

March 31, 2024

**The South Asian Legal Defense Fund's Statement Regarding:
The Police Killing of Win Rozario**

The South Asian Legal Defense Fund is alarmed by the preventable incident involving the fatal shooting in Queens yesterday. Bangladeshi immigrant Win Rozario, a 19-year-old young man in mental distress, was killed by the police in his own home. This incident highlights a grave injustice in our society, where individuals seeking help during mental health crises are met with lethal force instead of the necessary support and intervention.

Win Rozario's case underscores the urgent need for comprehensive reform in law enforcement practices, particularly in handling mental health emergencies. The use of deadly force against someone in a vulnerable state is unacceptable and runs counter to the principles of compassion and humanity. A person's brandishing of scissors when surrounded by armed police in one's own home is no justification for lethal force. It is a failure of our systems to protect and serve all members of our community, irrespective of their mental health status or background. In particular, the NYPD pilot ThriveNYC program initiated under Mayor Bill DeBlasio does not cover Ozone Park, where Rozario's family resides, highlighting how outer boroughs and communities more likely to include immigrant families are rarely prioritized for critical care.

The South Asian Legal Defense Fund demands a thorough and impartial investigation into the circumstances surrounding Win Rozario's death. Already we are seeing the implications laid bare when NYPD officers' statements are reported as fact and the victim's family's statements are treated as an afterthought. Transparency is paramount, and we call for the immediate release of all relevant body camera footage and investigative reports. Accountability must be upheld, and those responsible for the unjustified use of lethal force must be held accountable under the law.

We urge Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz to take decisive action in this matter.

Their offices must lead the investigation to ensure impartiality and integrity. Prosecution of the involved police officer(s) is essential to deliver justice for Win Rozario and his grieving family. We welcome an open dialogue between community members, the Queens Borough President, and Queens City Council Members to ensure further support and investment in mental health services and policing alternatives.

It is incumbent upon South Asians to address the systemic issues that lead to such tragic outcomes. We stand in solidarity with Win Rozario's family and community advocates & coalitions for meaningful reform to prevent similar incidents in the future. We continue to fight for justice, accountability, and dignity for all members of our community.

Sincerely,

The South Asian Legal Defense Fund