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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**TENANT CHARGED WITH MURDER OF BUILDING SUPERINTENDENT WHO WAS TRYING TO COLLECT UNPAID RENT**

*Victim Bludgeoned to Death; Police Called by Victim's Coworkers to do Wellness Check and Found Body Under Bed*

*Defendant Faces up to 25 Years to Life in Prison*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced that Sandra Coto-Navarro has been charged with murder for allegedly killing her building's superintendent, 55-year-old Jose Portillo, inside her apartment in Kew Gardens Hills. The victim reportedly entered the defendant's apartment around 8:40 a.m. Tuesday to collect unpaid rent on behalf of the landlord. The super's coworkers called the police later that day after he failed to return. NYPD officers discovered Portillo's body wrapped in garbage bags and clothing stuffed under a bed inside the apartment.

District Attorney Katz said: "This was a gruesome murder. As alleged, the defendant not only murdered the superintendent trying to collect rent, but attempted to dismember the lifeless victim, wrapped his body in black garbage bags and tried bleaching the area. Now, a life has been lost and a family is in upheaval because the defendant allegedly chose to resolve a rent dispute with violence. This is not the way a civilized society operates. The defendant will face justice for this heinous murder."

Coto-Navarro, 48, of 70<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Kew Gardens Hills, was arraigned just before midnight on Thursday, January 16, before Criminal Court Judge Vidya Pappachan on charges of murder in the second degree, two counts of tampering with physical evidence and criminal possession of a weapon in the fourth degree. Judge Pappachan remanded the defendant and ordered her to return to court today. If convicted of the top count, the defendant faces up to 25 years to life in prison.

According to the charges, on January 14, at approximately 8:40 a.m., the victim entered the defendant's apartment as he attempted to collect past due rent from the defendant.

The victim's coworkers attempted to contact Portillo multiple times, and the victim failed to answer his phone. A call was placed to 911 at approximately 5:00 p.m. asking for police assistance in finding Portillo.

Arriving officers reviewed video surveillance and spoke to Coto-Navarro, who said that the victim stopped by her apartment earlier in the day and that she paid him \$23,000 and Portillo left. The police then reviewed video surveillance which did not depict the victim leaving the apartment.

Upon returning to the apartment, police were directed to the bedroom of the apartment. Upon entering the bedroom, officers observed the victim's lifeless body wrapped in clothing and black garbage bags under the bed. Police also reported smelling a strong odor of bleach and observed a mop and what appeared to be blood near the bottom of the bed and by a dresser in the bedroom.

According to the New York City Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, the victim sustained multiple blunt force injuries to the head and a bag was placed over his head, causing his death. The victim further sustained post-mortem sharp force injuries to his neck and left leg near the knee. The defendant was arrested on-site.

The investigation was conducted by members of the NYPD's 107<sup>th</sup> Precinct Detective Squad.

Assistant District Attorney Timothy Shortt of the District Attorney's Homicide Bureau is prosecuting the case, with assistance from Assistant District Attorney Jennie Evangelista, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys John Kosinski, Bureau Chief, Karen Ross, Deputy Bureau Chief and Cold Case Unit Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Shawn Clark.

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

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