



U.S. NEWS

Top Justice Department official orders prosecutors to drop charges against New York Mayor Eric Adams



1 of 3 | New York City Mayor Eric Adams speaks during a press conference at City Hall, Wednesday, Feb. 5, 2025, in New York. A top official at the U.S. Department of Justice has ordered federal prosecutors to drop charges against New York Mayor Eric Adams and halt the ongoing investigation. (AP)

BY [JAKE OFFENHARTZ](#), ALANNA DURKIN RICHER AND [ERIC TUCKER](#)

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NEW YORK (AP) — The Justice Department on Monday ordered federal prosecutors to drop corruption charges against [New York City Mayor Eric Adams](#), arguing in a remarkable departure from long-standing norms that the case was interfering with the mayor's ability to aid the president's crackdown on illegal immigration.

In a two-page memo obtained by The Associated Press, acting Deputy Attorney General Emil Bove told prosecutors in New York that they were "directed to dismiss" the bribery charges against Adams

immediately.

Bove said the order was not based on the strength of evidence in the case, but rather because it had been brought too close to Adams reelection campaign and was distracting from the mayor's efforts to assist in the [Trump administration's law-and-order priorities](#).

"The pending prosecution has unduly restricted Mayor Adams' ability to devote full attention and resources to the illegal immigration and violent crime," Bove wrote.

The memo also ordered prosecutors in New York not to take "additional investigative steps" against the Democrat until after November's mayoral election, though it left open the possibility that charges could be refiled after that following a review.

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The intervention and reasoning — that a powerful defendant could be too occupied with official duties to face accountability for alleged crimes — marked an extraordinary deviation from long-standing Justice Department norms.

Public officials at the highest level of government are routinely investigated by the Justice Department, including President Donald Trump during his first term, without prosecutors advancing a claim that they should be let off the hook to attend to government service.

An attorney for Adams, Alex Spiro, said the Justice Department's order had vindicated the mayor's claim of innocence. "Now, thankfully, the mayor and New York can put this unfortunate and misguided prosecution behind them," said Spiro, who has also represented Elon Musk.

A spokesperson for the acting U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York, Danielle Sassoon, declined to comment. The case against Adams was brought under the previous U.S. attorney for the district, Damien Williams, who stepped down before Trump became president.

The memo follows months of speculation that Trump would take steps to end the case against Adams, who was charged in September with accepting bribes of free or discounted travel and illegal campaign contributions from foreign nationals seeking to buy his influence.

Adams, a Democrat elected on a centrist platform, has moved noticeably right following his indictment, rankling some within his own party.

Rather than restricting cooperation with Immigration and Customs Enforcement, as Adams once

promised, he has expressed a willingness to roll back the city's so-called sanctuary policies and pledged not to publicly criticize a president whose policies he once described as "abusive."

In recent weeks, he implied that Trump's agenda would be better for New York than former President Joe Biden's.

Several of the mayor's opponents in the Democratic mayoral primary claimed Monday that Adams had agreed to do Trump's bidding because he hoped for leniency.

"Instead of standing up for New Yorkers, Adams is standing up for precisely one person," said Brad Lander, the city's comptroller and a mayoral challenger.

Zohran Mamdani, a state assemblymember who is also running for mayor, called for an investigation into whether Adams "cut any kind of deal with the Trump administration that involves breaking city law."

Trump, who was convicted last year of falsifying business records to cover up a hush money payment, has previously expressed solidarity with Adams. He hinted at the possibility of a pardon in December, telling reporters that the mayor had been "treated pretty unfairly."

He had also claimed, without offering evidence, that Adams was being persecuted for criticizing former President Joe Biden's policies on immigration.

"I know what it's like to be persecuted by the DOJ, for speaking out against open borders," Trump said in October at a Manhattan event attended by Adams. "We were persecuted, Eric. I was persecuted, and so are you, Eric."

The prosecutors in New York had noted that the investigation into Adams began before he began feuding with Biden over migrant funding.

Still, Bove, in his memo, echoed some of Trump's and Adams' claims about politicization.

"It cannot be ignored that Mayor Adams criticized the prior Administration's immigration policies before the charges were filed,"

The criminal case against Adams involves allegations that he accepted illegal campaign contributions and lavish travel perks worth more than \$100,000 — including expensive flight upgrades, luxury hotel stays and even a trip to a bathhouse — while serving in his previous job as Brooklyn Borough president.

The indictment said a Turkish official who helped facilitate the trips then leaned on Adams for favors, at one point asking him to lobby the Fire Department to allow a newly constructed, 36-story diplomatic building to open in time for a planned visit by Turkey's president.

Prosecutors also said they had evidence of Adams personally directing campaign staffers to solicit foreign donations, then disguising those contributions in order to qualify for a city program that provides a generous, publicly-funded match for small dollar donations. Foreign nationals are banned from contributing to U.S. election campaigns under federal law.

As recently as Jan. 6, prosecutors had indicated their investigation remained active, writing in court papers that they continued to "uncover additional criminal conduct by Adams."

The task of carrying out the order to dismiss the case will fall to Sassoon, who assumed job the day after Trump took office. Her role was intended to be temporary. Trump in November nominated Jay Clayton, the former chairman of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, to the post, an appointment that must be confirmed by the Senate.

Federal agents had also been investigating other senior Adams aides. Prior to the mayor's indictment, federal authorities seized phones from a police commissioner, schools chancellor, multiple deputy mayors and the mayor's director of Asian Affairs. Each of those officials denied wrongdoing but have since resigned.

In December, Adams' chief adviser and closest confidant, Ingrid Lewis-Martin, was [indicted](#) by a state prosecutor — the Manhattan district attorney — on charges that she and her son accepted \$100,000 in bribes related to real estate construction projects.

Durkin Richer and Tucker reported from Washington.



JAKE OFFENHARTZ

Offenhartz is a general assignment reporter in the New York City bureau of The Associated Press.



ALANNA DURKIN RICHER

Richer is an Associated Press reporter covering the Justice Department and legal issues from Washington.



ERIC TUCKER

Tucker covers national security in Washington for The Associated Press, with a focus on the FBI and Justice Department and the special counsel cases against former President Donald Trump.



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