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QUEENS RESIDENT CHARGED WITH MURDER
IN STABBING DEATH OF MAN WHO TRIED TO BREAK UP FIGHT

*Defendant Captured in Indiana and Returned to Queens;
Faces Up to 25 Years to Life in Prison if Convicted*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced today that a Queens resident has been charged with murder in the fatal stabbing death of a 43-year-old man, who intervened when the defendant became embroiled in a fight with a property owner on April 13, 2020.

District Attorney Katz said, “The victim in this case was allegedly stabbed to death by the defendant after attempting to break-up a fight. Following the violence, the defendant is alleged to have fled the state to evade arrest. He was apprehended in Indiana and returned to New York to face charges.”

The District Attorney’s Office identified the defendant as Muhammad Habib, 24, of 167th Street, in Jamaica, Queens. Defendant Habib was arraigned today on a complaint charging him with murder in the second degree, criminal possession a weapon in the third degree, tampering with a witness in the third degree and assault in the third degree before Queens Criminal Court Judge Toni Cimino. Judge Cimino held the defendant without bail and ordered him to return to court on May 20, 2020. If convicted, Habib faces up to 25 years to life in prison.

According to the charges, said District Attorney Katz, on April 13, 2020, between 10 a.m. and 11:08 a.m., the defendant was observed by witnesses and on video surveillance allegedly engaged in a physical altercation with another man inside of 106-09 Guy R. Brewer Boulevard. Wycliffe Gentles, 43, of 157th Street in South Jamaica, attempted to separate the 2 men and while doing so began to fight with the defendant Habib. As blows were being thrown, the defendant allegedly pulled out what appeared to be a knife and the victim grabbed a nearby object and struck the defendant in the head with it.

Continuing, said the DA, according to the complaint, Habib chased Mr. Gentles down a flight of stairs, at where Mr. Gentles retrieved a 2x4 wooden beam and raised it in the direction of the defendant. The fight continued outside the building, but at one point, the victim dropped the wooden plank and fell to the ground. The defendant allegedly stood over the victim and stabbed him 7 times in the neck and torso penetrating Mr. Gentles’ left chest, lung and

pulmonary artery. The victim died from these injuries. Habib fled the area and ultimately the state.

It is further alleged, said DA Katz, according to the charges, that at approximately 6:41 p.m., the defendant texted the property owner he had originally fought with and stated that “snitches get treated the same.”

The defendant was arrested last week on April 14, 2020, at approximately 12:10 p.m. in Hancock County, Indiana by Indiana’s Pro-Active Criminal Enforcement (PACE) team, which is a multi-jurisdictional enforcement criminal interdiction task force. PACE team Sergeant James Goodwin of the Henry County Sheriff’s Department spotted the suspect’s vehicle while patrolling Interstate 70 near the Hancock County/Henry County line after an NYPD felony alert was placed on the vehicle on April 13, 2020. After coordinating a multi-jurisdictional response, Sergeant Goodwin apprehended the defendant following a vehicle pursuit through 2 counties.

District Attorney Katz would like to thank Detective Derek Webber of the New York City Police Department’s 103rd Precinct Detective Squad, Detective Thomas Cappolla of the NYPD Queens South Homicide Squad, as well as other members of the NYPD for their diligent efforts in investigating this case, tracking the defendant and returning him back to Queens County.

District Attorney Katz would also like to extend our thanks to District Attorney Brent Eaton of the Hancock County District Attorney’s Office and Sergeant Nicholas Ernstes of the Hancock County Sheriff’s Department for their assistance in facilitating the return of Muhammad Habib from their jurisdiction.

Assistant District Attorney Suzanne Bettis and Christine McCoy of the District Attorney’s Homicide Bureau is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Brad A. Leventhal, Bureau Chief, Peter J. McCormack III, Senior Deputy Bureau Chief, John W. Kosinski and Kenneth M. Appelbaum, Deputy Bureau Chiefs, and Kristin Papadopoulos, Senior Assistant District Attorney and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Daniel A. Saunders.

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 at www.queensda.org.