

Minority Leader Jeffries refuses to endorse NY mayoral candidate Mamdani amid deepening Democratic Party crisis

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On Sunday, in an appearance on CNN's *State of the Union* program, Democratic House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries refused to answer the question put to him several times by anchor Dana Bash as to why he has not endorsed the winner of the New York City Democratic mayoral primary election, Zohran Mamdani, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). He dodged the question, saying he was "engaged in a conversation" with Mamdani on a variety of topics.

To date, none of the leading national or state figures in the Democratic Party, including, besides Jeffries, New York senators Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand and Governor Kathy Hochul, have endorsed Mamdani. Gillibrand was recently forced to retract her statement that Mamdani's position on Palestine is "glorifying the slaughter of Jews."

The refusal to date of top national and state elected Democrats to endorse the party's candidate in the country's largest city, more than two months after the primary, is extraordinary. It is an expression of a deep crisis pervading the Democratic Party.

Mamdani, who refers to himself as a socialist and opposes the Gaza genocide, ran on a program of minor reforms, such as a freeze on rent increases on rent-regulated apartments, free bus service and universal childcare. He won the votes of hundreds of thousands of workers and young people, in a lopsided victory over former New York Governor Andrew Cuomo and other contenders.

The oligarchy that controls both big business parties demands that the next administration in New York impose sweeping austerity measures as state and federal funding for education and social programs evaporates.

Moreover, the Democratic Party has swung so far to the right since the Reagan era, working with Republicans to

redistribute the national income from the bottom to the top, gut social programs, and wage aggressive imperialist wars, that even nominal opposition to these policies sets off alarm bells. The oligarchic character of American society is such that the class of billionaires that dominates US politics is not willing to sanction even the most modest incursion into its members' fabulous fortunes.

Both Cuomo and the current mayor, Eric Adams, are running as independents against Mamdani, with varying degrees of support from ruling circles in the city and state. Both are trailing far behind Mamdani in the polls.

Mamdani's own reaction to this hostility has been to seek to accommodate himself to the billionaires. He held a well publicized meeting in July with the leading organization of the ruling class in the city, the Partnership for New York City. He has disavowed the phrase "globalize the intifada," and made a particular effort to show that he is a friend of the New York Police Department, distancing himself from the "defund the police" rhetoric of some sections of the DSA.

None of this is surprising. He is a member of the DSA, a faction of the Democratic Party that has oriented itself to American imperialism for decades and backed politicians such as New York Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders. Both of them worked overtime to support Joe Biden and then Kamala Harris in the 2024 elections, have voted for strikebreaking legislation, and have backed material and political support for the Zionist state, while supporting the imperialist war against Russia in Ukraine.

Another faction of Democrats believes that refusal to back Mamdani would be politically suicidal under conditions of hemorrhaging popular support for the Democratic Party. Polls show that despite mass hostility to Trump, support for the Democrats is at record lows.

This faction hopes as well that the DSA, a known political quantity, can help channel surging left-wing political opposition back behind the Democrats. Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren has campaigned with Mamdani, gushing with praise, and a *New York Times* op-ed last week revealed that former president Barack Obama called him shortly after his primary victory in June to give him encouragement.

In the last week, various media outlets have reported a comment on Obama's phone conversation by Reverend Al Sharpton: "It gives the sense that President Obama's world is comfortable with his candidacy. It normalizes him. It helps with the perception of some people that Mamdani is too radical. It sends a message that he is not unacceptable."

The *New York Times*—which has been somewhat favorable to Mamdani, though in the primary election it urged voters to support *anyone but* Mamdani—published an opinion piece that criticized the Democratic Party's short-sightedness. Ben Rhodes, former deputy national security adviser to Obama, wrote that the party should embrace Zohran Mamdani's strategy, which he called "an innovative example of fresh political tactics and policies."

Even some sections of the extremely wealthy, although a distinct minority, are prepared to back him with their lucre. Last Wednesday, the Mamdani campaign received a \$250,000 donation from Elizabeth Simons, the daughter of the billionaire hedge fund manager James Simons, who died in 2024.

Time magazine put Mamdani on its front cover, and the accompanying article began by saying that his campaign represented "an electrifying answer for a moribund party." The article made its political focus the assurance that Mamdani will compromise when in power, as he did when he was a state legislator. *Time* quoted Mamdani's former chief of staff and mayoral primary campaign manager Elle Bisgaard-Church: "'We've been guided by the principle that you put the stake as far to the left as possible—of course, within some reason, and grounded in the actual material stuff.'"

A more cautious opinion piece on Mamdani in the *Atlantic* warned that the DSA was not a homogenous organization and had in it "militant caucuses [that] wield considerable power on DSA's national committee."

This is a fundamentally incorrect assessment of the DSA, which has no leadership factions that pose a threat to the capitalist status quo. The so-called "left" of the organization is a pseudo-left amalgam of Stalinist, Pabloite and state-capitalist formations who long ago

proved their worth to the capitalist system and the Democratic Party.

What underlies this talk about "militant caucuses" in the DSA is fear of a mass rebellion of workers and youth from below that will escape the control of the Democratic Party and enable genuine socialists to gain a mass hearing.

The Democratic National Committee is preparing to contest the national 2026 midterm elections by adapting to the fascistic Republican Party's program, particularly its assault on immigrants, while downplaying Trump's police-state measures. As another anti-Mamdani opinion piece, published in *Newsweek*, put it: "Democrats would have a very difficult time distancing themselves from Mamdani as representative of what their party stands for."

It is this sentiment that Andrew Cuomo is banking on. Trailing Mamdani by over 20 points, the former New York governor has held a series of "policy briefings" with rich backers. The *Times*, which obtained a recording of one of these meetings, reported that Cuomo said "he believed President Trump would wade into the race for New York City mayor and help clear a path for his election," because "Trump himself, as well as top Republicans, will say the goal is to stop Mamdani."

The current mayor, Eric Adams, who is polling at the bottom of the candidates at seven percent, continues to spew out the crassest samples of the longtime ideological mainstay of the Democratic Party, identity politics.

Recent campaign fliers distributed in predominantly African American neighborhoods have accused Cuomo of a "long war on the Black and Brown Community: Undermined Carl McCall's 2002 run to become the first Black Governor; Stopped Charlie King's 2000 bid to become the first Black Attorney General; Sabotaged David Patterson [sic] the first Black Governor." Adams was forced to fire a campaign worker after she gave a reporter a potato chip bag with cash in it.



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