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**TAXI DRIVER PLEADS GUILTY TO ATTEMPTED RAPE OF FEMALE PASSENGER**

*Faces Up To 5½ Years In State Prison; Must Register as Sex Offender*

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown announced today that a livery cab driver has pleaded guilty to the attempted rape four months ago of a 23-year-old female passenger.

District Attorney Brown said, “The offense to which the defendant has admitted is a crime of violence that poses a serious threat to public safety and, as such, warrants punishment by a prison term.”

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Klever Sailema, 46, of 79-11 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue in Elmhurst, Queens. Sailema, who has been held in jail in lieu of \$50,000 bail since his arrest in March 2009, pleaded guilty yesterday to attempted first-degree rape before Acting Queens Supreme Court Justice Joseph Grosso, who indicated that he would sentence the defendant to five and one-half years in state prison plus seven years post-release supervision when sentenced on August 4, 2009. As a convicted sex offender, Sailema must also register with the state’s Division of Criminal Justice Services, which will place his name in the Sex Offender Registry database.

District Attorney Brown said that, in pleading guilty, Sailema admitted that the 23-year-old victim entered his livery cab at approximately 1:00 a.m. on March 2, 2009, in the vicinity of 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 37<sup>th</sup> Street in Astoria. At some point, the victim fell asleep in the back seat and when she awoke her pants and underwear were down and Sailema was on top of her. The victim began screaming and punching the defendant, biting him on the arm, before grabbing the defendant’s hack registration and a photo of the defendant and fleeing the vehicle. The victim was taken to a local Queens hospital and treated for injuries sustained during the attempted rape.

The investigation was conducted by Detective James Ropenus of the New York City Police Department’s Queens Special Victims Squad under the supervision of Lieutenant Arthur Hall, Commanding Officer.

Assistant District Attorney Jared R. Rosenblatt, of the District Attorney’s Special Victims Bureau, prosecuted the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Marjory D. Fisher, Bureau Chief, and Assistant District Attorneys Kenneth M. Appelbaum and Lucinda C. Suarez, Deputy Bureau 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.

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Note to Editors: Press release e-version posted on [www.queensda.org](http://www.queensda.org)