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**D.A. BROWN: CATHEDRAL HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER
CHARGED WITH SEXUALLY ABUSING TWO FEMALE STUDENTS**

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown today announced that a high school teacher employed at Cathedral High School in Manhattan has been charged with the statutory rape of one student and the sexual abuse of a second student. Both incidents are allegedly to have taken place in Queens.

District Attorney Brown said, "The defendant, who was entrusted with the care, custody and education of these students, is alleged to have betrayed that trust in taking advantage of them."

District Attorney Brown identified the defendant as Richard Ali, 27, of 91-48 115th Street in Richmond Hill, Queens. He is employed as a teacher at Cathedral High School, a Catholic college preparatory school for young women located at 350 East 56th Street in Manhattan. He has been charged with three counts of third-degree rape, two counts of endangering the welfare of a child and one count of third-degree sexual abuse. If convicted, he faces up to four years in prison.

District Attorney Brown said that, according to the criminal complaint, in January 2007, the defendant had sexual intercourse with a female student under the age of seventeen while his vehicle was parked in the vicinity of Long Island City High School.

The District Attorney said that the complaint further alleges that, during the 2006-2007 school year, the defendant placed several phone calls to another student, also less than seventeen years of age, and spoke about wanting to have sex with the student. It is also alleged that on February 3, 2007, the defendant and the student were together at the Whitestone Movie Cinemas when the defendant began to rub the student's legs and then put his hand up her shirt and rubbed her stomach and breasts.

According to District Attorney Brown, an investigation began this week when one of the students informed a school guidance counselor of the alleged sexual abuse. The guidance counselor, in turn, reported the incident to the school principal, who then reported it to the police. The defendant, who was arrested yesterday, was arraigned today before Queens Criminal Court Judge Robert Raciti who set bail at \$40,000, granted orders of protection for both victims and set a return date of April 9, 2007.

The investigation was conducted by Detectives Richard Santagelo and Steven Aquaviva of the New York City Police Department's Queens Special Victims Squad under the command of Lieutenant Arthur Hall.

Assistant District Attorney Donna Marie Golia, who is assigned to the District Attorney's Special Victims Bureau and serves as the Coordinator of the Queens Child Advocacy Center, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Marjory D. Fisher, Bureau Chief, and Kenneth M. Appelbaum and Lucinda C. Suarez, Deputy Chiefs, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Charles A. Testagrossa and Deputy 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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