

Benesch White Collar Attorney Shaneeda Jaffer on Scripps News: Indictment of NYC Mayor Eric Adams

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New York City Mayor Eric Adams has been indicted on charges of conspiracy, wire fraud and bribery after federal prosecutors say he accepted illegal campaign donations, upgrades and freebies from wealthy Turkish officials and businesspeople in exchange for his influence. On the heels of the Thursday morning unsealing of the indictment, Benesch White Collar, Government Investigations & Regulatory Compliance Partner Shaneeda Jaffer weighed in on the case as part of a panel on Scripps News.

“Mayor Adams, just like every single one of us, is entitled to the presumption of innocence until he’s proven guilty,” Shaneeda explained. “That said, the indictment comes from a very good office, and it’s a very high-profile case, so it probably got approvals all the way to the top.”

Commenting on the strength of the case, Shaneeda added, “Indicting a sitting mayor is a bold move, so I would be surprised if this case isn’t rock solid. If you read the indictment, it’s full of facts, and they don’t paint a very pretty picture. At the same time, the mayor has excellent lawyers, and you can be sure that they are going to exploit every single weakness in the government’s case.”

Among the allegations against Mayor Adams are that he received certain perks and accepted illegal monetary donations.

“Is it a big deal that he got airline upgrades?” Shaneeda said. “The indictment says the value of those upgrades amounted to \$100 thousand. And if the rules say you can’t take free perks like that, then he shouldn’t be doing it. As a public official, he should be avoiding even the appearance of impropriety or corruption. And if he’s getting those perks just because he’s the mayor, and with the expectation that he’s going to do something on the other side, that’s inappropriate and, in this case, potentially illegal. If the facts in the indictment are true, it’s sort of irrelevant whether it was airline upgrades or other types of bribes that are much larger. It’s sort of one and the same under the eyes of the law.”

The federal prosecutor overseeing the investigation, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York Damian Williams, has been involved in several high-profile cases throughout his career including, most recently, the case against Sean “Diddy” Combs.

“The Southern District of New York is a very active office, and it’s an office that oversees the epicenter of financial markets, as well as the largest metropolitan center in the United States,” explained Shaneeda. “If there is corruption going on in New York and in the New York Mayoral Office, it’s the Southern District and Damian Williams’ job to prosecute that crime. If he makes a name for himself in the process, I’m sure he’s okay with that, but I don’t think that Damian Williams’

office is the only office that had a say in bringing this indictment. I expect that there are a lot of people in a lot of high places who signed off on this indictment.”