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QUEENS MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO STEALING OVER \$50,000
IN APARTMENT RENTAL SCAM

*More Than a Dozen People Victimized by Con Artist;
Defendant Ordered to Pay Restitution to Victims*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz today announced that Cesar Fernandez-Loor, 38, has pleaded guilty to grand larceny for stealing over \$50,000 from numerous apartment-hunters. The defendant promised housing to applicants, then collected rental deposits without actually permitting anyone to move in. Many of the victims were immigrants living in Jackson Heights and surrounding neighborhoods.

District Attorney Katz said, “The victims were looking for a place to call home. Sadly, they crossed paths with a con artist determined to enrich himself at their expense. In this case, I am happy to say, the victims are getting their money back.”

Fernandez-Loor, of Flushing, Queens, pleaded guilty yesterday to grand larceny in the third and fourth degree. Queens Criminal Court Judge Karen Gopee ordered the defendant to pay over \$50,000 in restitution to the 18 victims. Judge Gopee indicated that if Fernandez-Loor failed to pay what was owed to the victims he would face up to 2 1/3 to 7 years in prison.

District Attorney Katz said, between December 2017 and February 2020, the defendant posed as a real estate agent working for ACT Realty Corp. He defrauded multiple victims, who were seeking an apartment to rent. The victims turned over anywhere from \$1300 to \$7000 thinking they had secured a place to live. The defendant pocketed more than \$50,000 in total and never actually rented the promised space to any of the applicants.

According to Court records, the victims called a phone number listed on apartment rental advertisements posted in the Jackson Heights area and then scheduled appointments to meet in person. At those meetings, Fernandez-Loor presented himself as a real estate agent working for ACT Realty Corp. and distributed business cards with both his name and the company’s name. The defendant showed the victims the apartments, and upon approval, required them to pay a security deposit. However, none of the would-be renters were permitted to move in. The defendant offered various excuses or completely cut off all communication with the would-be renters. On occasion, he would provide refund checks to applicants – checks that were returned for insufficient funds.

Furthermore, said DA Katz, in May 2018, Univision Channel 41 (A TU LADO) did a news story highlighting complaints from various victims of this rental scheme, which mentioned ACT Realty. As a result of the news segment and more victims coming forward an investigation was initiated by Detective David Matos, of my Queens District Attorney’s Office of Immigrant Affairs. Then the investigation was transferred to Detective

Dimitrij Prokopez, of the New York City Police Department's Grand Larceny Unit, who also had been investigating the defendant. Detective Prokopez, with the assistance of Detective Michael Russo and Police Officer Raully Espinal, completed the investigation and arrested the defendant. The investigation was conducted under the supervision of now retired Sergeant Sean O'Hara and under the overall supervision of Deputy Inspector Patrick Cortright.

District Attorney Katz would like to thank Univision Channel 41 for their assistance in exposing the defendant's actions and bringing the victims to the Queens DA's Office.

She urged all victims of housing rental schemes, deed/mortgage fraud, wage theft, unsafe working conditions and other crimes involving real estate and labor to contact the DA's Housing and Worker Protection Bureau at 718-286-6673.

Assistant District Attorney Myongjae M. Yi, of the District Attorney's Housing and Worker Protection Bureau and Section Chief of the District Attorney's Office of Immigrant Affairs, prosecuted the case with the assistance of Trial Prep Assistant Cristal Luciano, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys William Jorgenson, Bureau Chief, Christina Hanophy, Deputy Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney of the Investigations Division Gerard Brave.

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