

Transcript: Mayor Adams Delivers Remarks at National Faith Leaders Response to Mass Killings

May 31, 2022

Mayor Eric Adams: Well, you know, I just keep remembering that reading somewhere, “If my people would turn towards me and pray, I will heal the land.” I think there is a real erosion of some of the basic principles that made us who we are and during my most turbulent and difficult times in life, I turn towards prayer and faith, and I believe we are there again. I think what we’re facing did not happen overnight. I think it is just a complete dismantling of the things that are needed to raise healthy children and families.

Mayor Adams: And I say over and over again there must be an intervention and prevention. A prevention, those are the long term things that we must do and allocate funding too. Something like dyslexia screening — we’re doing 100% dyslexia screening in the City of New York. 30% of our inmates in prison are dyslexic. We’re looking at mental health. We’re leaning into our foster care children that age out every year at 21 with no support and end up in the criminal justice system. We want to be really proactive and prevent. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu states, we spend a lifetime pulling people out of the river. No one goes upstream and prevents them from falling in in the first place. We want to take our city upstream.

Mayor Adams: But there is intervention. An intervention means properly funding our Crisis Management Teams, give them the resources to go on the ground and talk with our young people who are on a pathway. The profiles are just similar. They’re the same things when you look at the shooters and those who are acting in some violent way. It is the same profiles when we do our analysis. And we also want to make sure we use our existing agencies. Our Department of Probation now is partnering with every young person who is arrested for a violent act, they are partnering with them and treating them as mentors and giving them the wraparound support that they need.

Mayor Adams: But we need Congress to do more. There is a real problem with the over-proliferation of guns in the inner city. Number one, the Supreme Court ruling that is about to come out is alarming for all of us. The right to carry is frightening. The thought that in cities that have had great gun laws, you're now going to open it up, where people are going to have the right to openly carry in our cities. That's something we should be alarmed about.

Mayor Adams: The recent law that stood up in the court by Zellnor Myrie, in Brooklyn, that allows us now to sue reckless gun manufacturers, everyone should become familiar with the law so they can look at their cities and figure out doing lawsuits to target these gun manufacturers. But we also need the power of prayer. I am hoping that we will mobilize during Gun Awareness Month, I like to call it, that every house of worship this weekend will hold a sermon on what we must do in Washington, in our state levels, and in our cities. And biblical texts really support how we should make sure this is done in all of our texts of worship, of the Quran, in any other books that we look at, we talk about what we should be doing.

Mayor Adams: And I'm hoping that we use this weekend to have a national call that this weekend during Gun Violence Awareness Month, with the first weekend, to really send a signal out across the entire country that we are focusing on this crucial issue. I heard the story of Milwaukee, it's no different than the story right in Manhattan, or the story of Chicago or Atlanta, these are the same stories that we hear over and over again. Too many people are using guns to answer the pains that they are experiencing. So we are going to do our law enforcement arm, it's unfortunate that it took 2,900 off the streets since I've been the mayor. We're going to do that. That's the intervention, and we have to focus on that, but it would be an endless flow if we don't have a prevention mechanism in place at the same time.

Mayor: And so I thank you for allowing me to come on, and I thank you for coming and taking on this issue. This is the civil rights battle of our lifetime, dealing with how guns are destroying, not only individuals, but is destroying the anatomy of our cities and our communities. And even when a bullet hits the target, it does not stop ripping apart the body of the families and loved ones and the communities that are impacted by the laws and are traumatized. We want to work together. New York is a strong believer in how do we build collaborations and we look forward to that collaboration. Pastor Monroe has been leading here in the city for us and we want to continue to take the orders from Pastor Monroe and those of you who are on this call. Again, thank you so much for being part of this conversation.

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