



June 8, 2020

Bill de Blasio  
Mayor of the City of New York  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

Commissioner Dermot Shea  
New York City Department of Police  
1 Police Plaza  
New York, NY 10038

Dear Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Shea,

We are writing to express our shared concern about reported conditions at mass processing centers, precincts, and jails across New York City. Over the past week and a half, thousands of New Yorkers have organized together, protested in the streets, and rose up to demand justice for Black lives. Many of those engaging in protest (and some who have not but have been swept up nonetheless) have been arrested and detained, often longer than the legally-mandated 24 hour time-limit between arrest and arraignment. Additionally, our offices have received reports that community members who have been arrested have faced dangerous and dehumanizing conditions while being processed by the NYPD. Allegations include unsafe overcrowding in holding cells, a lack of PPE, use of force against pregnant detainees, little food or water, and repeated requests for medical care being ignored.

In response to these allegations and at the urging of community members, we went to both 100 Centre Street and 1 Police Plaza on Saturday, June 6th. We were denied entry to 100 Centre Street and after nearly an hour and a half, multiple conversations, and movements from one entry to another, were finally given entry to 1 Police Plaza. While no one was being held at 1 Police Plaza during the time of our short visit, we remain concerned about the process by which New Yorkers are being arrested and arraigned and the conditions inside facilities.

We are requesting immediate responses to the following questions:

1. Where are recently arrested New Yorkers being processed and arraigned? Please provide a list of all facilities being used as Mass Arrest Processing Centers, including email, phone and fax numbers.
2. How many are being held at each facility? How long have they been held?
3. Are the phone lines for each of the facilities being staffed 24/7 so that lawyers can find out information about, and advocate for, their clients? If not, why not?
4. Are individuals in NYPD custody being given access to phone lines to call lawyers and family members? If not, why not?
5. What medical care, including PPE, are recently arrested New Yorkers receiving while in NYPD custody?

6. Can you confirm whether all officers guarding arrestees have been wearing masks and if not, why not?
7. Reports of interrogations by NYPD Counterterrorism and FBI have leaked to the media. Can you confirm whether such interrogations have taken place and, if so, whether detainees were able to have a lawyer present?
8. What “special event” code is being applied to New Yorkers arrested for protesting? In what other ways are New Yorkers arrested for protesting being coded in your systems?
9. What system is in place to allow arrestees to regain their confiscated property after release? Why is the Property Clerk Window closed and when will it be opened?

In addition, we urge you to take immediate action to:

1. Release everyone who has exceeded 24 hours between arrest and arraignment;
2. Release all minors, pregnant people, immunocompromised people, and injured people;
3. Provide access to adequate medical care for all detained people and honor all requests for medical attention;
4. Provide officers who are participating in making and processing mass arrests a means of recording and tracking who is processed where and who is in transit;
5. Staff phone lines 24/7 at mass processing arrest sites so that lawyers, family members, and advocates can locate people and invoke legal representation.

As elected officials, it is our responsibility to ensure our constituents, neighbors, and friends are able to safely exercise their right to protest and that if they are arrested for doing so, are quickly and safely processed and released back to their community. The outrage that has prompted recent protests and has sustained racial justice movements for decades is further compounded when family members do not know where their loved ones are being detained and the conditions within which they are being held. Further, the complete lack of access to information and answers, by elected officials, lawyers, and the general public, heightens New Yorkers’ belief that the NYPD is beyond reform. If the NYPD is “committed to keeping all New Yorkers safe,” as both of you have repeatedly stated, it is incumbent upon the agency to immediately provide access to data and information, improve conditions, and release detainees most at risk.

We look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely,



Jumaane Williams  
The Public Advocate for the City of New York



Keith Powers  
New York City Council Member  
Chair, Committee on Criminal Justice



Brad Lander  
New York City Council Member  
Deputy Leader for Policy