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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2022

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QUEENS MAN AND WOMAN INDICTED FOR SEX TRAFFICKING HOMELESS WOMAN

*Male Defendant Allegedly Forced Victim into Prostitution with the Assistance of Hotel Employee;
Accused Face Up to 25 Years in Prison if Convicted*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced today that Adam “Damian” Lee, 29, and Ida Copeland, 35, have been indicted by a Queens County grand jury and arraigned in Supreme Court on sex trafficking, promoting prostitution and other crimes for allegedly forcing a homeless woman into prostitution and setting up sex dates in various hotels – as well as private homes and other locations - throughout Queens County.

District Attorney Katz said, “As alleged, the two defendants in this case exploited the victim’s circumstances for their own benefit. The victim, who was homeless, was forced to sell sex for cash – money that defendant Lee collected and kept for himself. In addition, these defendants are accused of abusing the hotel employee’s position to target victims for sex trafficking. The reason the Human Trafficking Bureau exists is to free victims and hold accountable those who would profit from such bondage.”

Lee, of Hillside Avenue, in Jamaica, Queens, was arraigned yesterday before Queens Supreme Court Justice Peter Vallone Jr., on a 14-count indictment. Copeland, 35, of Hollis, Queens was arraigned today before Queens Supreme Court Justice Marcia Hirsch. Both defendants are charged with sex trafficking and promoting prostitution in the second and fourth degree. Defendant Lee is additionally charged with rape in the first and third degree, criminal sexual act in the first and third degree, sexual abuse in the first degree, and assault in the second and third degree. Justice Vallone ordered Lee to return to Court on March 14, 2022. Justice Hirsch set Copeland’s return date for March 15, 2022. If convicted, Lee and Copeland face up to 25 years in prison.

District Attorney Katz said, on January 1, 2022, the 35-year-old woman, who had been staying at the Floral Park Motor Lodge located in Nassau County, informed defendant Copeland, the hotel clerk, that she could no longer afford to stay at the hotel. Shortly after the conversation, defendant Lee appeared at the woman’s room door, identified himself as Copeland’s friend and claimed to have been sent by her. Once inside the room, Lee allegedly told the victim that she now worked for him and ordered her to remove her clothes and put on sexy lingerie. When the woman refused, Lee allegedly pulled out a gun, threatened her and then forced her to take semi-nude photographs to be used for sex advertisements.

Continuing, on January 5, 2022, Lee took the woman to a residence in Queens County where a male customer paid the defendant. Lee then waited outside while the customer and the victim were inside the residence. This customer, however, became angry at one point and refused to let the woman leave. Lee then allegedly broke down the door, grabbed the victim and went to a nearby store to call defendant Copeland, who arrived a short time later and took them to the Casa Azul Blue Hotel on Jamaica Avenue, where they were now living.

Lee left the victim with defendant Copeland while he went to the store. At this time, the victim informed Copeland that Lee had allegedly assaulted her. Copeland said in sum and substance, that's Damian for you. Copeland then instructed the victim to learn how to deal with Lee and to keep him happy and make his quotas so that he stays happy.

Police officers from the 105th Precinct responded to a 9-1-1 call at the location and removed the victim from the Casa Azul Blue Hotel. However, days later Lee found her and brought her to yet another hotel in Queens.

For two days in mid-January 2022, according to the charges, the victim stayed with Lee at the Pergola Hotel. On the 15th of January, Lee took her to meet with a man for sex. On January 16th, Lee allegedly forced the victim to have sex with another man at the Pergola Hotel and the customer paid Lee for the sex. At one point, Lee became angry at the victim and began to destroy the room. In the process, defendant Lee is alleged to have assaulted the victim – punching her in the head and face and causing the woman to sustain a black eye, swelling and bruising. Lee then allegedly sexually assaulted and raped her. The woman managed to call police and was taken to a nearby Queens hospital for treatment.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Elizabeth Gonzalez, of the NYPD Vice Human Trafficking Unit, under the supervision of Lieutenant Amy Capogna and under the overall supervision of Inspector Fernando P. Guimaraes.

Assistant District Attorney Tara DiGregorio, Assistant Deputy Bureau Chief in the District Attorney's Human Trafficking Bureau, is prosecuting the case, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Jessica Melton, Bureau Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Gerard A. Brave.

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

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