

NEWS

'Bernie Madoff' of landlords gets new digs at Rikers

By [Rebecca Rosenberg](#)

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Steven Hirsch

The so-called “Bernie Madoff” of landlords was finally tossed behind bars Tuesday — after getting a short reprieve from the judge [to celebrate Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur](#).

Steven Croman previously [copped to charges of grand larceny, tax fraud and filing a false instrument](#) and agreed to pay a \$5 million settlement as part of a plea deal.

Justice Jill Konviser reminded Croman that “Rikers ain’t the Ritz” as she handed down the one-year sentence in Manhattan Supreme Court.

“I hope that you spend your days thinking of those that you harmed,” she said as dozens of his tenants giddily watched his comeuppance from the gallery.

“I hope that you spend your days thinking about the religious principles that I delayed the sentencing for,” she added, before he was cuffed and hauled off to jail.

The reviled landlord, whose portfolio includes 140 buildings, had faced up to 25 years in prison.

He scored \$45 million in loans by filing false paperwork inflating his rental income on mortgage documents, according to the office of the State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, who prosecuted the case.

“The measures Mr. Croman took to boost his own bottom line— while blatantly disregarding the wellbeing of his tenants — are shocking,” said Schneiderman in a statement. “A booming real estate market is no excuse for criminal activity aimed at displacing New Yorkers.”

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The AG’s office is also suing the landlord in civil court for using an ex-cop-turned-private investigator to intimidate tenants out of their rent-stabilized apartments.

Croman allegedly built his real estate empire by buying up cheap buildings filled with rent-regulated tenants then embarking on a campaign of harassment to get them out, according to the AG.

Cynthia Chaffee, 65, who lives in one of Croman’s Gramercy Park buildings, blasted her landlord for intimidating tenants by shutting off hot water and refusing to make repairs.

“I wish jail on no one but the public needs to be protected from him,” she said outside the courtroom. “He’s a monster.”

Defense lawyer Benjamin Brafman said Croman had taken responsibility for his actions and paid \$3 million of the \$5 million settlement he owes. The remaining sum is due in the next two years.