



The City of New York  
Department of Investigation

MARK G. PETERS  
COMMISSIONER

80 MAIDEN LANE  
NEW YORK, NY 10038  
212-825-5900

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**CONTACT: DIANE STRUZZI  
NICOLE TURSO**

**DOI COMMISSIONER MARK G. PETERS' REMARKS AT PRESS CONFERENCE ON ANNOUNCEMENT OF CHARGES AGAINST LANDLORD, OTHERS FOR CREATING LIFE-THREATENING CONDITIONS AT EAST HARLEM APARTMENT BUILDING**

I want to commend and thank District Attorney Vance whose team of prosecutors worked hand-in-hand with DOI and the investigators standing before you today. The District Attorney and his team have been at the absolute forefront of efforts to reform dangerous practices in the construction industry.

As a result of our partnership, the property owner, property manager and contractor associated with this building, today stand charged with their illegal conduct: performing unsafe renovations, covering up the extent of their work, and harassing a family of tenants they wanted out of their rent-stabilized apartment.

This investigation underscores what DOI has found time and again: that there is a direct nexus between a dearth of integrity and dangerous building conditions. This scenario has only grave results -- New Yorkers are placed at risk and the reliability and safety of construction in this City are undermined. That is why DOI has made it a core focus of our independent investigatory efforts.

In March 2015, DOI was called to the site by the City Department of Housing Preservation & Development after the agency was told there were tenants residing with no heat and hot water and in a building that had literally been gutted around them. Floors had been removed. The roof appeared to be near collapse. And water was leaking into the building – all in an apparent attempt to force the tenants out of the rent-stabilized apartment.

DOI worked with Housing and Buildings inspectors, the Public Advocate, and the Manhattan District Attorney to uncover the serious history of violations at this site, one that led to a Stop Work Order this past March. Even after tenants were moved out last year, unsafe work continued, with no regard for the workers. Thankfully, the Stop Work Order has mandated any work at the site cease until violations are addressed.

This investigation highlights the layers of illegal conduct perpetrated by these defendants. Most strikingly, defendants actually removed the fire escape system from the building, leaving the family that remained no means of getting out if the entranceway was blocked by fire. Later, after the family was finally forced to leave the building, defendants continued to collect public rental subsidies – cheating the City of scarce public assistance dollars.

We cannot assert this enough: Construction safety is not a compromise in this City. There is no tolerance for ignoring the City's construction rules, for treating other people – including tenants and workers -- as collateral damage to the construction process.

As this case demonstrates, we will not turn a blind eye to unscrupulous developers and property interests.

I want to once again thank all the partners who worked on this investigation – the Manhattan District Attorney, Public Advocate James and her tireless team, HPD and DOB, and the team here at DOI, specifically Chief Investigator James McElligott, Special Investigator Dan Taylor, Inspector General Jessica Heegan and Associate Commissioner James Flaherty, Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Michael Carroll and First Deputy Commissioner Lesley Brovner.

An indictment is an accusation. Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty

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