policing and jails. ¹⁹ Communities fought back to restore funding to libraries and other services, but Adams remains focused on mass-criminalization.

SHUT RIKERS DOWN

The appalling problems at Rikers aren’t new – they are all too familiar and dramatically underscore that the city needs alternatives to jail. With an unrelenting crisis at Rikers marked by a rapidly rising death toll, we need urgent action to save lives. Mayor Adams and the New York City Council must:

- **CUT** the number of people held on Rikers and in all city jails and cut the budgets used for caging people.
- **SHUT** down the Rikers Island jail complex.
- **INVEST** in real community safety: housing, health care, education, and jobs.

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Until Rikers is shut down, the federal courts must appoint a receiver to take over city jails and improve conditions for the people incarcerated there and those who work there.²⁰

#SHUTRIKERS

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ACTION
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For more information and to get involved, please contact:

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