



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10007

EXECUTIVE ORDER No. 61

December 2, 2025

PROTECTING NEW YORKERS' RIGHTS TO FREE EXERCISE OF RELIGION, FREEDOM
OF SPEECH, AND PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

WHEREAS, the First Amendment to the United States Constitution protects the right to the free exercise of religion, the right to freedom of speech, and the right to assemble peacefully; and

WHEREAS, the City has a significant interest in keeping public spaces safe and free of congestion;

WHEREAS, the City of New York is home to thousands of houses of worship that represent myriad religions and faiths, and which coexist peaceably and add to the diverse fabric of the City; and

WHEREAS, at times, houses of worship are targets of protests and other actions that can disrupt congregants' ability to freely exercise their chosen religion and threaten the public safety of worshipers and surrounding neighbors; and

WHEREAS, federal, state, and local laws have been enacted to ensure access to houses of worship to safeguard protected speech and religious exercise while maintaining the right to assemble and protest peaceably; and

WHEREAS, the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act of 1994, 18 U.S. Code § 248, prohibits intentionally injuring, intimidating, or interfering with, or attempting to injure, intimidate, or interfere with, by force, threat of force, or physical obstruction, any person exercising or seeking to exercise the First Amendment right of religious freedom at a place of religious worship; and

WHEREAS, section 240.70 of the New York State Penal Law provides that intentionally injuring, intimidating or interfering with another person because such person exercised, or sought to exercise, their right to engage in religious freedom at a place of religious worship constitutes a misdemeanor; and

WHEREAS, section 240.21 of the New York State Penal Law provides that disrupting or

disturbing a religious service constitutes a misdemeanor; and

WHEREAS, many houses of worship host activities that, while not directly connected to worship services, provide a community service and facilitate protected speech and assembly that are vital to communities across the City of New York; and

WHEREAS, houses of worship are sometimes sites of protest, at times leading to worshipers and other community members who avail themselves of services and fellowship offered by houses of worship feeling threatened when exercising their own Constitutional rights of freedom of speech, assembly, and religion; and

WHEREAS, this Administration recognizes the need to protect houses of worship at all times while preserving the rights of New Yorkers who seek to voice their opinions through peaceful protest;

NOW, THEREFORE, by the power vested in me as Mayor of the City of New York, it is hereby ordered:

Section 1. The Police Commissioner, in coordination with the Law Department, is directed to review the New York City Police Department's (NYPD) patrol guide and legal guidance in an effort to ensure that they provide clear guidance for protection of both houses of worship and persons exercising their rights to free assembly and free speech near houses of worship. Such review shall include, but not be limited to:

- a. Consideration of federal, state, and local laws regulating protests at houses of worship, reproductive health facilities, private residences and other sites; and
- b. Consideration of existing legal constraints on policing demonstrations and large gatherings, including, but not limited to, peaceful protests; and
- c. Evaluation of proposals for regulation of protest activity occurring close to houses of worship, including, but not limited to, the following:
 - i. Establishment of zones where protest activities would be prohibited or regulated within an area of at least 15 feet and up to 60 feet from the entrance to a house of worship, or zones outside of houses of worship where protest activities are allowed;
 - ii. Establishment of additional restrictions on protest activities that would be applicable during publicly-scheduled religious services;
 - iii. Establishment of appropriate limitations on protest activities outside of houses of worship during non-religious activities to protect the speech and assembly rights of community members who make use of houses of worship.

§ 2. The review required by this order shall be conducted to ensure compliance with the constitutions of the United States and the State of New York, and federal, state, and local laws.

§ 3. This Order shall take effect immediately.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Adams", written over a horizontal line.

Eric Adams
Mayor