Mamdani “disbands” NYPD’s Strategic Response Group, keeps its protest-policing role under a new name

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New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani announced Monday that his administration is “disbanding” the New York Police Department’s (NYPD) Strategic Response Group (SRG), the militarized unit notorious for brutalizing left-wing protesters. “I am disbanding the SRG,” Mamdani declared in a video with Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) Councilmember Chi Ossé, presenting the move as the fulfillment of a core campaign promise.

In reality, it is an exercise in political fraud. It is designed to provide a “free speech” cover for the continued police repression of the working class as the class struggle escalates.

Under the plan, the SRG’s counterterrorism functions, including heavy-weapons deployments, will be transferred to the NYPD’s Intelligence and Counterterrorism Bureau. Its crowd-control functions will go to a new Patrol Support Division (PSD) within the Patrol Services Bureau, staffed by what the mayor’s office calls “vetted officers” who will spend most of their time on patrol and receive specialized crowd-management training. According to City Hall, they may make arrests at demonstrations “in rare instances.”

Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch said the SRG’s roughly 500 officers will be reassigned before next spring, many of them to the Counterterrorism Bureau. That bureau’s deputy commissioner, Rebecca Weiner, named the “far-left” among the city’s terrorist threats at a press conference alongside Mamdani in September.

The PSD will accompany a “First Amendment Support Team” (FAST), a unit of 30 armed police officers within the Community Affairs Bureau with “specialized training in communication and de-escalation.” FAST and PSD will respond to protests until a “Community Dialogue and De-escalation Division” (CDDD) within the mayor’s Office of Community Safety, staffed by unarmed civilians, is established. But this unit will not be operational until 2028 at the earliest, and FAST will remain in place even after CDDD is operational.

Mamdani also announced a ban on the use of tear gas, pepper spray, sound or acoustic devices exceeding 90 decibels, bicycles, and kettling tactics against demonstrations. He endorsed a City Council bill, the CURB Act sponsored by Ossé, that would codify many of the changes into law and purport to bar any future mayor from reconstituting the SRG.

Most revealing, Tisch, the billionaire heiress who has long defended the SRG, endorsed the changes. As recently as March, she told the City Council that her discussions with Mamdani were “not to disband” the unit. In Monday’s joint statement with the mayor, she declared, “I would never support changes that diminish the NYPD’s ability to protect New Yorkers, or that put our officers in a position where they lack the resources necessary to confront a serious threat.”

Appearing beside Mamdani in an exclusive Eyewitness News interview aired Monday, Tisch told ABC7’s N.J. Burkett that “nothing would change about the way that the NYPD responds to crowd control conditions,” citing the celebrations after the Knicks’ championship. “And so New Yorkers can expect in crowd control type situations to see the very same response that they are accustomed to,” she said.

According to ABC7, Tisch said the change would not affect how the NYPD responds to civil disorder. Asked whether the plan was a compromise, she replied, “No, I would never compromise on security for New Yorkers.”

According to criminal justice advocates briefed on the plan, Tisch demanded the creation of the PSD as the price of her support for disbanding the SRG.

The Police Benevolent Association (PBA) denounced even these cosmetic changes. “Mayor Mamdani is showing his true colors: he’s willing to put your safety and police officers’ safety at risk to appease his radical base,” fascistic PBA President Patrick Hendry said. “So the next time your life is disrupted by demonstrators who are blocking bridges and roadways or causing chaos on our streets, remember: Mayor Mamdani is on their side, not yours.” Whatever the name of the unit, this is the attitude of the police toward protesters.

The plan does not disband the SRG. It renames it. The unit was created in 2015 under Mayor Bill de Blasio and the *World Socialist Web Site* warned at the time that the new militarized force was the ruling elite’s preparation for class struggle. In the decade since, the SRG has been the spearhead of police violence against left-wing demonstrations, including the violent

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raids on the Columbia University pro-Palestinian encampment protest and the assault on protesters who thwarted an ICE raid in Chinatown last November.

Mamdani pledged during his campaign to disband the unit. Instead, he kept it running for 10 months.

In May, when about 200 people gathered outside a Brooklyn hospital to stop ICE agents from taking away Nigerian immigrant Chidozie Wilson Okeke, the NYPD arrested eight protesters and, local officials charged, cleared a path for the federal agents.

On September 24, police arrested more than 100 protesters near the United Nations, Ossé among them, who were demanding the arrest of wanted war criminal Benjamin Netanyahu as he addressed the General Assembly. Last month, the SRG was deployed against protesters after ICE agents shot immigrant worker Oscar Belgal in front of his 5-year-old son in the Marble Hill neighborhood of upper Manhattan.

When workers and youth demanded that Tisch be fired after the Belgal shooting, Mamdani replied, "Jessica Tisch is the police commissioner. I have no plans to change that."

The deployments of the SRG are part of a broader police policy overseen by Mamdani and Tisch. The NYPD has continued "broken windows" policing in all but name: the harassment and criminalization of the poor for "quality-of-life offenses" that has defined the department since the Giuliani era. According to the city's Mayor's Management Report, the NYPD issued 220,802 quality-of-life summonses in fiscal year 2026, an increase of 13 percent. This is a policy Mamdani pledged to reverse.

In a statement released on social media Monday, the New York City chapter of the DSA (NYC-DSA) declared, "the SRG has been disbanded." It continued:

> The administration's creation of a civilian dialogue unit within the Office of Community Safety (OCS) is a historic step toward a different approach to public safety…We welcome the administration's proposed guardrails, but we will remain watchful and urge the administration to maintain aggressive oversight. We cannot allow the SRG to return under a different name.

This is in fact what is happening, with the DSA's stamp of approval. The essential function of the DSA, of which Mamdani is a leading representative, is to provide a left cover for the operations of the capitalist state.

On November 14, the NYC-DSA held its biennial citywide convention where it urged strike-breaker Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to run for president and endorsed Mamdani's agenda of austerity and police repression.

The SRG announcement is of a piece with Mamdani's broader political function. In the aftermath of the popular repudiation of the White House fascist in the midterm elections, Mamdani described his relationship with Trump as "productive." The mayor who campaigned as an opponent of the fascist president now boasts of his collaboration with the would-be dictator.

This is the same Mamdani who has spent his first months in office reassuring Wall Street, reneging on his promise of free bus service, endorsing Governor Kathy Hochul while she supported scabs during a nurses' strike, firing Haitian municipal workers, invoking the anti-worker Taylor Law to block a bonus for the city's poverty-wage-earning paraprofessionals, and meeting regularly with Trump. As the WSWS has documented extensively, Mamdani's administration represents fundamental continuity with his predecessors, not a break.

Confronted with a growth of workers' struggles and increasing popular hostility to the city administration's pro-Wall Street policy, Mamdani and the DSA have concocted this political fraud to confuse and mislead the millions of workers and youth looking for a fighting political perspective and program against police repression, inequality, attacks on democratic rights and imperialist war.

The SRG, its replacements and the rest of the NYPD are instruments of the same class rule. They are "bodies of armed men," in Lenin's phrase, maintained to defend the property and interests of the capitalist class against the working class. No reorganization of the NYPD will protect democratic rights. That requires the independent political mobilization of the working class, organized in rank-and-file committees and in an independent socialist party, against both capitalist parties and the state they jointly administer.



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