



RICHARD A. BROWN
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

**DISTRICT ATTORNEY
QUEENS COUNTY
125-01 QUEENS BOULEVARD
KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11415-1568
718-286-6000**

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CONTACT: QDA PRESS OFFICE
718-286-6315

**ASTORIA LANDLORD CHARGED WITH ILLEGAL CONVERSION
OF TWO-FAMILY HOUSE INTO NINE APARTMENTS**

*Defendant Allegedly Rented One Apartment To Four Different Tenants For Same Time Period;
Allegedly Pocketed Tens Of Thousands Of Dollars As Pre-Payments For Uninhabitable Apartments*

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown, joined by New York City Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly, New York City Department of Investigation Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn and New York City Buildings Commissioner Robert LiMandri, announced today that a Queens landlord who allegedly ignored an order to vacate his premises has been charged with taking tens of thousands of dollars from prospective tenants for uninhabitable apartments and in one particularly egregious case renting out the same apartment to four different tenants for the same time period.

District Attorney Brown said, "This case sadly represents another instance in which an allegedly greedy landlord is accused of creating dangerous living conditions for tenants and, additionally, taking thousands of dollars from tenants as rental pre-payments for apartments that were uninhabitable and/or unavailable. The defendant was ordered to vacate the premises last December, but allegedly ignored that order – endangering his tenants and first responders – and now must face the consequences of his actions."

Department of Investigation Commissioner Gill Hearn said, "The owner repeatedly endangered and defrauded his tenants and thumbed his nose at the City's orders to enforce basic safety standards in his illegally subdivided building, according to the charges. We're now coordinating a criminal investigation with other remedies to address the hazards and hardships he has created for his community. DOI is pleased to join District Attorney Brown and Commissioner LiMandri to reinforce the point that we will not tolerate lawlessness by anyone who would exploit the strong demand for affordable housing in Queens."

Commissioner LiMandri said, "Property owners who create illegal dwellings are gambling with people's lives, and they must be held accountable. This arrest clearly demonstrates that the Department of Buildings, along with the Queens District Attorney and the Department of Investigation, are increasing the pressure on property owners who are making a profit by endangering the lives of their tenants. Illegal conversions pose a serious threat to the safety of New Yorkers, and we are doing more than ever to combat the dangers associated with illegal construction. I would like to thank District Attorney Brown and Commissioner Gill Hearn for their continued support."

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Hinyoung Limtung, 55, of 14-14 30th Road, in Astoria, Queens. The defendant was arrested today and is presently awaiting arraignment in Queens Criminal Court on a criminal complaint charging him with first-degree scheme to defraud, third-degree grand larceny and second-, third- and fourth-degree criminal possession of stolen property. If convicted, Limtung faces up to 15 years in prison.

District Attorney Brown said that the matter was brought to the attention of his office by several of the tenants at 31-70 Crescent Street – a property owned by the defendant – complaining about the alleged egregious conditions at their building. The District Attorney's Office commenced an investigation with the New York City Police Department and thereafter learned that the City's Department of Buildings and Department of Investigation were conducting a simultaneous probe. The two investigations were then joined.

In December 2012, the Department of Buildings issued a vacate order to the defendant after determining that the two-family building had been converted into a five-family building with no permit or certificate of occupancy issued for the conversion, that the first and second floor had no secondary means of egress, and that the building had no sprinkler system. Upon returning to the premises on February 19, 2013, the DOB investigator discovered that the property had been converted into a nine-family dwelling despite the existing vacate order and that there were multiple individuals allegedly living at the premises in violation of the vacate order.

According to the criminal complaint, on January 23, 2013, complainant Ajada Mirashi signed a lease

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with the defendant to rent apartment S2 for \$1,000 a month. She allegedly paid him \$3,000 in advance and was supposed to move in on March 1, 2013. The defendant allegedly failed to tell her about the vacate order and she was subsequently unable to move into the apartment. The defendant allegedly failed to return her deposit.

Additionally, in January 2013, according to the criminal complaint, complainant Robert Bryan signed a lease to rent apartment S2 at the location for \$800 a month and paid the defendant \$10,400 in advance, representing 12 months rent and one month's security deposit. Bryan subsequently agreed to move into apartment F3 at the location, moved into the apartment on January 18, 2013, and was later informed of the vacate order by Department of Buildings investigators and ordered to move out on March 8, 2013. The defendant allegedly failed to return his deposit.

According to the criminal complaint, in February 2013, complainant Edward Cheatham signed a lease to rent apartment S1 and paid the defendant \$3,700. Because of the vacate order the complainant was unable to move into the apartment and the defendant allegedly failed to return his deposit.

Furthermore, according to the criminal complaint, complainant Adam Hardman gave the defendant \$5,400 in advance as rent for a studio apartment at the rate of \$700 a month in December 2012 without being told by the defendant about the vacate order. Hardman subsequently moved into a studio apartment at the location but was later forced to move out because of the vacate order. The defendant allegedly did not return his deposit.

Finally, according to the criminal complaint, complainants David Chan, Peter Thompson, Camila Viana and Dilek Gena each unwittingly signed a lease to rent out the same apartment for the same time period as each other, and each allegedly gave the defendant large sums of money to secure the apartment and that money was not returned to the complainants even though they were unable to live in the apartment, which, in addition to being unavailable was uninhabitable as it had no bathroom or kitchen.

The investigation was conducted by Detective David Gilbert, of the NYPD's Queens District Attorney's Squad, under the supervision of Sergeant Frank Teran, Lieutenant Keith Gallagher and Captain John Zanfardino, and the overall supervision of Chief James G. Molloy, and Chief of Detectives Phil T. Pulaski, and by Chief Investigator James McElligott and Special Investigator Faye Stephan of the New York City Department of Investigation, and investigators from the Department of Buildings.

Assistant District Attorney Eleonora B. Rivkin, of the District Attorney's Economic and Environmental Crimes Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Gregory C. Pavlides, Bureau Chief, and Christina Hanophy, Deputy Bureau Chief, and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Peter A. Crusco and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Linda M. Cantoni.

It should be noted that a criminal complaint is merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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Note to Editors: Press release e-version posted on www.queensda.org.