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**DEFENDANT INDICTED ON HATE CRIME CHARGES FOR UNPROVOKED ATTACK ON
RABBI IN FOREST HILLS**

*Defendant Allegedly Said “F*ck Jews” Before Punching Victim in Face and Chest*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced that Eric Zafra Grosso was indicted on charges of assault as a hate crime and related crimes for allegedly attacking a rabbi, who was wearing a visible prayer shawl with fringes, walking at the intersection of Queens Boulevard and Yellowstone Boulevard in Forest Hills on January 27. The defendant allegedly shouted antisemitic slurs immediately prior to the unprovoked assault which took place on International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

The defendant was slated to be arraigned on the indictment on March 18 but failed to appear in court. A bench warrant was issued for his arrest. He was arrested in Manhattan on March 27 and held over the weekend to involuntarily appear on the Queens case today.

District Attorney Katz said: “The defendant is indicted on the charge of assault as a hate crime. As alleged, he yelled ‘F*ck Jews’ before assaulting a rabbi completely unprovoked. He then did not show up for a mandated court appearance. We asked for and obtained a warrant for his arrest. Thank you to the NYPD for apprehending this defendant, who now remains in custody. Anti-Jewish bias still accounts for a significant share of hate crimes in our city, and my office will continue to take these cases with the utmost seriousness.”

Grosso, 32, of Corona, was arraigned today on a grand jury indictment charging him with assault in the third degree as a hate crime, assault in the third degree and aggravated harassment in the second degree. Queens Supreme Court Justice Germaine Auguste ordered the defendant to return to court on May 7. If convicted of the top charge, Grosso faces 1 1/3 to four years in prison.

DA Katz said that, according to the indictment and investigation, on January 27, between 2:20 p.m. and 3 p.m., the defendant approached 30-year-old David Soussan at the intersection of Queens Boulevard and Yellowstone Boulevard in Forest Hills. The victim, a rabbi in the Bukharian Jewish community, was wearing a visible prayer shawl with fringes, known as tzitzit, and walking to a nearby synagogue. The victim’s black fedora covered his yarmulke.

Grosso allegedly shouted “F*ck Jews” and punched the victim in the face and chest, causing the victim to fall to the ground.

Grosso was arrested shortly afterward by members of the NYPD’s 112th Precinct inside the Forest Hills-71st Continental Avenue subway station.

Assistant District Attorney Zebo Fattoyeva of the District Attorney’s Hate Crimes Bureau is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Michael Brovner, Bureau 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.

Note to Editors: Archived press releases are available at www.queensda.org.

