

Mamdani faces backlash after NYPD aids ICE at Brooklyn hospital

Elliott Murtagh
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Community members in the Bushwick neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York, spontaneously protested the presence of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers at Wyckoff Heights Medical Center last week.

In response, the New York Police Department (NYPD), overseen by police commissioner and billionaire heiress Jessica Tisch, attacked and arrested protesters, clearing the path for ICE operations. This collaboration between NYPD and ICE directly violates New York City's sanctuary laws and has led to a wave of denunciations of Mayor Zohran Mamdani.

According to reports, federal immigration agents brought Nigerian immigrant Chidozie Wilson Okeke to Wyckoff hospital for medical assistance for injuries sustained during ICE's violent arrest. In a video of the arrest that has circulated on social media, Okeke is tasered in his car and screams, "Somebody help me! They are killing me!"

Hundreds of residents gathered outside the hospital late Saturday night as word spread that ICE was preparing to remove Okeke. NYPD officers arrived in force, issued dispersal orders and moved against the crowd. Videos show a masked agent pepper-spraying protesters and police officers shoving demonstrators, throwing them to the ground, restraining them and clearing a path for federal agents to leave while dragging Okeke away in restraints. Nine protesters were arrested.

The hospital reportedly barred Alex Franco, an immigration and human rights lawyer contacted by Okeke's family, from entering the emergency room and speaking with their client. Franco told the *New York Times*, "They basically said that they had to medically clear the person, the detainee, before I was allowed access. And I explained to them, 'Look, I've done this before, show me where that policy is. Because as soon as he's discharged, ICE is going to take him away. So, you are essentially denying them the right to counsel.'"

In response to these events, Mamdani, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), told a press conference that there was no prior coordination between the

NYPD and ICE and framed the incident as merely a matter of public order. He said the NYPD was simply "responding to 911 calls regarding a protest outside the hospital" and that "our laws leave no room for interpretation about the fact that our NYPD will not participate in civil immigration enforcement." Mamdani thus denied the facts: The NYPD had actively facilitated the removal of an ICE detainee. Following Mamdani's logic, ICE only has to call 911 whenever they need the NYPD to secure an area to carry out ICE raids.

City Council member Sandy Nurse, who was at the protest, wrote on X that she witnessed "direct coordination between ICE and the NYPD, with officers cordoning off the ambulance bay to allow ICE to move the individual into their vehicles and leave." Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso also accused the police department of supporting a deportation operation: "escorting and supporting ICE as they brought the detainee into the car, helping them close the door to the car."

A group of "progressive" Democratic supporters of Mamdani, including Nurse, Reynoso, US Representative Nydia Velázquez, New York State Senator and DSA member Julia Salazar and City Council member Jennifer Gutiérrez issued a letter to the mayor stating that police "coordinated on the ground with ICE agents" and called for NYPD reforms. But rather than demanding that the mayor resist ICE raids in New York City, they wrote, "Officers arriving at a scene where federal agents are already operating cannot be left to improvise. They need a bright-line rule, communicated up and down the chain of command, that informs them when to disengage, when to step back, when to refuse a request for assistance and how to document what they observed."

It is noteworthy that *Politico* wrote the following about the letter: "The fact that Mamdani's elected supporters opted to call him out in such a direct way is a strong indication elements of his base are growing frustrated with his handling of public safety issues—and his perceived drift to the political center since entering City Hall."

Contrary to the Democrats' claims, however, the NYPD under Tisch is not improvising. The police officers' actions in Bushwick were not mistakes but the state policy of the ruling class. In December 2025, the NYPD deployed the notorious Strategic Response Group (Mamdani campaigned on the promise to disband the Strategic Response Group but did not) against a similar anti-ICE confrontation in Lower Manhattan. Police used force to clear a path for agents, violently assaulted and pepper-sprayed demonstrators and arrested 12 protesters before ICE retreated due to the protesters' effective human chains.

Following this episode, Mamdani released a video in which he feigned opposition to the ICE attack but told viewers not to "impede their [police] investigation, resist arrest or run." As we wrote at the time:

The essential political content of the video is, however, that the NYPD will arrest anyone who interferes with ICE operations. The intended audience of the video is the NYPD brass and the Trump administration. The video seeks to reassure them that a Mamdani government will uphold ICE operations in the city. It is worth noting that since Mamdani met with Trump in November, he has not posted a single item on social media criticizing Trump.

The pact between Trump and Mamdani has a concrete—and chilling—meaning: Mamdani will allow the work of the repressive apparatus of the state in the city, in this case primarily the NYPD, to continue unimpeded.

This is the significance of his reappointment of NYPD Commissioner Jessica Tisch, the pioneer of one of the most sinister mechanisms of repression aimed at the working class, the NYPD's mass surveillance tools.

Indeed, the response of both Mamdani and the pseudo-left Democratic officials who mildly criticize him makes clear that neither is waging any serious struggle against the Trump administration's vicious crackdown on immigrants but are rather managing its fallout.

Most recently, Trump's "border czar" Tom Homan warned that if New York state advances measures limiting cooperation with federal immigration authorities, the government will "flood" New York with "more ICE agents than you've ever seen before."

Mamdani campaigned on the promise to be "Donald Trump's worst nightmare" but instead has courted him and

openly crafted a cordial "partnership" with the fascist. Following Mamdani's second White House meeting with Trump, the WSWS wrote that this was "an act of treachery aimed at forging an alliance with the far right."

Mamdani's collaboration with Trump expresses the class character of his politics. And it must be stated plainly: these are the politics of the Democratic Socialists of America as a whole. Mamdani is not a rogue actor. He is the DSA's most prominent elected official, hailed by them as their greatest political success story. What Mamdani does in the Oval Office, the DSA does. His handshake with Trump is the DSA's handshake with Trump.

...The entire policy of Mamdani and the DSA is directed at disorienting and demobilizing the working class. Mamdani postured as the most militant opponent of Trump and everything he represented. He won votes and recruited members on the basis of these claims. Now, by pursuing backroom collaboration and accommodation, he is working to turn that mobilized anger into demoralization—encouraging the conclusion that "everyone is the same" and that opposition is futile.

Workers, immigrants and youth rightly see ICE as an armed instrument of state terror. Mamdani and the pseudo-left speak the language of sanctuary while preserving a police apparatus that collaborates with federal agents and suppresses popular opposition. The struggle against deportations, police violence and authoritarianism cannot be waged through appeals for cosmetic NYPD reform or pressure on the Democratic Party. What is required is the independent political mobilization of the working class—uniting workers, immigrants and youth in a common struggle against ICE, the capitalist state, war and dictatorship.



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