Queens Jail Support Statement on DOC Killing of Luis Alberto Lopez Castillo

On September 16, 2026, Luis Alberto Lopez Castillo took his own life while in custody at the Queens County Criminal Courthouse. Luis was only 20 years old.

Luis is the 8th person that we know of to die in Department of Corrections custody this year alone. Luis deserved to live the full life ahead of him, and not die in the indignity of a cell. Like many others terrorized by the police, Luis was unhoused when arrested. We hold responsible for his death DOC, the NYPD, the court system, and, ultimately, the capitalist white supremacist system that had discarded him. Luis's death reveals the so-called "justice" system for what it is: a tool of white supremacist domination. This system sacrifices the lives of Black and brown poor and working-class New Yorkers like Luis at the altar of "law and order."

We know what happens next: The system will investigate itself, and nothing will happen. It will "reform" and nothing will happen. The current carceral managers, like all those before them, oversee a death machine that cannot change but can only be dismantled. They promise to close down Rikers, but only if they get to build new cages throughout the city that will undoubtedly continue the legacy of horrors of every jail and prison that has preceded them.

Queens Jail Support stands in uncompromising solidarity with all those targeted by the carceral machine. Mutual aid pending revolution will never be sufficient: our work will not be done until the system is torn down—from the police to the courts to the prisons. After the system took Luis's life, court officers went back to filling the same cells with more vulnerable individuals. The very next day, another person—whose name has not been made public—died in an NYPD van being transported to the jail.

Luis died on September 16th, but the system persistently deprived him and others like him of life every step of the way. Every day, the same system that leaves someone to die in a cold cell also releases our unhoused neighbors back onto the streets with no resources, or robs people of their housing and employment via arrest. Even when it doesn't make the headlines, this engine of punishment works to wreck and uproot lives daily.

This system of brutality and warehousing can never be the foundation for safety. With love and rage, we remember Luis and the others whose lives the carceral system has claimed this year:

Luis Alberto Lopes Castillo, 20, murdered by the state in the Queens County Criminal Courthouse
[Unknown], murdered in transit from Rikers to the Queens County Criminal Courthouse
Christopher Rodriguez, 36, murdered by the state in the Bellevue Hospital jail unit
Julian Pagan, 29, murdered by the state at the Bronx County Courthouse
Clarence Woodward, 41, murdered by the state at Rikers' Robert N. Davoren Center
Rajpattie Ramkellawan, 41, murdered by the state at the Rose M. Singer Center
Umais Khan, 40, murdered by the state at the Eric M. Taylor Center
John Price, 49, murdered by the state at Elmhurst Hospital after being at Rikers
Barry Cozart, 39, murdered by the state at the George R. Vierno Center