

New York City's ban on homeless sparks outrage



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New York, February 22 (RHC)-- U.S. organizations helping homeless individuals and families have criticized New York City's mayor for ordering heavy-handed police tactics against people seeking shelter during the cold winter. Mayor Eric Adamson, a former police captain, announced plans to remove homeless people from the city's subway system and bar people from sleeping on trains or riding the same lines all night.

Adamson, who likened homelessness to a "cancerous sore," said he would deploy more teams of police officers and mental health workers to the subway to enforce rules more strictly. Homeless advocates and others who have criticized police's heavy-handed tactics said banning homeless people from subways won't solve the problem.

Shelly Nortz, the deputy executive director for policy at the Coalition for the Homeless, denounced Adamson's comments as "sickening." She said criminalizing homelessness is not the solution to the problem of homeless people.

"Repeating the failed outreach-based policing strategies of the past will not end the suffering of homeless people bedding down on the subway. It is sickening to hear Mayor Adams liken unsheltered homeless people to a cancer. They are human beings."

Police Commissioner Keechant Seweell said the police department will start enforcing the new rules in New York City subway this week. Police teams, she said, will focus on high-traffic areas or areas where there have been reports of crime.

Homeless people who live in the underground tunnels of New York City have been referred to as Mole People or Tunnel People. British documentary feature film *Dark Days* (2000) is about a group of homeless people living in the New York City subway.

Teun Voeten's book *Tunnel People*, published in 2010 by the Oakland-based PM Press, also describes the underground homeless community in New York City. Homelessness in the United States is increasing in the least affordable rental housing markets and cities with skyrocketing home prices. Expensive cities include New York City, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Washington, DC, among others.

Last year in a similar move, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti signed a sweeping rule making it illegal for homeless people to be in almost all places across the west coast city.

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