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**39-2020**  
**For Immediate Release**  
**December 17, 2020**

**BRONX MAN INDICTED FOR INTENTIONALLY SETTING  
RIVERDALE APARTMENT BUILDING ON FIRE  
Fire Left Three People With Lung Damage, One of Them Was Also Burned**

Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark today announced that a Bronx man has been indicted on first-degree Arson and additional charges, for intentionally setting an apartment building ablaze in the Riverdale section of the Bronx, critically injuring three people.

District Attorney Clark said, “The defendant allegedly started a fire in a five-story building he lived in, not caring about the danger to dozens of his neighbors. Three people sustained injuries and were in the hospital on a ventilator because of smoke inhalation. One of them required skin grafts. The victims are still suffering terrible physical and emotional pain because of the defendant’s alleged barbaric actions.”

District Attorney Clark said the defendant, Albert Blease, 48, of 215 West 242<sup>nd</sup> Street, was arraigned today on first, second and third-degree Arson, six counts of first-degree Assault, six counts of second-degree Assault, second and third-degree Criminal Mischief, first and second-degree Reckless Endangerment, and fourth-degree Criminal Possession of a Weapon before Bronx Supreme Court Justice Efrain Alvarado. The defendant was released and is due back in court on March 18, 2021.

According to the investigation, at approximately 9:00 a.m. on March 6, 2020 at 215 West 242<sup>nd</sup> Street, the defendant, who lived on the first floor, set gasoline cans on fire in his apartment. First responders nearby were alerted and saw Blease’s apartment on fire and went inside. They observed Blease with a machete and two gas cans in the doorway.

The fire traveled to the apartment located above the defendant’s home, injuring Damarys Molina, 59, and Carlos Matias 37. Molina sustained lung damage and burn injuries. She received three skin grafts and was on a ventilator for a month. Blease’s next door neighbor, Joshua Pizarro, 31, who went back into the building to alert neighbors about the flames and urged them to run to safety, was also injured. Pizarro and Matias were put on a ventilator after sustaining lung damage due to smoke inhalation.



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The case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Elizabeth Kamens of Trial Bureau 50, under the supervision of Lawrence Piergrossi, Chief of Trial Bureau 50, and under the overall supervision of James Brennan, Deputy Chief of the Trial Division, and Theresa Gottlieb, Chief of the Trial Division. District Attorney Clark thanked Emergency Services Unit Detectives Justin Hoff and Jason Egnaczyk, who responded to the scene, and NYPD Detective Robert Bourne of the Arson and Explosion Squad.

**An indictment is an accusatory instrument and not proof of a defendant's guilt.**

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