

NYC mayor Adams steps up law and order campaign after two police officers killed

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Newly installed Mayor Eric Adams, the entire New York political establishment, and its media propagandists are using the deaths of the two New York City police officers who were shot when responding to a domestic dispute in Harlem to step up a hysterical law-and-order campaign. The aim is to divert attention from the catastrophic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the whole social crisis—unemployment, poverty, homelessness—that has been intensified in the last several years.

The two officers, Jason Rivera and Wilber Mora, were shot after entering the apartment of a woman who had called the police reporting a dispute with her son. The son, 47 years old, was having a mental breakdown, and opened fire without warning when the officers approached him.

Adams, a former New York Police Department (NYPD) captain, has launched what has been dubbed a “battle against gun violence.” This is a continuation of his election campaign, which focused almost entirely on law enforcement and “public safety.” He is continuing on this course at a time when the city, which was one of the earliest centers of the pandemic in the US, is suffering yet another wave of infections, hospitalizations and deaths due to the uncontrolled spread of the Omicron variant.

The horrendous conditions faced by the city’s impoverished working class are starkly exemplified by the two deadly fires that took place within the first few days of Adams’ taking the oath of office, one of which claimed the largest death toll in more than 30 years. These “accidents” are an indication of the raging social crisis in New York, one that has been deepened by the COVID-19 pandemic over the past two years.

The right-wing media blitz regarding the police deaths has been exploited for its full propaganda effect by the media’s lavish coverage of the cops’ funerals. For days leading up to and following the ceremonies, the

population was deluged with wave upon wave of stories heaping praise on the officers and demanding action to suppress gun violence. The intention is to portray the city as an armed camp, where crime is totally out of control, in order to justify an intensification of police repression. The media sympathy for the fallen cops, including a 22-year-old rookie, serves to divert attention from the true criminals, the ruling elite that has presided over so much suffering during the pandemic.

The officers who died in the shooting incident in Harlem were each given a funeral Mass at the opulent St. Patrick’s Cathedral in Midtown Manhattan. By contrast, most of the city’s COVID-19 victims are placed in body bags lined up in hospital corridors or stacked in refrigerated trucks parked on city streets, many to be buried in mass graves in the city’s paupers cemetery on Hart Island.

The campaign to stoke fear and justify the strengthening of the state’s repressive forces takes place while, in fact, the rates of murder and other violent crimes in New York City remain far below those of the early 1990s, when murder rates hovered around 2,000 per year. In 2021 there were fewer than 500.

Within days of the police officers’ deaths, Adams announced his proposed “gun violence action plan,” which reportedly includes deployment of additional police in areas of high gun violence, restoration of anti-crime police units disbanded in 2020, accelerated prosecution, and lengthening of prison sentences.

The disbanded units will be composed of plainclothes teams and were involved in some of the city’s most notorious police shootings of civilians. Expansion of mental health intervention and youth programs is also mentioned as a sop to liberal critics, a thin cover for Adams’ law-and-order program.

The New York City campaign must be seen in the wider context of US imperialism’s war drive against Russia and

China. Both are being deployed by the ruling class in a desperate effort to divert attention from the effects of the criminal “herd immunity” policy which is generating a growing wave of opposition from workers and young people and to legitimize the use of police-state tactics to suppress dissent. With the national death toll having reached 900,000 and that in the city nearing 40,000, a social explosion is building against the criminal mishandling of the pandemic. Adulation of the police is part of the preparation to justify brutal methods to be employed against the working class.

Adams has completely embraced the ruling class’s “herd immunity” policy. Interviewed on ABC television a day after assuming office, Adams told parents of small children to “fear not sending them back. The stats are clear. The safest place for children is inside a school.”

The broader significance of the campaign launched by Adams is shown by the announcement that President Biden will travel to New York City this coming Thursday, February 3, to meet with Adams in connection with his “comprehensive strategy to combat gun crime.” This praise is of a piece with Biden’s war drive. The US Department of Justice had already last summer established gun violence strike forces in New York and other cities with elevated gun violence. Both the mayor of the largest city and the president of the US have only one answer to the crisis—the preparation for state violence and war.

Gun violence has indeed spiked during the pandemic, driven by pre-existing social conditions exacerbated by the ruling class’s “herd immunity” policy, which has allowed COVID-19 to run rampant. An effective response to the pandemic, as has been demonstrated in China, is anathema to the ruling class. The answer to gun violence is jobs, education, housing, and above all an end to the pandemic. But this interferes with the profit interests of Wall Street. The promotion of repression by the police is entirely consistent with Adams’ proud self-identification as a defender of the financial elite.

In announcing his anti-gun violence plan, Adams proclaimed, “This is my number one priority: Keeping you safe. I campaigned on it; I will deliver on it.” The city’s current daily death toll from COVID-19 averages 271, which is only going to continue and likely increase under the “let it rip” policies of the ruling class. This death toll is entirely preventable, but the deaths of two members of the “bodies of armed men” that defend the interests of the rich is Adams’ focus, while the hundreds dead of COVID-19 are totally ignored.

The last time two NYPD cops were killed in a single incident was in 2014. By contrast, at least 179 civilians have been killed by police in New York City over the past 15 years. In only one of these killings was the officer convicted, and he was not sentenced to prison time. On an annual basis, police in the US kill an average of 1,000 civilians.

Less than 20 months ago, the brutal police killing of George Floyd prompted a wave of massive multi-racial protests against police violence. The ruling elite, shaken by this and other signs of restiveness in the working class, including the wave of strikes undertaken by workers enraged by contract concessions backed by the unions, is preparing for a social explosion.

Adams, a man who proudly identifies as a spokesman of Wall Street, only weeks in office, has already had a number of ethics allegations raised against him. He tried to appoint his brother to a \$210,000 post, only to be rebuffed by the city’s Conflicts of Interest Board. He has appointed a man who is an unindicted co-conspirator in a seven-year-old police corruption case as his deputy for public safety.

Adams’ transition team included Rick Gropper, a co-founder of one of the group of companies that owns the building in which the city’s most recent deadly fire claimed 17 lives. While the city’s ruling establishment is well aware of these issues, it is at this point four square behind Adams in his law-and-order campaign.

The answer of this ex-cop—and the ruling class he represents—to the pandemic, the astronomical accumulation of wealth by the pandemic profiteers, and the ongoing impoverishment and unemployment of workers in the hotel and restaurants and entertainment sectors, among others, is police repression on behalf of the bankrupt and decaying capitalist system.



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