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QUEENS MAN CHARGED WITH HATE CRIME
FOR DRAWING SWASTIKA ON A NEIGHBORHOOD SYNAGOGUE
Defendant Allegedly Desecrated Rego Park Jewish Center with Hate Symbol;
The Accused Faces Up to 1 1/3 to 4 Years in Prison if Convicted

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced today that Ramtin Rabenou, 41, has been charged with criminal mischief as a hate crime and other crimes for allegedly defacing the Rego Park Jewish Center on Queens Boulevard with a swastika and for scrawling graffiti at multiple other locations in the area in February 2021.

“Sadly, we have seen a spike in people acting on their bigotry against people of different races and religions. Targeting people because of their religion has no place anywhere – and certainly not in Queens, the most diverse county in the country,” District Attorney Katz said.

Rabenou, of Queens Boulevard in Forest Hills, was arraigned today before Queens Criminal Court Judge Jerry Iannece on a complaint charging him with criminal mischief in the fourth degree as a hate crime, aggravated harassment in the first degree, criminal mischief in the fourth degree and making graffiti. Judge Iannece ordered the defendant to return to Court on April 30, 2021. The defendant faces up to 1 1/3 to 4 years in prison if convicted.

According to the charges, around 11 a.m. on February 17, 2021, the defendant allegedly used a black marker to draw a swastika on a sign on the front of the Rego Park Jewish Center on Queens Boulevard. Later that day, the Rego Park Jewish Center’s Rabbi Romiel Daniel discovered the defaced sign.

Continuing, the DA said, there was also other graffiti in the area on streetlamps, emergency response boxes and traffic devices on and near 67th Road and 68th Avenue. Surveillance video and photographs obtained from these areas, as well as the Rego Park Jewish Center, depicted an individual tagging these locations. Rabenou was questioned by police and shown the video images and allegedly identified himself in the footage.

The investigation was conducted by Police Officer Sean Barnwell of the New York City Police Department’s 112th Precinct.

Assistant District Attorney Michael Brovner, Chief of the DA’s Hates Crimes Bureau, is prosecuting the case, under the supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney of the Trial Division Pishoy Yacoub.

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

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