

New York City Mayor Eric Adams charged with bribery

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Federal prosecutors on Thursday charged New York City Mayor Eric Adams with five counts of bribery, fraud and soliciting foreign campaign donations, making him the first modern New York City mayor to be indicted while in office. Adams has thus far resisted calls to resign while pledging to fight the charges.

The indictment is the culmination of a virtual collapse of the Democratic administration in the city, as corruption probes have hit the police department, the school system, the agencies responsible for the welfare of immigrants and the mayor's own executive office. Indictments, resignations, transfers and forced retirements abound.

Prosecutors released the 57-page indictment Thursday. It describes a multiyear scheme dating from Adams' tenure as Brooklyn borough president and continuing through his stint as mayor to secure illegal campaign donations and luxury travel while fraudulently obtaining public funding for his campaign.

According to the indictment, Adams developed dealings with multiple Turkish businesspeople and government officials, who provided him with free or heavily discounted trips worldwide, including to Turkey, India, France, Sri Lanka, China, Hungary, Pakistan and Ghana. All told, prosecutors estimate Adams received flights, luxury hotel stays, food and entertainment worth more than \$100,000 between 2016 and 2021. Adams failed to disclose these gifts in required reports, often covering them up with fake paper trails.

Prosecutors allege that Adams also solicited tens of thousands of dollars in campaign contributions from foreign interests, which is illegal under US law. To conceal the origin of the donations, the campaign used "straw donors," US citizens who falsely certified that they had provided the money. These phony contributions were then used to obtain public campaign financing. In New York, candidates can receive public funding of up to eight times the value of small individual donations. "As a result

of those false certifications, [Adams'] 2021 mayoral campaign received more than \$10,000,000 in public funds," the indictment states.

In exchange for donations and gifts, Adams' patrons received access to a rising figure in the Democratic Party. The indictment alleges Adams personally intervened to fast-track the opening of a new Turkish high-rise consulate in September 2021, in time for the president of Turkey's visit, despite the building failing the fire inspection.

Adams' indictment is the product of just one of at least five corruption investigations engulfing the administration. On September 12, New York Police Commissioner Edward Caban resigned a week after his home was raided by federal investigators. Press reports indicate that the raid was part of a probe into the top cop's twin brother, James, a former NYPD officer himself, who is suspected of shaking down nightclubs, demanding payments in exchange for protection from NYPD enforcement.

In addition, search warrants and seizures were carried out targeting the three Banks brothers: Schools Chancellor David Banks, who announced his retirement at the end of the year; Deputy Mayor Philip Banks; and former transit official Terrance Banks, who now runs a consultancy company. The investigation is reportedly centered on bribery accusations related to the awarding of city contracts.

Adams' senior adviser Tim Pearson, who was appointed to oversee a new agency responsible for contracts for the influx of migrants, is also under investigation. Alongside potential bribery, Pearson has been accused of assault by two security guards at a migrant shelter in Midtown Manhattan. Pearson's colleague, Molly Shaeffer, head of the city's Office of Asylum Seeker Operations, was also subpoenaed last week.

Despite the ongoing collapse of his administration, Adams has insisted he will not resign. “I always knew that if I stood my ground for New Yorkers that I would be a target, and a target I became,” Adams said in a video statement Wednesday after news of the coming indictment broke. He went on to attribute the corruption investigation to his criticism of the Biden administration’s immigration policies. “Despite our pleas, when the federal government did nothing as its broken immigration policies overloaded our shelter system with no relief, I put the people of New York before party and politics,” he said.

The demonization of immigrants has been a prominent feature of the Adams’ administration, with the Democratic mayor last year claiming that migrants “will destroy New York City.” After channeling the rhetoric of fascist ex-President Donald Trump demonizing migrants, Adams is now reprising Trump’s claims that he is the innocent victim of a criminal prosecution launched by his political enemies.

Adams has used migrants as the scapegoat for a broader austerity agenda in New York City, which imposes sacrifices on working people in a city that is home to more millionaires than any other on the planet. He has close connections to Wall Street and the city’s real estate moguls and has led the austerity charge on behalf of big business, taking an axe to library funding, school budgets and other essential services, supposedly due to the costs of housing some 65,000 migrants.

The Democratic mayor has also used the crisis to eliminate in practice the legal requirement to provide housing for the homeless. With social tensions in the city on a hair trigger, the attack on migrants serves to pit one section of workers against another rather than at the corporate and financial elite who monopolize the resources of the city.

In an appearance Thursday outside of his official residence, Gracie Mansion, which was raided earlier in the day by federal agents, Adams sought to rely on another well-worn diversion to salvage his position: a racial appeal. Adams, the city’s second black mayor, held a press conference together with black clergy in an attempt to portray the indictment as the product of racism, although the US attorney who brought the charges is himself African American.

The press event did not go as planned, however, as hecklers continually interrupted, calling him a disgrace to all black people and demanding his resignation.

His criticisms of Biden over immigration

notwithstanding, the policies of the mayor of the nation’s largest city have been squarely in line with the White House and the dominant section of the Democratic Party nationwide.

In addition to attacking immigrants, he has based his mayorship on law-and-order hysteria, expanding the NYPD and vociferously defending police brutality. Adams, a former cop, has used the city’s 30,000 uniformed police officers to aggressively crack down on dissent, particularly over the genocide in Gaza.

The indictment and the growing calls by city Democrats for Adams’ resignation reflect concerns in the political establishment and on Wall Street that the mayor has become a liability and will, therefore, be unable to control social struggles.

Democratic Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez was the first prominent Democrat to call for the mayor to resign. “The flood of resignations and vacancies are threatening gov function. Nonstop investigations will make it impossible to recruit and retain a qualified administration,” she wrote on X. “For the good of the city, he should resign.”

Notably, Ocasio-Cortez did not criticize the substance of Adams’ right-wing policies but bemoaned the fact that the corruption investigations would make it impossible for him to carry them out.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Minority Leader issued statements expressing concern over the severity of the charges but stopped short of demanding the mayor’s resignation. Likewise, New York Governor Kathy Hochul, who has the power to remove Adams, albeit after a lengthy legal process, vowed to review the indictment but has not yet called for the mayor to step down.

Adams is expected to appear in federal court on Friday for his arraignment.



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