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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**MAN INDICTED ON RAPE AND ASSAULT CHARGES**  
**FOR ATTACK ON WOMAN INSIDE FOREST PARK**

*Victim Allegedly Struck, Dragged Off Walking Trail and Then Assaulted;  
Defendant Faces Up to 25 Years in Prison if Convicted*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced today that Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, 32, has been arraigned after a Queens County grand jury handed up an indictment charging the defendant with rape in the first degree and other crimes for allegedly assaulting a 51-year-old woman as she walked in Forest Park around 6:30 p.m. on July 25, 2020.

District Attorney Katz said, “What should have been an idyllic stroll through the park turned into a maelstrom of violence for the victim in this case, who courageously fought off her attacker. Fortunately, a passerby heard her and startled the defendant, who will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. We are all entitled to enjoy our neighborhoods without fear.”

Cardenas was arraigned today before Queens Supreme Court Justice Richard Buchter on a four-count indictment charging the defendant with rape in the first degree, sexual assault in the first degree, assault in the second degree and criminal obstruction of breathing or blood circulation. Justice Buchter remanded the defendant and set the return date for November 6, 2020. If convicted, Cardenas faces up to 25 years in prison.

District Attorney Katz said before sunset on Saturday evening, July 25, 2020, the defendant approached a woman as she walked on a trail inside Forest Park. He tapped her on the shoulder and when she turned toward him the defendant allegedly hit her in the face and tried to kiss her. The sudden blow knocked the woman to the ground. Cardenas then allegedly dragged the victim into the bushes, pulled down her pants and got on top of her sexually assaulting her. As the victim fought against Cardenas, he allegedly wrapped a cloth around her neck that restricted her breathing. The victim was able to scream for help, which alerted a passerby. The defendant then ran away from the area.

The victim was treated at a nearby Queens hospital for her injuries. The defendant, who is believed to be homeless, was apprehended two days later after surveillance photos of him were circulated in the press.

Senior Assistant District Attorney George Kanelopolous, of the District Attorney’s Special Victims Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Eric C. Rosenbaum,

Bureau Chief, Debra Lynn Pomodore and Brian C. Hughes, Deputy Bureau Chiefs, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Daniel A. Saunders.

*Criminal complaints and indictments are accusations. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.*

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