



RICHARD A. BROWN
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

**DISTRICT ATTORNEY
QUEENS COUNTY**
125-01 QUEENS BOULEVARD
KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11415-1568
718-286-6000

Release # 154-2009
www.queensda.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19, 2009

CONTACT: KEVIN RYAN
HELEN PETERSON
MERIS CAMPBELL
(718)286-6315

LONG ISLAND MAN PLEADS GUILTY
IN FATAL DWI CRASH THAT KILLED TWO WOMEN

Faces 3½ Years to 10½ Years In State Prison

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown today announced that a Long Island man has pleaded guilty to felony vehicular manslaughter in a drunk-driving crash in which his car collided with a livery cab at an Astoria intersection last November, killing both the driver and her passenger.

District Attorney Brown said, “The defendant has admitted his guilt to a terrible and tragic crime and will serve serious prison time, giving him time to reflect upon his reckless actions that resulted in the untimely death of two women. When an individual drives under the influence of alcohol, his vehicle ceases to be a means of transportation and instead becomes a deadly weapon capable of inflicting great bodily harm not just to the driver but to all who cross his path.”

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Daryush Omar, 25, of 35 Eldorado Boulevard in Plainview, New York. Omar, who has been held without bail since his arraignment on November 16, 2008, appeared today before Acting Queens Supreme Court Justice Lenora Gerald and pleaded guilty first-degree vehicular manslaughter. Justice Gerald indicated that she would likely impose a prison term of 3½ years to 10½ years in state prison at sentencing on September 9, 2009.

The District Attorney said that, in pleading guilty, Omar admitted that he was operating a 2004 white Range Rover at about 3:20 a.m. on Sunday, November 16, 2008, when he went through a steady red light at the intersection of 34th Street and 31st Avenue at a speed of at least 45 miles per hour. Omar, who was going westbound on 31st Avenue, collided with a livery cab that was going southbound on 34th Avenue. The driver of the cab, Bessy Valasquez, 41, of 77 Steuben Street in Brooklyn, and the passenger, Panayiota Demetriou, 30, of 31-23 34th Street in Astoria, both suffered massive body trauma and were transported to a local hospital where they died later that day.

Police who responded to the scene reported that Omar emitted a strong odor of alcohol, slurred his speech, had bloodshot and watery eyes and was unsteady on his feet after the crash. He had a blood-alcohol level of .176, more than two times the legal limit.

Assistant District Attorney Keshia Espinal prosecuted the case under the supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Charles A. Testagrossa and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Daniel A. Saunders.

#

Note to Editors: Press release e-version posted at www.queensda.org.