

Mamdani, Sanders and the fraud of “fighting the oligarchy” via the Democratic Party

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At an event Saturday that had the character of a changing of the guard, New York City mayoral candidate Zohran Mamdani joined Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders at the latest stop on the national “Fighting Oligarchy” tour, held at Brooklyn College.

For decades, Sanders, who turned 84 this week, has been at the forefront of efforts to shore up the Democratic Party, channeling mass anger over growing social inequality while promoting the lie that it can serve as a vehicle for improving the conditions of the working class. This included his two failed presidential campaigns in 2016 and 2020, in which he ultimately threw his support behind the pro-corporate candidacies of Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden.

At Saturday’s event, Mamdani—the 33-year-old “fresh face” of the Democratic Party’s so-called left wing and a frontrunner to become the next mayor of America’s largest city—showed that he is every bit as committed to the same fundamental political function as Sanders. Far from leading a fight to break the power of the oligarchy or resist Donald Trump’s developing dictatorship, Mamdani and Sanders are laying a political trap that will betray the aspirations of their supporters.

Nowhere was this more evident than in what was left unsaid on Saturday. In nearly 40 minutes of combined remarks, neither Mamdani nor Sanders explicitly mentioned Trump’s deployment of the National Guard in Washington, D.C. Both remained silent on his plans to expand military occupation to major urban centers, including New York, even after Trump issued a fascistic threat earlier that day to unleash the renamed “Department of War” on Chicago.

It was only at the very end of the program, when an audience member asked how Mamdani would respond to the National Guard entering New York, that the issue was even raised. Mamdani acknowledged the inevitability of Trump’s illegal deployment of troops, stating: “We have to be prepared, and we have to be clear-eyed. And we have to understand that it will take every single tool at our disposal.”

And what exactly are those “tools,” according to Mamdani? He pointed to California, saying: “We saw in

California the mayor of LA, the attorney general of the state, and the governor work together to fight back against the White House’s deployment of the National Guard. They filed a lawsuit. A federal judge just recently found in their favor.”

Mamdani continued: “I use this example because partnership is critically important in fighting back against Donald Trump. Can you imagine Andrew Cuomo working together with [New York Attorney General] Tish James and [Governor] Kathy Hochul to fight back against the deployment?”

Mamdani’s response amounts to a dangerous downplaying of the threat of dictatorship and a cover-up of the Democratic Party’s role in enabling Trump’s authoritarian measures. In California, the Democrats’ so-called “fight back” consisted primarily of asserting that the LAPD was fully capable of suppressing protests, a task they took up with no small amount of violence. Officers charged at protesters and journalists alike, assaulted them with rubber bullets, flashbangs and tear gas. Meanwhile, the mayor imposed a curfew to quell protests and protect Trump’s immigration Gestapo.

Since winning the primary, Mamdani has launched a charm offensive to court sections of the corporate and financial elite, highlighted by his demonstrations of loyalty to the NYPD. In recent weeks, he has met with police groups, said he would consider retaining the current NYPD chief and publicly distanced himself from earlier “abolish the police” rhetoric.

Mamdani’s plan to oppose Trump through “partnership” with New York Democrats—many of whom still refuse to endorse their party’s own primary victor—falsifies the record of their acquiescence. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, also from New York, struck a deal with Trump in March to finance the government, enabling massive cuts to social programs and laying the groundwork for dictatorship.

Governor Kathy Hochul likewise paved the way for Trump’s current National Guard deployment by doing the same in 2024, invoking the fraudulent pretext of fighting

subway crime, despite the fact that crime in the transit system was near historic lows by several measures. After the re-election of Trump, Hochul called the fascistic president to congratulate him on his victory and to have what she called a “productive” discussion.

In response to a question about defending immigrants from ICE abductions, Mamdani again stressed faith in the legal system. “One of the key things that we can do here in New York City is to actually start to provide legal representation to New Yorkers,” he said. “Just the mere act of having legal representation in that proceeding increases your likelihood to go home to your family by elevenfold.”

The bankruptcy of this strategy was underscored on Monday, when the Supreme Court allowed Trump to resume roving ICE raids in Los Angeles targeting anyone who speaks Spanish or appears Latino. Even if the courts were to consistently rule against Trump, Mamdani himself admitted, “We cannot try and convince ourselves that because something is illegal, Donald Trump will not do it.”

Another notable omission from Saturday’s speeches was the word “genocide.” This silence is especially striking as Israel, with full US backing, is currently accelerating the ethnic cleansing of Gaza through its assault on Gaza City. Unlike Sanders, Mamdani has in the past described events in Gaza as genocide. But throughout his campaign he has carefully shifted his language, seeking to tap into popular outrage at US-Israeli war crimes while signaling to the ruling class that he can be trusted.

This week, for instance, on Al Sharpton’s MSNBC program, Mamdani spelled out the pro-imperialist content of his rhetoric, saying he discourages the use of the slogan “globalize the intifada” because it might offend proponents of Zionism.

Following Sanders’ lead, Mamdani above all seeks to block the emergence of an independent struggle that mobilizes the power of the working class against inequality, dictatorship and war, working instead to contain it within the Democratic Party.

Supporters of the Socialist Equality Party campaigned among the 2,000 attendees at Saturday’s “Fighting Oligarchy” event, emphasizing the need to reject Mamdani’s and Sanders’ efforts to channel opposition back into the Democratic Party and sabotage a genuine fight against the oligarchy. They distributed hundreds of statements, which concluded:

These are serious times, and they demand serious politics. The capitalist oligarchy is carrying out a political and social counterrevolution in the United States. Every social gain won by the working class

over the past century is under attack. Medicare, Medicaid, and public education are being gutted; workplace deaths mount by the day; and an aggressive campaign against public health will sicken and kill millions.

The oligarchs who control the state have given their blessing to Trump’s presidential dictatorship. Immigrant families are being rounded up by paramilitary thugs, while the National Guard and active-duty troops occupy Washington, D.C. and prepare for deployment to other cities. Internationally, the ruling class is preparing for world war, seeking to reimpose colonial domination on the oppressed nations. Gaza is being razed, millions expelled or starved, as part of a broader war in the Middle East.

The fight against oligarchy and dictatorship is necessarily a fight against capitalism itself. It requires the independent mobilization of the working class, in the United States and internationally. It requires a complete break from the Democratic Party, which paved the way for Trump. And it requires the development of a genuine socialist leadership.

The Socialist Equality Party says openly what Sanders and Mamdani will not: Trump is implementing a fascist dictatorship, with the complicity of the Democrats, and only the working class, armed with a socialist program, can stop it. Do not let your opposition be misdirected or suffocated. Join the fight to build a real socialist movement of the working class. Study the lessons of history. Read the *World Socialist Web Site*. Take up the fight for socialism.



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