

New York City Mayor Mamdani prepares for austerity following NYPD raid against anti-ICE protesters

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On Wednesday, New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), announced in a special address to the public that the city faces a budget shortfall of \$12.6 billion over the next two fiscal years. A final budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2027 is due from the mayor's office by February 17. In recent years, the city's budget has been approximately \$115–\$120 billion.

"Today, we are going to be sharing the truth with New Yorkers that has sadly been hidden from them for far too long," Mamdani stated, blaming the previous administration of Eric Adams for a \$12 billion fiscal deficit—"at a scale that eclipses what we saw here in New York City during the Great Recession."

While claiming to "reject austerity politics" and insisting that "the excellence in public services our city depends on should not be sacrificed," Mamdani immediately raised the prospect of cuts to essential services, stating that "cuts to libraries, parks, and schools" are "last resort."

Mamdani added, "We will not balance the budget on the backs of working people while the wealthiest city in the wealthiest country in the world sees one in four of its residents living in poverty."

The day after his remarks rejecting austerity, Mamdani signed an executive order aimed at initiating spending cuts. The order established the position of Chief Savings Officer (CSO) within every city agency, to be filled by an existing senior employee. Each CSO has been tasked with delivering a plan to City Hall within 45 days outlining how to make their respective agencies "more efficient."

In announcing the order, Mamdani declared, "Delivering public goods requires public excellence. That means a government that respects New Yorkers by using every dollar wisely." Far from rejecting austerity, the

mayor is preparing to implement it through a rebranding of cuts as "efficiency." His declaration that CSOs will "take direct aim at waste" and "cut through bureaucracy" employs the standard language used to justify the slashing of jobs, wages and social services.

Publicly, Mamdani has pledged to address the deficit by "taxing the rich," though he has advanced no serious proposals in this direction. Aside from a symbolic gesture to defund a faulty city chatbot at a cost of \$500,000, his main proposals amount to mild adjustments that depend entirely on the support of the Democratic Party establishment at the state level. These include a 2 percent personal income tax surcharge on incomes over \$1 million, impacting roughly 34,000 filers, and an increase in the corporate tax rate from 7.25 to 11.5 percent on the most profitable companies, matching New Jersey's rate.

Together, these measures would extract only a fraction of the immense wealth hoarded by New York's ultra-rich, including 116 billionaires and more than 16,000 individuals with net worths exceeding \$30 million.

These proposals, however, depend entirely on the support of Democratic politicians in the state legislature and, above all, Democratic Governor Kathy Hochul, who has consistently opposed tax hikes on the wealthy.

In fact, far from confronting Hochul, Mamdani has privately assured her administration that he would "happily accept money she was willing to offer in lieu of raising taxes in her re-election year," according to a *New York Times* article published earlier this week.

"I think you pick your spots, and a win's a win," Rebecca Katz, a campaign ad consultant for Mamdani, told the *Times*. A person close to the mayor added that Mamdani is "intensely focused on policy victories rather than ideological fights"—a revealing admission that his performative rhetoric is subordinated to backroom deals

with the Democratic Party establishment.

In his remarks on Wednesday, Mamdani cited 2022 figures showing that the city sent \$68.8 billion to Albany but received only \$47.6 billion in return, creating a \$21.2 billion gap. He was, however, careful not to criticize Hochul.

Mamdani has met with some of the richest New Yorkers since his primary victory in June and has appointed dozens of officials from the Bloomberg, de Blasio, and Adams administrations—many of them deeply involved in school closures, budget cuts and the reopening of city services, including schools, during the pandemic. He has assembled an administration well prepared to implement austerity.

One of Mamdani's most significant actions was the reappointment of billionaire scion Jessica Tisch as NYPD Commissioner.

Tisch, a former Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications chief, is one of the principal architects of the city's mass surveillance infrastructure and predictive policing programs.

On Tuesday, the so-called Strategic Response Group (SRG)—the NYPD's heavily militarized counterterrorism and protest suppression unit, notorious for its brutal treatment of demonstrators—carried out mass arrests of peaceful protesters outside a Hilton Hotel in Manhattan, where ICE agents were reportedly being housed.

At a press conference later that day, Mamdani expressed support for the demonstrators but insisted that the NYPD would retain its “responsibility” to respond to protests. He attempted to square the circle by declaring that he aimed to “disband the SRG” by “decoupl[ing] the counterterrorism responsibilities from within the department to police responses to First Amendment activity.”

In practice, this means that the NYPD's “anti-terrorism” operations will continue—targeting anyone the department chooses to label a terrorist—and that any future police violence will simply be carried out by other units.

The most overt expression of Mamdani's prostration before and political integration into the capitalist establishment is his ongoing relationship with Donald Trump. Even as the Trump administration directs a nationwide campaign of ICE murders, violent repression of dissent, and a conspiracy to establish a presidential dictatorship, Mamdani maintains open lines of communication with the fascist president.

In an interview aired Sunday on ABC's *This Week*, Mamdani said he has “directly conveyed” his concerns

over ICE operations in Minneapolis to Trump. Mamdani called the actions of federal agents “horrific,” without addressing Trump's own responsibility.

He then declared that while he would oppose Trump if he pursued policies that “hurt” New York, “When the president is going to pursue policy to help the city, I'll embrace that opportunity for working together.”

He portrayed his relationship with Trump as pragmatic, stating: “It's less about the maintenance of a personal relationship, it's more about delivering for the people of the city.”

Mamdani did not explain how a president who operates nakedly in the interests of the financial oligarchy, who is overseeing the murder of immigrants and citizens alike, would “help” the population of New York or any other city.

On Thursday, Trump returned the favor. In a press briefing, he offered effusive praise for Mamdani, declaring, “I told everyone New York was being run into the ground. Now the new mayor is finding out exactly what I have said for years.” He continued, “Adams left a mess, but Zohran is finally being honest about how bad it really is. It's a smart political move. You always blame the guy before you. In this case, he's actually right—Adams was a disaster for that city.”

Mamdani's collaboration with Trump in November—when they held a closed-door meeting in the Oval Office—signaled to the political establishment that Mamdani could be trusted to “deliver” without challenging the underlying interests of capital.

Mamdani's relationship with Trump belies the DSA's posturing as a political alternative to the establishment. It reveals the real function of such “left” figures within the Democratic Party: to channel opposition into safe, controlled paths, while facilitating the implementation of the very policies they claim to oppose.



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