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**QUEENS GRAND JURY INDICTS MAN FOR RANDOM ATTACKS ON MUSLIMS;
DEFENDANT CHARGED WITH ROBBERY AND ASSAULT AS A HATE CRIME**

*Queens Man Also Faces Robbery and Weapons Charges;
Defendant Allegedly Followed and Attacked Strangers Who Appeared to Be Muslim in Separate Incidents;
Faces Up to Eight Years in Prison if Convicted*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced today that Naved Durrni, 30, has been indicted by a Queens County grand jury and arraigned in Supreme Court on robbery, assault as a hate crime and other charges. In three separate incidents, the defendant allegedly pursued people on the street he believed were Muslim, struck them and yelled anti-Muslim views in June and July 2021.

District Attorney Katz said, "As alleged, the defendant was motivated by his own biases and prejudice when he followed and struck four different victims whom he believed were Muslim. This kind of hateful behavior will not be tolerated in Queens - the most diverse county in the country. The defendant now faces justice in our Courts for his alleged actions."

Durrni, of 106th Avenue in the Jamaica, Queens, was arraigned today before Queens Supreme Court Justice Toni Cimino on an eight-count indictment. The defendant is charged with robbery in the second degree as a hate crime, assault in the third degree as a hate crime, aggravated harassment in the second degree, criminal possession of a weapon in the third degree and menacing in the second degree as a hate crime. Justice Cimino ordered the defendant to return to Court on January 24, 2022. Durrni faces up to eight years in prison if convicted.

According to the charges, on June 20th, at approximately 9:15 p.m., the defendant encountered a man and woman walking near Liberty Avenue and Lefferts Boulevard. Durrni approached the 31-year-old man and allegedly struck him without provocation and continued his attack by pulling on the 24-year-old woman's hijab. He then chased the pair when they tried to get away from him by crossing the street. The defendant also allegedly grabbed and ran away with a box that the woman was carrying. During this attack, Durrni allegedly yelled anti-Muslim slurs, saying in sum and substance "Mohammad was a liar."

About an hour later, said DA Katz, the defendant encountered another couple walking on Inwood Street in Jamaica, Queens. Durrni began to follow them. Again, without cause, the defendant allegedly began to yell anti-Muslim sentiments, including saying in sum and substance "Mohammad was a liar." Then the defendant allegedly punched the 56-year-old female victim in the face and head. The woman sustained a fractured nose as a result of the attack and had to be treated at a nearby hospital.

On Sunday, July 25th, according to the charges, the Durrni was in front of 94-06 Sutphin Blvd., at approximately 6:30 p.m., when he allegedly bumped a 38-year-old woman into the street. The victim was wearing

traditional Muslim clothing. The defendant allegedly yelled at her that “Mohammad was a liar” and “Jesus tells the truth.” When the woman tried to call 911 on her cell phone, Durrni is alleged to have pulled out a knife and point it at the woman in a threatening manner before fleeing the scene.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Michael Diaz, of the New York City Police Department’s Hate Crimes Task Force.

Assistant District Attorney Michael Brovner, Bureau Chief of the District Attorney’s Hate Crimes Bureau, is prosecuting the case, under the supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Felony Trials Pishoy Yacoub.

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

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