Mamdani praises New York police amid 2 fatal shootings

John Conrad
7 September 2026

New York City police officers shot and killed two emotionally disturbed individuals last week. Neither killing has prompted a word of protest from Democratic New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani, the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) member who was swept into office by politically radicalized workers and young people looking for an alternative to the capitalist system.

Presenting himself as a rebel against the Democratic Party establishment, Mamdani promised to implement social reforms and rein in the police.

But within hours of the second shooting last week, Mamdani was on social media defending the police who gunned down the victim, while he and New York Governor Kathy Hochul devoted their public energies to denouncing the Trump administration for withholding police funding.

On the afternoon of August 31, a 49-year-old Queens woman, Pamela Cisneros, stabbed two people in Times Square. Cisneros had struggled with serious mental illness for decades and had a documented mental health history with the New York Police Department (NYPD). She pulled two kitchen knives from a plastic shopping bag and used them to kill one victim and injure another. At least 10 officers surrounded her and demanded that she drop the knives. One officer deployed a taser that failed to incapacitate Cisneros. When the woman shuffled toward the police, waving the knives, an officer shot her in the abdomen.

The second killing came early Friday morning, September 4, on the Brooklyn Bridge. Forty-one-year-old Bronx resident Chaun Bottom, a welder unemployed for the last five years, had climbed the bridge cables while holding a knife. He told the police: “I want to die. I want you to kill me.” Officers reportedly spent an hour trying to talk him down. When he descended the cables toward them, they shot him. He was pronounced dead at Bellevue Hospital.

In the department’s own words, both were “EDPs”—emotionally disturbed persons—a category that has defined many of the NYPD’s deadliest encounters for generations. Last week’s killings were the latest entries in an extensive record of NYPD murders of mentally ill individuals: Eleanor Bumpurs in 1984, Gidone Busch in 1999, Deborah Danner in 2016, Saheed Vassell in 2018, Win Rozario in 2023. According to the NYPD’s own official account, 48 people were shot and killed by New York police between 2020 and 2024.

This policy is now Mamdani’s. In January, Jabez Chakraborty, a 23-year-old Queens resident, was shot at least four times in his own home after his family called 911 for an ambulance because he was having a mental health crisis. Mamdani praised the officers who shot him, writing on X: “I’m grateful to the first responders who put themselves on the line each day to keep our communities safe.” Chakraborty survived the gunshot wounds and is now being charged by the Queens District Attorney with attempted assault and criminal possession of a weapon.

Mamdani has been silent on the murder of Cisneros. His statement on the killing of Bottom reads like an NYPD press release. He praised officers for working “to de-escalate,” emphasized that Bottom “threatened the officers,” and concluded that the shooting would be reviewed internally.

One day after the killing of Cisneros and three days before the fatal shooting of Bottom, Mamdani stood at a Bronx police roll call beside NYPD Commissioner Jessica Tisch—the billionaire heiress who built the NYPD’s mass-surveillance apparatus and oversaw the violent crackdown on Gaza genocide protests—to tout the department’s crime statistics. The DSA mayor declared that “the NYPD worked around the clock to keep New York City safe” and gushed that he was “grateful for their service today and every day.”

The Bronx is the poorest borough in New York City. According to a report by the New York University Furman Center, the median household income is around $41,000, and the poverty rate is 28 percent to 31 percent. In a city where a $100,000 annual income is necessary for a single individual to live “comfortably,” the Furman Center’s numbers likely underestimate the level of economic distress.

Bronx neighborhoods are subjected to some of the worst police violence in the city. According to a report by the New York City Comptroller’s office released at the end of last year, two Bronx police precincts had hundreds of excessive force complaints. In January of this year, a Bronx man on his way home with food for his young son was thrown off his moped scooter by police and brutally beaten.

On the same day that Mamdani lavished praise on this police force, he joined Governor Kathy Hochul, a right-wing Democrat, to denounce Trump for withholding $87 million in federal counterterrorism funds—money for police bomb squads, intelligence operations, and surveillance. “Donald Trump is defunding the police,” Hochul declared, demanding that Trump “release the $87 million you owe us.” Mamdani said, “At the very moment we should be strengthening the systems that protect New Yorkers, the federal government is walking away from that responsibility.”

These statements further reveal the true character of the Democratic Party, responsible for the militarization of police across the country. In the summer of 2020, some Democratic politicians briefly mouthed the slogan “defund the police” to contain massive protests over the police murder of George Floyd. Under attack from Republicans and from within their own party, they abandoned the slogan within weeks of the protests subsiding.

Now the Democrats are completing the circle, wielding the slogan

© World Socialist Web Site

against Trump. The Democrats, Mamdani included, are never happier than when they can solidarize themselves openly with the police, the intelligence agencies and the national security state and attack the Republicans from the right.

Mamdani campaigned on reining in the NYPD, notorious for its brutality towards workers and poor people. But from the moment of his election, he moved to reassure the financial oligarchy that nothing fundamental would change under a DSA administration. A clear signal was his announcement that he would retain Tisch as police commissioner. Since then he has repeatedly praised Tisch's "success" in bringing down crime rates. The Mamdani administration has remained silent on a lawsuit challenging the integration of some 18,000 public housing security cameras into the NYPD's Domain Awareness System.

Meanwhile, the same Trump administration that Hochul denounces for "defunding the police" has escalated its Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids across the city. Fascistic Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin announced on September 1 that ICE had arrested more than 2,100 people in New York City in a month-long "Operation Rotten Apple" and threatened to send still more federal agents into the streets.

Apart from a few tepid words about "sanctuary" policies, Mamdani and Hochul have not lifted a finger to defend immigrants, while Mamdani has boasted of his "partnership" with Trump and met with him twice in the Oval Office. Last month, when Trump and the Supreme Court stripped 350,000 Haitian immigrants of their Temporary Protected Status, Mamdani fired Haitian city employees who had lost their TPS.

Wall Street and the financial oligarchy that control New York and both capitalist parties are well aware that an explosive conflict with the powerful New York working class is coming. The DSA administration, for all its left rhetoric, is an instrument of that oligarchy. It is no less frightened and no less determined to shore up the state forces of repression, beginning with the police.

New York is a social powder keg, the most unequal city in America. It is home to more billionaires than any other city on earth, alongside mass poverty and endemic homelessness. Wall Street bonuses alone reached a record $49.2 billion last year. Workers across industries have seen their wages being devoured by the cost of living in one of the most expensive cities in the world. The class contradictions are sharpening by the day, and the DSA-Mamdani administration, whipped into line by its capitalist masters, is attacking the workers and intensifying the class tensions.

Last month, the administration reversed its pledge to support a $10,000 one-time bonus for paraprofessional school aides, among the most poorly paid and brutally exploited workers in the city. Mamdani went to court to block City Council legislation mandating the bonus. He claimed it was illegal because it violated the Taylor Law, which he touted as a boon to workers. This law is a vicious piece of anti-labor legislation that bans strikes and docks the pay of public sector workers who defy it. It has been used to break strikes by New York teachers and jail teacher union leaders.

When 3,500 Long Island Rail Road workers struck in May, Mamdani's public statements directed positive attention to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's strikebreaking shuttle buses. In January, his administration oversaw the arrest of 13 striking nurses. He has slashed school and homeless programs, deferred city pension contributions, delayed the state mandate to reduce school class sizes, reneged on free bus service and created a government commission to prepare permanent austerity.

The actions of the Mamdani administration expose the bankruptcy of the political perspective of the DSA. The DSA is not a socialist organization. It is a faction of the Democratic Party, which is itself a key institution of the capitalist state apparatus. Its function is to channel the leftward movement of workers and youth back into the dead-end of capitalist politics and to block the emergence of an independent movement of the working class. Toward this end it integrates itself into both the Democratic Party and the pro-capitalist trade union bureaucracy.

The DSA represents privileged upper-middle-class layers who want a larger share of the oligarchy's loot extracted from the working class. It is hostile to and fearful of the working class.

For its part, the oligarchy is not only opposed to granting even the most minimal social reforms, it is determined to dismantle all the previous social concessions extracted by the working class from the capitalists—including Medicare and Social Security. This is incompatible with democratic forms of rule, which is why the Trump administration, with the complicity of the Democrats, is erecting a presidential dictatorship.

The acute and worsening crisis of American capitalism—exacerbated by the wars in Iran and Ukraine, the exploding national debt and weakening dollar, the radicalization of workers and youth and the growing wave of strikes—is expressed with particular sharpness in New York. It is bringing the movement of the working class into head-on collision with the Mamdani administration. The ruling class requires an intensification of state repression, and Mamdani complies.

Only the independent industrial and political movement of the working class in direct opposition to both capitalist parties can answer police murders, escalating war, austerity, the assault on immigrants, and dictatorship. The working class of New York must build its own organizations—rank-and-file committees in every workplace and neighborhood—and the political leadership, the Socialist Equality Party, that fights for the socialist transformation of society.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site