

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

P.O. BOX 750 • MADISON, WI 53701 • (608) 256-8900 • WWW.FFRF.ORG

February 23, 2026

The Honorable Zohran Mamdani
Mayor of the City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Re: Unconstitutional Religious Observance with City Employees

Dear Mayor Mamdani:

I am writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) regarding serious constitutional concerns raised by your participation in and promotion of a religious observance with city employees. FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with 42,000 members across the country, including more than 2,100 members in New York. Our purposes are to protect the constitutional principle of separation between state and church, and to educate the public on matters relating to nontheism.

On February 22, 2026, you posted on your official New York City Mayor's X account photos and commentary showing you participating in suhoor with Department of Sanitation workers.¹ The post includes an image of you appearing to engage in prayer alongside city employees.

While you are fully entitled to practice your religion in your personal capacity, the Constitution prohibits government officials from promoting or participating in religious exercise in their official capacity. When a mayor joins a religious observance with municipal employees and publicizes that participation through official government communication channels, it conveys governmental alignment with a particular faith.

We respectfully request that you remove the February 22 post from your official account and refrain from using your position as mayor to engage in or promote religious observances with city employees in an official capacity in the future.

City employees are subordinate to elected leadership. Even if participation is described as voluntary, the inherent power imbalance between a mayor and municipal workers creates a risk of implicit coercion. Public employees should never be placed in a position where they may feel pressured to participate in, or appear supportive of, a religious exercise occurring while they are on the job to maintain favor or avoid disapproval.

As a government official, you are tasked with upholding the Constitution of the United States—including the Establishment Clause. New York City serves a religiously diverse population that includes people of many faiths as well as those who are nonreligious.² Government neutrality requires that officials neither favor nor disfavor religion. Promoting religious observance through official accounts needlessly alienates constituents and employees who do not share the same beliefs. The fact that a religious viewpoint may

¹ <https://x.com/NYCMayor/status/2025695027322659125>.

² <https://www.pewresearch.org/religious-landscape-study/metro-area/new-york-city-ny/>.

represent a minority faith does not diminish the constitutional prohibition on governmental promotion of religion.

Government officials may worship and express their religious beliefs in their personal capacities. They may not use the machinery, prestige, or platforms of a public office to advance or highlight religious exercise. Your elected office belongs to the people of New York City, not to any particular religion.

We respectfully urge you to ensure that future engagements with city departments remain secular in nature and that official government resources and platforms are not used to promote or highlight religious exercise.

Please inform us in writing of the steps you will take to address this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Chris Line". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Christopher Line
Legal Counsel
Freedom From Religion Foundation

Enclosure

