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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Landlord Who Allegedly Stole Over \$8,000 from Brooklyn Tenant After  
Illegal Eviction Charged with Grand Larceny**  
*Defendant extradited from Florida*

Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez, together with New York City Department of Investigation Commissioner Mark G. Peters and New York City Sheriff Joseph Fucito, today announced that a Florida man who acted as the landlord and manager of several buildings in Brooklyn and Yonkers has been charged with grand larceny for allegedly stealing \$8,500 in security deposits and first month's rent collected from a tenant who he evicted approximately two weeks after the tenant moved into an East New York apartment.

District Attorney Gonzalez said, "The defendant is an alleged scam artist who has a history of allegedly evicting vulnerable tenants, stealing their hard-earned money and damaging the apartments they rented to prevent them from moving back in. We will now hold him accountable for his unscrupulous and unlawful actions."

Commissioner Peters said, "This defendant allegedly swindled his tenant of thousands of dollars in rent before evicting her and making the apartment uninhabitable, according to the charges. DOI and its partners will hold unscrupulous landlords who steal tenants' money and force them from their homes accountable for their actions."

Sheriff Fucito said, "The Sheriff's Office treats housing crimes seriously. All New Yorkers are entitled to live safely in their homes and free from landlord harassment. The Sheriff will use all the office's authority to ensure obedience to the law. Our partnerships with the Kings County District Attorney and United States Marshal's Service Fugitive Task Force have brought some measure of justice in this matter."

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Yaniv (Ben) Erez, 46, of Miami, Florida. He was arraigned today in Brooklyn Criminal Court on a criminal complaint in which he is charged with third- and fourth-degree grand larceny. He was ordered held on \$10,000 cash bail or \$15,000 bond and to return to court on September 27, 2018. The defendant was also remanded for 30 days on a previous criminal contempt conviction.

The District Attorney said that, according to the investigation, on July 12, 2015, the defendant met with the tenant at the tenant's residence to rent 385 Warwick Avenue, a single-family house in East New York. The tenant handed the defendant \$6,000 in cash for two months security deposit and a month's rent. The tenant also gave the defendant a signed blank check to cover the cost of renting the basement of 385 Warwick Avenue. According to the investigation, the tenant instructed the defendant to make out the check for \$1,500, which included two months security and one month's rent to rent the basement.

It is alleged that the defendant wrote out the check for \$2,500 instead of \$1,500. When the check bounced, the tenant provided the defendant with another signed check and instructed the defendant to write it out to the agreed upon amount of \$1,500. However, the defendant allegedly again made the check out for \$2,500. That check cleared.

According to the investigation, the tenant moved into the location on or about July 16, 2015 after receiving a lease and keys to the residence. On August 4, 2015, an employee of the defendant informed the tenant that the defendant had "something that will force" the tenant to vacate the location. When the tenant refused to move out, the defendant arrived at the location

shortly thereafter with police officers and a copy of an order to vacate. The police ordered the tenant to leave the location because of the vacate order. When the tenant returned to the location on August 5, 2015, the residence was uninhabitable. The tenant's personal belongings were also damaged. The defendant allegedly kept the tenant's security deposit.

Official records of the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) show that a vacate order was issued on May 20, 2015, and later lifted on June 12, 2018, after the agency determined that 385 Warwick Avenue was a hazard for human habitation. It is alleged that the defendant used the vacate order to illegally evict the tenant and previous occupants.

Records from Kings County Housing Court show that the defendant was held in contempt on February 16, 2016 and sentenced to 30 days in jail and a \$1,000 fine for illegally evicting and destroying the apartment of another tenant at 385 Warwick Avenue. According to the complaint, he has been out on a warrant since February 6, 2016.

The case was investigated by DOI's Inspector General for HPD, specifically Confidential Investigator Noko Soumahoro-Ali and Special Investigator Raymond Li under the supervision of Inspector General Jessica Heegan, Associate Commissioner Jay Flaherty, Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Susan Lambiase and First Deputy Commissioner Lesley Brovner.

The case is being prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Dovid Wolosow, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Gavin Miles, Counsel to the Frauds Bureau, under the overall supervision of Assistant District Attorney Patricia McNeill, Deputy Chief of the Investigations Division.

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**A criminal complaint is an accusatory instrument and not proof of a defendant's guilt.**