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LONG ISLAND MAN CHARGED WITH SCHEME TO DEFRAUD FOR REAL ESTATE SCAM THAT TARGETED RENTERS

Defendant Allegedly Duped Prospective Tenants out of More Than $60,000
Faces up to Seven Years in Prison, if Convicted

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced today that Rajat Verma was indicted for scheme to defraud, grand larceny, identity theft and other crimes for a rental fraud scheme involving seven Queens properties and one in Brooklyn. Verma allegedly rented apartments by providing forged checks to landlords and, in turn, rented out the same properties to numerous unsuspecting tenants duping them out of $61,625 in security deposits and other rental payments.

District Attorney Katz said: "As alleged, this defendant took advantage of those seeking housing by purporting to be a real estate agent and renting out properties that did not belong to him. The unsuspecting tenants gave him payments and signed phony leases that left them without their money and housing. Anyone who suspects that they may have been taken advantage of by this defendant is urged to contact our Consumer Fraud Helpline at 718-286-6673."

Verma, 35, of Franklin Square, was arraigned yesterday on a 40-count indictment charging him with scheme to defraud in the first and second degrees, seven counts of criminal possession of a forged instrument in the second degree, 13 counts of criminal possession of stolen property in the third degree, 12 counts of grand larceny in the third degree, two counts of identity theft in the first degree, two counts of grand larceny in the fourth degree and two counts of criminal possession of stolen property in the fourth degree.

Queens Supreme Court Justice Leigh Cheng ordered him to return to court November 23. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in prison.

District Attorney Katz said that, according to the charges and investigation, from September 23, 2022, to November 24, 2023, Verma posed as a tenant seeking apartments from small landlords in Glen Oaks, Rego Park, College Point, Ozone Park, Hollis, Maspeth and Brooklyn

Verma allegedly gave the landlords forged checks and then received keys to the properties. During the next several days, as the landlords waited for the checks to clear, Verma advertised the properties for rent online. He allegedly used different aliases, phone numbers and email addresses.

Prospective tenants who wanted the apartments provided Verma with payments that often amounted to thousands of dollars. Some received keys to their new homes only to find out the keys did not work. In one instance, a tenant arrived at an apartment to find another family, also allegedly duped by Verma, living there.

Verma -- who used the aliases Rajvinder Kaur, Rajib "Raj" Sharma, Sammy Miah, Berihai "Barry" Padmanabhan, Barry Padmanabhan, Barry Padman, Bobby Gupta, Dave Mair, Ahmed Abbas, Samir, and Abbas Mithun – allegedly defrauded at least 15 people during the year-long scam.

The investigation was conducted by Assistant District Attorney Kathryn Ingle of the District Attorney's Housing, Worker and Consumer Protection Bureau and Detective Kevin Stewart of the NYPD Organized Theft Squad, with the assistance of Paralegal Specialist Ericka Loperena-Hunter.

Assistant District Attorney Ingle is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys William Jorgenson, Bureau Chief, and Christina Hanophy, Senior Deputy Chief, under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Joseph T. Conley III.

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

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