

CLOSE RIKERS

DECARCERATE * DEFEND * DIVEST & REDISTRIBUTE

The Rikers Island jails should have been closed long ago. ‘Torture Island,’ as many survivors call it, has been used to rob generations of poor, Black, and Brown New Yorkers of their freedom, and to attempt to also rob them of their humanity. Rikers has no place in a city that values equity and human rights - it is a [400-acre complex](#) of ten jails and nearly 15,000 jail beds, isolated from the rest of the city on an island composed largely of landfill, where people are caged in torturous conditions while they [await their day in court](#), often because they can’t pay bail, or serve a short sentence.

The enormous moral costs of Rikers (and other City jails like [The Boat](#), a floating jail in the Bronx) are matched by [outrageous financial ones](#). New York City’s jail system spends [over \\$447,000 per incarcerated person per year](#), yet still exposes people to [physical conditions](#) that harm their health (like extreme heat and cold, inoperable plumbing, mold, and methane gas from decomposing waste) and to levels of violence that prompted the Federal government to [sue New York City](#). Even before the most recent humanitarian crisis that has led to an explosion of deaths, people in the City’s jails were routinely denied adequate food, access to legal and medical services, and supportive programming.

Closing Rikers is not an easy task, and previous efforts to do so have failed. Meanwhile, more lives have been lost or forever damaged. We can no longer *talk* about closing Rikers – we have to do it. We have a pathway to do so [by 2027 or sooner](#), and the next Mayor must both address the immediate crisis and follow through on plans to erase this stain on our city once and for all.

With survivors of Rikers and impacted families leading the way, the Campaign to Close Rikers seeks to:

- **Decarcerate.** We must reduce the number of people incarcerated in New York City as much as possible, as fast as possible. We can do that by ending the criminalization of poverty, addiction, disability and mental health needs; protecting the presumption of innocence for everyone; and investing in resources that create true safety. By implementing the [plan to close Rikers](#) adopted in 2019, NYC will reduce the number of people in jail to its lowest level in 100 years.
- **Defend the rights of incarcerated people.** While anyone is still incarcerated, conditions matter. None of New York City’s fourteen [existing jails](#) meet basic standards for human habitation, in how they are built or how they are operated. We must transform both the physical conditions of confinement for anyone who remains detained, and bring about a complete overhaul of the Department of Correction.
- **Divest & Redistribute.** Closing the Rikers Island jails as well as the Boat, and shrinking citywide jail capacity by 75% in alignment with the plan to close Rikers adopted in 2019, creates a pathway to divert [at least \\$1.8 billion annually](#) from the Department of Correction. Elected leaders must move swiftly to redirect DOC’s inflated budget to resources that meet people’s needs - like housing, healthcare, education, and employment - and by doing so, create true safety.

Endorsing Organizations [list in formation]

**indicates Coordinating Committee member*

1. Alliance of Families for Justice
2. All Saints' Episcopal Church Racial Justice Initiative
3. American Friends Service Committee
4. Arab American Association of NY
5. Artistic Noise
6. Breaking the Chains of Your Mind
7. BronxConnect*
8. Brooklyn Movement Center
9. CASES
10. Center for Court Innovation
11. Children of Promise, NYC
12. Children's Defense Fund - NY
13. Children's Haven: A Place of Healing & Hope, Inc.
14. Children's Rights
15. Circles of Support
16. Citizens Against Recidivism, Inc.
17. Color of Change
18. Community Access, Inc.
19. Community Service Society of New York
20. Congregation Beit Simchat Torah
21. Corporation for Supportive Housing
22. Create Forward
23. Daughters4Justice
24. Dream Deferred Inc.
25. Drive Change
26. exalt
27. Exodus Transitional Community*
28. Fountain House
29. Freedom Agenda, Urban Justice Center*
30. From Punishment to Public Health (P2PH) at John Jay College of Criminal Justice
31. Gangstas Giving Back
32. Gangstas Making Astronomical Community Changes (G-MACC)
33. Getting Out and Staying Out (GOSO)
34. Greenburger Center for Social and Criminal Justice
35. Good Call
36. Hour Children
37. Housing Plus
38. Humanities Action Lab
39. Incarcerated Nation Network, Inc.
40. Innocence Project
41. John Jay College Institute for Justice and Opportunity
42. Justice Ministries Committee, NYC Presbytery
43. Kings Against Violence Initiative (KAVI)
44. Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church
45. Legal Action Center*
46. Mental Health Project, Urban Justice Center*
47. Mott Haven Reformed Church
48. National Action Network NYC Chapter Second Chance Committee
49. National Alliance on Mental Illness – NYC (NAMI-NYC)
50. National Religious Campaign Against Torture
51. New York County Defender Services
52. New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
53. NYC Jails Action Coalition
54. Osborne Association
55. Park Avenue Christian Church
56. Peer Network Of New York
57. Penn and Perry Inc.
58. Presbytery of New York City
59. Providence House, Inc
60. Racial Justice BK
61. Rikers Debate Project
62. Rising Ground, Inc.
63. Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
64. Sadhana Hindus
65. St. Boniface Social Justice Action Committee
66. Supportive Housing Network of New York
67. The Ali Forney Center
68. The Brotherhood Sister Sol
69. The First Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn
70. The Fortune Society
71. The Interfaith Center of New York
72. The New York Academy of Medicine
73. Theatre of the Oppressed

- 74. T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
- 75. Trellis/Recovery House of Worship
- 76. United Community Centers
- 77. Vera Institute of Justice
- 78. Visionary V

- 79. Women & Justice Project
- 80. Women's Community Justice Association*
- 81. Women's Prison Association
- 82. Youth Justice Network
- 83. Youth Represent

To sign on to the Campaign to Close Rikers, please contact Freedom Agenda, fa@urbanjustice.org