

Biden visits New York City to press law-and-order campaign

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3 February 2022

President Joe Biden visited New York City Thursday afternoon for a series of public relations appearances, side by side with the new Mayor Eric Adams, Governor Kathy Hochul, and other Democratic politicians, as well as top officials of the New York Police Department.

The purpose of the visit was to show Biden's support for the law-and-order agenda of Mayor Adams, a former police captain elected late last year and sworn in on January 1, and to demonstrate his own support for the police.

Adams has called for a stepped up police presence on the streets, as well as reconstituting plainclothes "anti-gang" squads that were disbanded after repeated allegations of brutality, albeit under a new Orwellian name: Neighborhood Safety Teams.

For his part, Biden has abandoned any effort to pass legislation named after George Floyd, the victim of police murder in Minneapolis whose death touched off worldwide demonstrations in 2020. The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act would have enacted only a few cosmetic reforms, but even that was too much for police unions and right-wing politicians, Democrat as well as Republican.

Instead, the president has funneled billions into building up the police, allowing governors and mayors to use COVID-19 recovery funds for that purpose. And the *New York Times* reported this week that Biden's top adviser on domestic policy, Susan Rice, has had more than 20 meetings with police unions over the past few months to discuss the "anti-crime" agenda of the White House.

The Democratic president has been under fire from right-wing Republicans over rising crime rates in many US cities, although that violence is far below the level of the 1980s and 1990s, when urban centers were

ravaged by the crack cocaine epidemic.

Now a different epidemic, COVID-19, is taking far more lives than any "crime wave," but the US ruling elite, both Democrats and Republicans, has washed its hands of any responsibility, declaring instead that working people must learn to "live with the virus." No one suggests that people should "live with" murder, robbery or rape.

The disparities in death tolls are staggering. Biden said during a stop at NYPD headquarters, "Every day in this country, 316 people are shot, 106 are killed and 6 NYPD officers have been victims of gun violence so far just this year."

Every day in America, however, hundreds of thousands are infected with COVID-19, and more than 3,000 are killed by it. As for the NYPD, some 64 cops and civilian employees have died from the pandemic over the past two years, as compared to a handful of deaths by gunfire.

According to a recently released FBI report, in 2021 the number of US police deaths in the line of duty jumped to 458, the most ever recorded and double the annual death toll in recent decades. Of these, 301 were attributed to COVID-19, 72 to felony assaults and 58 to traffic accidents. The pandemic thus accounted for two-thirds of all police deaths.

Yet the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association, the New York City police union that stridently backed Donald Trump, filed suit against the city government because outgoing Mayor Bill de Blasio imposed a vaccine mandate on cops and other city employees.

Meanwhile, in the course of the last year, American police killed more than 1,000 people, the vast majority of them young men from the poorest sections of the working class, white, black, Hispanic and other minorities. Whites were by far the largest number of

those killed, but a disproportionate number were black and Hispanic.

None of these revealing figures were discussed by either Biden or Adams, and no one in the large media entourage that attended the series of carefully staged events was so rude as to ask a question rooted in that reality.

Instead, the main focus was the shooting deaths of two policemen in Harlem last week, by an apparently mentally disturbed man who was himself killed by the police in the course of the encounter. These two deaths have been milked by the media for endless sensational coverage, with the aim of justifying widespread police repression and violence in New York City and throughout the country.

Biden denounced calls to “defund the police,” which Democratic Party officials have blamed for their poor showing in the 2020 congressional elections, even though no Democratic candidates actually backed such action.

The slogan was raised in the course of the massive protests that followed the police murder of George Floyd, and it became the focal point of much Republican demagoguery in the election campaign, despite being universally disavowed by the Democrats.

The Republicans only gained an advantage because the Democratic Party made only a shamefaced criticism of police violence and conducted its 2020 campaign on a thoroughly right-wing basis, making no appeal to the mass oppositional sentiments expressed by millions in the course of the demonstrations which exploded after the murder of Floyd.

Biden has always been identified with law-and-order politics—more cops, more jails, savage prison sentences, right-wing demagoguery against “criminals,” while downplaying any examination of the social causes of murder, assault, burglary, etc. He boasted during his years in the Senate, during part of which he was chairman of the Judiciary Committee, that every law that was enacted on crime and punishment had his fingerprints on it.

This became an issue during the campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination, when he had to pretend his regret over the impact of his series of crime bills in sending millions of working people, disproportionately black and Hispanic, into the horrific US prison system.

Side by side with the ex-cop Adams, however, Biden was truly in his element. He praised the police for “putting their lives on the line every single day to keep our community safe.” He promised more money for the police, repeatedly declaring, “the answer is not to defund the police.”

He tried to give his right-wing posture a liberal gloss by combining it with a call for Congress to pass gun reforms, such as universal background checks. He brought Attorney General Merrick Garland with him on the New York City trip, noting that Garland had “directed all US attorneys in the United States to prioritize combating gun trafficking across state lines.”

There was a political message delivered by Biden’s visit as well. Adams won the Democratic nomination for mayor with a right-wing campaign directed against several more liberal candidates who advocated greater social spending, criticized police violence and deplored, at least rhetorically, the dominance of Wall Street and real estate interests over city government policy.

By embracing him, the leader of the national Democratic Party emphasizes his own distance from Democratic Party “progressives,” and seeks to make himself more acceptable to congressional Republicans and big business as a whole as the 2022 election campaign opens. It is noteworthy, in that context, that the *New York Post* and the *Wall Street Journal*, both owned by Rupert Murdoch, have been enthusiastic backers of Adams.



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