

Amid right-wing drive to criminalize opposition

Trump's DHS council targets Democratic mayoral primary winner Zohran Mamdani

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2 July 2025

One day after President Donald Trump threatened to arrest and deport Zohran Mamdani—the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) member who won the Democratic mayoral primary—for pledging to defy federal immigration raids if elected, his newly reconstituted Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC) used its first meeting to target Mamdani by name.

The Homeland Security Advisory Council, established after the September 11 attacks, is currently chaired by South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster and packed with Trump loyalists, Republican operatives, venture capitalists and fascist-minded sheriffs. Its members include billionaire Marc Andreessen, co-founder of the venture capital firm Andreessen Horowitz; Florida State Senator Joseph Gruters, treasurer of the Republican National Committee; and Christopher Cox, founder of the far-right group Bikers for Trump.

The meeting, the first half of which was broadcast on C-SPAN, was nominally focused on “national security” threats. In the middle of it, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem turned to council member Rudolph Giuliani—former New York mayor, Trump attorney and January 6 co-conspirator—and asked if he “wanted to run for mayor of New York again.”

Seeking to block the election of Mamdani, a self-declared democratic socialist, Giuliani said he and his “undercover colleague Beau” were “trying to put together some kind of strategy.” He warned it was “a suicide mission” unless the opposition united behind a single candidate, noting that “right now there are two for sure against him—Curtis Sliwa, our candidate, and [Eric] Adams, kind of our candidate (chuckles), and [Andrew] Cuomo, maybe.”

Despite calling Cuomo “a total scoundrel,” Giuliani said, “I would take him in a second as mayor,” prompting

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem to agree. “I don’t even care if [Adams is] a crook,” Giuliani added. “He’s not a communist!”

“This is not an exaggerated problem,” Giuliani declared, referring to Trump’s statement yesterday. “I saw the president yesterday talking about it. ... You could see his face, he was like, ‘This is the first time we had a real communist, holy shit.’”

He added, “The guy’s really as bad as it looks. It’s not exaggerated. ... Somehow we got the combination of an Islamic extremist and a communist. For a great city ... they are so brainwashed they don’t know what the hell they are doing.”

Shortly after Giuliani condemned the more than half a million “brainwashed” New Yorkers who had the audacity to rank Mamdani high on their ballots, delivering him a decisive 12-point victory over Andrew Cuomo, another member of the council, Las Vegas attorney David Chesnoff, joined in the attacks.

Chesnoff, a well-connected criminal defense lawyer known for representing mobsters, poker players and celebrities, declared, “It’s amazing that you can have the Hezbollah flag being marched within shouting distance from where the towers fell...”

In a statement that amounted to a barely veiled threat of state retaliation, Chesnoff declared, “We have someone running for mayor in my favorite city that applauds the very same philosophy and the same people that did that, and I think we need to send a bigger message to the American public about the danger that it poses...”

By equating Mamdani with the perpetrators of the September 11, 2001 terror attacks, Chesnoff was not simply engaging in racist demagoguery—he was laying the ideological groundwork for criminalizing Mamdani’s political views and potentially subjecting him and his

supporters to state surveillance, harassment or worse.

In response, Noem said she “appreciated you being here with your legal mind too, because a lot of what we will be looking at is the Department of Homeland Security has authorities it has never utilized before.”

Noem added ominously, “So we have the ability to do things that have never been done before. And I will need some good minds on how to use those authorities in ways to better protect our country.” Her statement made clear that the reconstituted Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC) is an operational instrument of repression, actively planning how to wield untested legal and extralegal powers against perceived internal enemies—above all, socialist political opposition.

Noem’s threats to invoke Department of Homeland Security “authorities it has never utilized before” came the same day Trump escalated his daily attacks on Mamdani. In a post on his social media platform shortly after 8:30 a.m., Trump raged:

As President of the United States, I’m not going to let this Communist Lunatic destroy New York. Rest assured, I hold all the levers, and have all the cards. I’ll save New York City, and make it “Hot” and “Great” again, just like I did with the Good Ol’ USA!

At a Wednesday rally with union officials from the Hotel and Gaming Trades Council, 32BJ SEIU, the New York State Nurses Association, and the Central Labor Council—many of whom had backed Cuomo but were now pivoting to Mamdani after his primary win—the Democratic nominee was asked to respond to Trump’s threats, his name being raised as a national security threat at the HSAC meeting, and coordinated attacks on his citizenship by figures including Mayor Eric Adams.

Mamdani acknowledged the escalating danger, stating, “I had a Republican City Council member call for me to be deported. The mayor refused to denounce that as well. What concerns me is that we know these are threats that invite further threats by others. I have received death threats—against myself, and against my family.”

Mamdani claimed that he fights “for working people ... the same people that [Trump] said he was fighting for,” and argued that Trump targets him “because we know he would rather speak about me than speak about the legislation he is shepherding through D.C.”

In fact, Trump has been relentlessly promoting his massive spending package—combining border militarization, expanded military funding and sweeping tax cuts for the oligarchy. His attacks on Mamdani are not a “distraction” but a calculated effort to normalize the criminalization of opposition to the rule of the financial elite.

The hysterical reaction of the Trump administration expresses fear not over the policies advocated by Mamdani—which he is now quickly walking back as he curries favor with businesses—but over the growing mass popular opposition to inequality and dictatorship that lies behind Mamdani’s victory in the primaries.

The threats to denaturalize and deport US citizens are already being carried out by Trump’s Department of Justice. On June 30, National Public Radio reported that the DOJ “is aggressively prioritizing efforts to strip some Americans of their US citizenship,” confirming that the machinery of denaturalization is being reactivated as a weapon against immigrants and political opponents.

In the four-page memorandum issued on June 11 by Assistant Attorney General Brett Summit, more than a quarter of the document is devoted to the “prioritization of denaturalization” as a core function of the Justice Department.

The June 11 memorandum states that the “benefits of civil denaturalization include the government’s ability to revoke the citizenship of ... any individuals convicted of crimes who pose an ongoing threat to the United States.” It directs the Justice Department’s Civil Division to “prioritize and maximally pursue denaturalization proceedings in all cases permitted by law and supported by the evidence.”

In practice, as with Trump’s mass deportation program, the targets will not be violent criminals but political opponents of the regime. The memo outlines sweeping criteria for denaturalization, including “cases referred by a United States Attorney’s Office” or “any other cases referred to the Civil Division that the Division determines to be sufficiently important to pursue”—an open-ended standard that hands the state broad authority to strip citizenship from anyone deemed politically undesirable.



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