



*United States Attorney
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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UNITED STATES SUES SUPERINTENDENT AND LANDLORD
OF RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS IN MANHATTAN
FOR SEXUAL HARASSMENT

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced today that the United States has filed a lawsuit against the superintendent, WILLIAM BARNASON, and the owner, STANLEY KATZ, of several buildings located on the Upper West Side of Manhattan for discrimination on the basis of sex, stemming from the sexual harassment of female tenants. Specifically, the lawsuit alleges that BARNASON sexually harassed female tenants by routinely demanding to have sexual relations with them in exchange for rent reductions. While KATZ allegedly was aware of this conduct, he purportedly refused to take any meaningful steps to address it.

The lawsuit was filed under the Fair Housing Act, which, among other things, prohibits gender-based discrimination in connection with rental property, or in the provision of services in connection with rental properties.

According to the civil Complaint filed in Manhattan federal court:

BARNASON, a Level 3 registered sex offender, has been employed by KATZ as the superintendent of three residential buildings (collectively, the "Properties") -- located at 144 West 73rd Street, 140 West 75th Street, and 142 West 75th Street in Manhattan -- for over eight years. As the Properties' superintendent, BARNASON had access to keys to tenants' apartments. BARNASON subjected numerous female tenants living in the Properties to severe, unwelcome and pervasive sexual harassment, thereby creating a hostile environment for female tenants and amounting to quid pro quo harassment in violation of the Fair Housing Act.

BARNASON's alleged conduct included various forms of unwanted verbal sexual advances, touching, and language, including his solicitation of sexual favors in exchange for

reductions in rent payments, inappropriate grabbing of tenants, and yelling obscenities at tenants who would not comply with his sexual demands. BARNASON also withheld basic duties, such as delivery of mail and apartment repairs, and threatened tenants with eviction, if his sexual demands were refused.

Meanwhile, KATZ was aware of BARNASON's conduct. And, despite receiving multiple complaints of sexual harassment, KATZ refused to take any meaningful steps to address it.

* * *

The Complaint seeks civil penalties under the Fair Housing Act, which provides for up to \$50,000 for a first violation of the Act, and also seeks compensatory and punitive damages for the alleged victims.

By Presidential Proclamation on April 1, 2010, President BARACK OBAMA declared April 2010 National Sexual Assault Awareness Month. In his Proclamation, the President recognized that sexual harassment occurs far too frequently and disproportionately affects women.

U.S. Attorney PREET BHARARA said: "Every woman has a right to live in an environment free from sexual harassment and discrimination. Pervasive sexual harassment by a superintendent, and a landlord's conscious refusal to address it, as alleged in the Complaint, are illegal and intolerable. This case underscores this Office's commitment to vigorously protecting the civil rights of all New Yorkers."

This case is being handled by the Office's Civil Rights Unit. If you believe you have been a victim of sexual harassment by a superintendent or building owner in connection with rental property, including of the conduct alleged in the Government's lawsuit, please contact the Civil Rights Unit complaint line at (212) 637-0840.

Assistant United States Attorney CAROLINA A. FORNOS is in charge of the case.

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