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**JACKSON HEIGHTS MAN SENTENCED TO UP TO 30 YEARS IN PRISON FOR MONTHS-LONG
BURGLARY SPREE**

*Juan Morales Convicted at Trial in March; Targeted Homes in Auburndale, Bayside, Fresh Meadows,
Hillcrest, Glen Oaks, Murray Hill, Oakland Gardens and Whitestone*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced today that Juan Morales was sentenced to up to 30 years in prison after being convicted in a jury trial of burglary, attempted burglary and other charges for a three-month crime spree spanning 2022 and 2023. The defendant broke into homes across Queens County and stole tens of thousands of dollars in cash, jewelry and designer handbags as well as passports and credit cards. As part of the burglary pattern, the defendant wore gloves, all black clothing, black sneakers and a wrist mounted flashlight and carried a black backpack with a distinctive reflective stripe. Morales routinely targeted large single-family homes, cut wires outside to disable security systems, and caused thousands of dollars in damage as he broke windows and doors to get inside.

District Attorney Katz said: “Your home should be the safest place for you and your family. This defendant shattered that peace of mind for these victims. He spent three months perfecting his craft, wearing gloves and disabling security systems and Wi-Fi, as he broke into homes and stole thousands of dollars in possessions. The property owners returned home to find their cash, jewelry and important documents gone, and their houses damaged, forcing them to make thousands of dollars’ worth of repairs. He has now faced justice for his actions and will serve up to 30 years in prison.”

Morales, 45, of 37th Avenue in Jackson Heights, was convicted by a jury of 12 counts of burglary in the second degree, burglary in the third degree, two counts of attempted burglary, grand larceny in the third degree, criminal mischief in the second degree, possession of burglar’s tools and criminal possession of stolen property in the third degree. Trial openings began March 3 and the jury reached a verdict on March 18 after deliberating for approximately five hours. He was acquitted of one count of burglary in the second degree.

Supreme Court Justice Frances Wang, who presided at trial, sentenced Morales yesterday to a determinate term of 27 years in prison on the charges of burglary in the second degree, attempted burglary and possession of burglar’s tool to be followed by a term of one to three years on the charges of burglary in the third degree, criminal mischief, grand larceny and criminal possession of stolen property. The sentences are to be followed by five years of post-release supervision.

DA Katz said that according to the charges, beginning on November 5, 2022, Morales began a three-month burglary spree by breaking into a home on 255th Street in Glen Oaks. The occupant came home and observed that a first-floor bedroom had been ransacked, the backdoor had been broken and that jewelry and

watches worth approximately \$27,000, along with \$5,000 in cash, was missing. The electrical wires outside the home were cut.

Video surveillance from a neighbor showed Morales approach the home at 6:30 p.m. while carrying a black backpack with a reflective silver stripe.

Morales continued breaking into homes on:

218th Street in Bayside
181st Street in Fresh Meadows,
166th Street in Hillcrest
172nd Street in Hillcrest
165th Street in Murray Hill
48th Avenue in Auburndale
214th Street in Bayside
211th Street in Bayside
163rd Street in Murray Hill
28th Avenue in Bayside
23rd Avenue in Whitestone

He also attempted to break into homes on 161st Street in Whitestone and 213th Street in Bayside.

His haul included numerous Rolex and Cartier watches, a Hermes Birkin handbag and other designer purses, diamond jewelry, large sums of cash and credit cards as well as passports. He also stole sentimental items such as a college ring and home videos of a family.

On February 15, 2023, police were called to a home on 188th Street in Auburndale after one of the occupants had received an alert from a backyard motion detection camera. Police apprehended Morales as he was fleeing the home through a shattered glass door. The defendant was carrying a backpack that was filled with burglar's tools, including a glass breaking device and a wire cutter. A bag found near the defendant contained cash and jewelry belonging to the homeowner.

He was linked to all the burglaries through the same clothing that he wore at each and the backpack he carried.

After his arrest, more than \$400,000 in cash in various denominations was found in a storage unit belonging to Morales as well as his old passports.

Assistant District Attorney Erin Mullins of the District Attorney's Career Criminal Major Crimes Bureau prosecuted the case with the assistance of Assistant District Attorney John Roque of Felony Trial Bureau II under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Michael Whitney, Bureau Chief, and Roni Piplani, Deputy Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney of Major Crimes Shawn Clark.

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