



# Department of Investigation

## *Press Release*

**Release # 054-2002**

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2002

### **DOI ARRESTS QUEENS LANDLORD FOR BRIBERY**

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), today announced the felony arrest of GABER MAHMOUD for paying a \$40 bribe to an undercover City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) Code Enforcement inspector assigned to DOI. The payoff allegedly was in return for the inspector dismissing numerous housing code violations issued against a multiple dwelling property that MAHMOUD sold in January 2002, for which \$5,000 was held in an escrow account pending the correction of the violations.

Commissioner Gill Hearn said that DOI began an investigation in April 2002 when an HPD employee, assigned to the Division of Code Enforcement's (DCE) Queens office, reported that MAHMOUD, who was at DCE to schedule and pay the \$300 fee for a Dismissal Request Inspection (DRI), stated to the employee that he intended to pay a bribe to the assigned housing inspector so that the escrow monies would be released to MAHMOUD.

Commissioner Gill Hearn explained that a DRI is normally conducted prior to the sale or financing of property. In this case, MAHMOUD had requested a DRI of the property, located at 1708 Palmetto Street in Queens, which had been cited 18 times, between 1994 and 2001, for such housing code violations as inadequate lighting, debris removal and egress and access issues, in order to facilitate the release of the escrow funds.

On May 3, 2002, DOI sent an undercover inspector, wearing a concealed recording device, to meet with MAHMOUD at the Palmetto Street property. MAHMOUD asked the undercover to dismiss the 18 existing housing code violations, and then handed him \$40 cash.

MAHMOUD, 60, of 217 Berriman Street in Brooklyn, was charged with Bribery in the Third Degree, a class D felony and Rewarding Official Misconduct in the Second Degree, a class E felony. If convicted, he faces up to 7 years in prison.

Commissioner Gill Hearn expressed her sincere appreciation to HPD Commissioner Jerilyn Perine and members of her staff for their cooperation and assistance in the investigation.

The investigation was conducted by Brian D. Foley, DOI's Inspector General for HPD, and members of his staff, including Special Investigators Christopher Adams and John Bavuso.

## DOI Arrests Queens Landlord For Bribery

The office of Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown is prosecuting the case, which has been assigned to Assistant District Attorney Yvonne Creque.

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