

Statement by Anita Khandelwal, Director, King County Department of Public Defense  
June 1, 2020

**More than 100 people denied right to appear before a judge in Seattle and Kent today**

Because of a fear of unspecified “civil disturbances,” Judge Rogers closed the King County Courthouse this afternoon, depriving 61 people in Seattle and 43 people in Kent who were jailed over the weekend of their right to come before a judge to seek their release. Washington State court rules presume that jailed individuals will be released within one business day of their warrantless arrest in the absence of specific and individualized findings by a judge.

Although the court was willing to sign release orders for those people whom the defense and prosecution could agree should be released on their own recognizance, the State refused to even discuss a single case, despite the pleas of several defense attorneys and family and community members.

I’m outraged that the prosecution would not even consider release, dangerously driving up the jail population during a pandemic. These are people who are all presumed innocent; some of these individuals were involved in a protest over the killing of yet another black man at the hands of a police officer, while others faced unrelated but equally unexamined allegations. Many have no criminal history at all. These actions once again prioritize the convenience of the system over the lives of those ensnared by it, leaving innocent individuals to languish in jail without an opportunity to seek their release.