

COMMUNITY OFFICE:

71-19 80TH STREET, SUITE 8-303
GLENDALE, NY 11385
TEL: (718) 366-3900
FAX: (718) 326-3549

CITY HALL OFFICE:

250 BROADWAY, SUITE 1765
NEW YORK, NY 10007
TEL: (212) 788-7381
FAX: (212) 227-7164

EMAIL: ecrowley@council.nyc.gov
WEBSITE: www.council.nyc.gov/crowley



THE COUNCIL OF
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

ELIZABETH S. CROWLEY

COUNCIL MEMBER, 30TH DISTRICT, QUEENS

CHAIR

FIRE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES

COMMITTEES

CIVIL SERVICE AND LABOR
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS
MENTAL HEALTH, DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITY, ALCOHOLISM, DRUG ABUSE
AND DISABILITY SERVICES
WOMEN'S ISSUES

August 8, 2016

Office of the New York City Comptroller
New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer
One Centre Street, Ste. 530
New York, NY 10007

Dear Comptroller Stringer:

On August 2, 2016, the Mayor's office issued a press release claiming significant reductions in violence on Rikers Island. To support this claim, the Administration compared data from select jail violence indicators from the first six months of 2016 to the first six months of 2015, claiming an overall decrease in violence on Rikers Island.

The release, however, leaves out key violence indicators, such as violent inmate-on-inmate incidents, and how many of those incidents resulted in serious injury. Throughout Fiscal Year 2016, numbers show that these incidents are steadily climbing, and have increased by 167 from September to June, the end of the fiscal year.

Instead, this press release touted reductions in officers' use of force and a decrease in serious injuries to staff. While this is important progress, it is disingenuous to only share selective statistics, and leave out an imperative indicator to violence and overall conditions in jails.

It additionally showed no change in stabbings and slashings, at 66 incidents reported incidents over the reporting period. However, when accounting for the daily population over the last six months, stabbings and slashings have increased overall. We have seen these violent incidents increase nearly 50 percent under the de Blasio administration.

The administration also claims that inmate assaults on staff resulting in serious injuries decreased by 45%, from 44 to 24 incidents. However, representatives from the Correction Officers' Benevolent Association, Inc. ("COBA") have informed me that the number of serious injuries to staff over this period was significantly higher. According to the union, 207 correction officers were sent to the emergency rooms at Mount Sinai Hospital Queens and New York Presbyterian Queens over the first six months of 2016.

Other questionable metrics included in the press release include the total inmate assaults on staff, which it says have decreased by 20%, from 494 to 394 incidents. This means that an average of more than two correction officers are assaulted each day – this number is unacceptably high.

Just this weekend, reports showed that one officer was slashed, and another was beaten and punched repeatedly in the face. I ask – are these not considered serious assaults by the Department of Correction?

Tens of millions of dollars have been included in the budget over the past two fiscal years to make Rikers Island a safer place for inmates, detainees, and correction officers. Having accurate data is essential to ensure that these dollars are spent appropriately.

A discrepancy of this magnitude warrants further investigation. As the Chair of the Fire and Criminal Justice Services Committee, I have serious questions and concerns about the administration's reporting as well as classifications of incidents. Therefore, I respectfully request that your office initiate an audit to determine the accuracy of this jail violence metric. We need to ensure the accuracy of this data in order to assess the effectiveness of the Department of Correction's anti-violence reforms.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth S. Crowley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Elizabeth" and last name "Crowley" being the most legible parts.

Elizabeth S. Crowley
New York City Council Member
District 30