

New York governor puts “guardrails” on New York City mayor Eric Adams

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Kathy Hochul, the Democratic governor of New York, decided last week not to exercise her power to remove her fellow Democrat, New York City Mayor Eric Adams, from office for his exchange of favors with the Trump administration.

Hochul’s decision was followed by support for Adams from House Minority Leader Hakeem Jefferies, who told Jake Tapper on CNN’s Sunday program, *State of the Union*, “Eric Adams has the responsibility to decisively convince the people of New York City that he’s solely focused on their interests and not doing the bidding of Donald Trump and his administration,” without calling for the mayor’s resignation.

The right-wing Adams administration was earlier roiled by calls for him to resign after it became apparent from Trump officials’ remarks that the president had issued an order to the Department of Justice (DOJ) to drop the federal corruption case against him in exchange for closer cooperation in implementing Trump’s anti-immigrant repression in New York, a sanctuary city that currently prevents federal agencies from invading city property such as schools and homeless shelters.

The Trump administration’s insistence on dropping the charges led to the February 13 resignation of the interim US attorney for the Southern District of New York, Danielle Sassoon, a Trump appointee, whose office brought the charges against Adams, as well as other attorneys in the DOJ associated with the case. Hagan Scotten, the lead prosecutor, resigned the next day.

Attorney General Pam Bondi and acting Deputy Attorney General Emil Bove III were finally able to find attorneys in the DOJ’s Public Integrity Section who agreed to dismiss the charges.

On February 18, four deputy mayors in the Adams

administration, including some of his closest political associates, resigned.

All of these events sparked a major crisis in the Democratic Party and Hochul, who has the power to remove him under the New York State Constitution, convened a series of meetings on February 18 with the speaker of the New York City Council, Adrienne Adams, City Comptroller Brad Lander, and Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, as well as New York state Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, all of whom called for Adam’s resignation and supported a move by Hochul to remove him.

Instead, Hochul decided to leave Adams in place, no doubt after further discussion with the top Democratic Party leadership. In an attempt to appease public opinion, which overwhelmingly wants to see Adams go, she proposed legislation that would establish “guardrails” for the New York City mayor, including establishing funds for the city comptroller and city public advocate to hire lawyers to sue the federal government if the mayor fails to do so and the creation of a new state office of deputy inspector general for the city.

Adams, for his part, still has the corruption charges hanging over him since the judge in the case, Dale E. Ho, on Friday delayed dismissal of the charges, normally a pro forma action when prosecutors request it, by appointing Paul Clement, a former solicitor general under George W. Bush to argue against dismissal, since, as he noted, “there has been no adversarial testing” of the government’s request to dismiss the case. Clement is charged with delivering his opinion by March 7. Ho indefinitely postponed Adams’ trial, previously scheduled for April.

Whatever Hochul’s exact motivation, however, for

refusing to force Adams out of office—doubtless the desire for stability in a politically volatile situation, nationally and internationally is one them—the intervention of the Trump administration into New York politics, essentially bribing the mayor to enforce its war against immigrant workers, has thrown the Democratic Party into a crisis.

Hochul herself has been groping for a way to appear as though she is opposing the Trump administration, and has found it in various court actions, such as one opposing federal efforts to dismiss congestion pricing in the city. The move has not convinced many New Yorkers that she is waging a fight, except for the most gullible or those who have a vested interest in maintaining the authority of the Democratic Party.

Of these, *Jacobin* magazine, the house organ of the Democratic Socialists of America, a faction of the Democratic Party, can be counted on to make the most crass and incredible statements, as it did on its website when writer Liza Featherstone boosted Hochul's moves on congestion pricing and dismissed the implications of allowing Adams to stay:

Not all Democratic leaders have been asleep at the wheel. Although New York governor Kathy Hochul has refused to remove compromised New York City mayor Eric Adams from office, she has been standing up for the city's independence in resisting Trump's efforts to dismantle congestion pricing.

Leaving Adams in place, however, is a de facto concession to Trump, and one with potentially grave consequences for hundreds of thousands of immigrant workers, both undocumented and documented, who comprise a considerable portion of the city's population.

Adams has given every indication that he will live up to his part of the bargain with the fascist in the White House. Even before the quid pro quo character of his agreement with the federal government became apparent, he issued a memo instructing city workers to allow Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on city property.

On February 13, Adams told the media he intended to allow ICE to open an office on Rikers Island, the largest prison complex in the United States, already a hellhole for thousands of inmates, many of whom are still awaiting trial.

Adams said in a statement, "We are now working on implementing an executive order that will reestablish the ability for ICE agents to operate on Rikers Island. ... ICE agents would specifically be focused on assisting the correctional intelligence bureau in their criminal investigations, in particular those focused on violent criminals and gangs."

This, of course, is nothing but a repetition of Trump's lies that his war on immigrants is focused on hard-core criminals. The targets of ICE in Rikers will be workers who have been arrested for minor crimes and infractions and could find themselves spirited away from the filthy, violent and overcrowded conditions of Rikers to the torture center of Guantanamo Bay or concentration camps on US military bases.

Adams' side of the bargain with Trump is entirely willing. Since the mass immigration of asylum seekers to New York City in 2022, he has sought to expel immigrants from city-run homeless shelters, ship them out of town and step up police harassment against them.

The city has now acquired tens of thousands more potential targets for ICE—and Adams—with the removal by Trump of Temporary Protected Status for Haitian immigrants last week, exposing them to deportation by the summer.



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