

DHS Chief Slams NYC Over 'Complete Breakdown Of Law & Order,' Blaming City's Sanctuary Laws

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The acting secretary of the Department of Homeland Security declared a "complete breakdown of law [and] order in New York City" on Wednesday, blaming the city's sanctuary policies for a recent deadly assault on a 92-year-old woman in Queens.

Pointing to the arrest of Reeaz Khan, a 21-year-old Guyana national who has been charged in the brutal sexual assault and killing of 92-year-old Maria Fuertes earlier this month, DHS chief Chad Wolf said the "citizens of NYC are facing the deadly consequences" of New York's sanctuary policies.

"There has been a complete breakdown of law & order in New York City," Wolf wrote in a tweet. "NYC proudly passed sanctuary city laws & bragged about it for months. But now they, & more importantly, the citizens of NYC are facing the deadly consequences of the sanctuary policies."

In the days following Khan's arrest, the city's sanctuary policies, which prevent police from turning undocumented immigrants over to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency except in cases of violent and serious offenses, have come under the microscope, with ICE claiming Fuertes' death could have been avoided had those policies not been in place.

In a press release published on Monday, ICE said Khan had been living in the U.S. "unlawfully" and had an "active detainer" on his file requesting that local law enforcement turn him over to the immigration agency.

Khan had been arrested earlier in November of last year in connection with a separate altercation reportedly involving his father, according to *The New York Times*. But, ICE said, he was "released from local law enforcement custody," despite having an active detainer, "due to New York City's sanctuary policies."

The New York Police Department has disputed this account, however, with NYPD Office of the Deputy Commissioner for Public Information spokesperson Detective Denise Moroney telling *Newsweek* on Thursday that the NYPD "did not receive an ICE detainer" for Khan at the time of his arrest on November 27.

"Our responses to detainer requests are dictated by local law," Moroney said.

ICE, however, released a copy of the fax transmission form accompanying the detainer on Wednesday, however, with the document dated to November 27. It is unclear whether the detainer was missed by the NYPD.

In a statement shared by ICE, Thomas Decker, the field office director for the agency's Enforcement and Removal Operations team in New York, claiming that the brutal killing makes clear "that New York City's stance against honouring detainers is dangerously flawed."

"It was a deadly choice to release a man on an active ICE detainer back onto the streets after his first arrest included assault and weapon charges, and he now faces new charges, including murder," Decker said in a statement provided by ICE on Monday.

"New York City's sanctuary policies continue to threaten the safety of all residents of the five boroughs, as they repeatedly protect criminal aliens who show little regard for the laws of this nation," he said. "In New York City alone, hundreds of arrestees are released each month with pending charges and/or convictions to return back into the communities where they committed their crimes, instead of being transferred into the custody of ICE. Clearly the politicians care more about criminal illegal aliens than the citizens they are elected to serve and protect."

While Fuertes' killing has raised questions around sanctuary laws and what they mean for public safety, Wolf appeared to suggest in his tweet that sanctuary laws were also responsible for what he branded a "complete breakdown of law & order" in NYC.

Murders in New York City did see a rise in 2019, with more than 300 people killed that year, representing an 8 percent uptick from 2018 numbers and marking the highest murder rate in three years, according to *The Times*.

However, overall, violent crime has remained at a historic low, particularly compared to the high murder rates NYC saw three decades ago, with 2,262 people killed across the city in 1990 alone.

In recent years, a number of studies have suggested that undocumented immigrants are less likely to commit crime than native-born Americans, with immigrants legally in the U.S. found to be even less likely to carry out crimes than U.S.-born citizens.

One study published in the journal *Criminology* found that states with larger shares of undocumented immigrants were more likely to see lower crime rates than those with smaller immigrant populations in the years 1990 through to 2014.

Meanwhile, a study from the libertarian Cato Institute, published in February, examined criminal conviction data for 2015 provided by the Texas Department of Public Safety and found that native-born residents were more likely to be convicted of a crime than immigrants who were either in the country legally or illegally. Overall, that study found undocumented immigrants to have 56 percent fewer criminal convictions than native-born Americans in Texas.