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Tenants Make Themselves Heard as Croman Case is Pushed Back



Croman tenants rally outside the Manhattan Supreme Court. Photo: Alex Gerald

Two controversial landlords who own a number of Lower East Side buildings were confronted by their tenants Tuesday morning.

Landlord Steve Croman appeared in Manhattan Supreme Court and was met by a coalition of his tenants who held a rally in front of the courthouse. Raphael Toledano – another New York landlord accused of tenant harassment – was in housing court across the street, and some of *his* tenants helped organize the rally (a “meet and greet,” as they called it) in front of the Supreme Court building at 100 Centre St.

Last month, Croman was indicted along with mortgage broker Barry Swartz on 20 felony counts related to alleged mortgage-fraud. (Read the full indictment [here](#)). On Tuesday, Supreme Court Justice Jill Konviser adjourned the hearing until Sept. 20, and Croman’s lawyer told the New York Post he’s close to reaching a plea agreement in the case.



Croman (left) leaving Manhattan Supreme Court on Tuesday. Photo: Alex Gerald

Croman is also facing a civil suit brought by State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman’s office for using an ex-cop named Anthony Falconite to intimidate tenants.

Toledano has been accused of harassing tenants as well, and appeared in New York City Housing Court Tuesday for civil and criminal contempt after failing to pay a settlement to tenants at 444 E 13th St., one of his buildings.

Nina d’Alessandro, a member of the Toledano Tenants Coalition who lives on East 5th Street, spoke at the rally. “They gain power by isolating us,” she said. “Sharing our experience makes us stronger.” The coalition was born about a year ago as residents living in several of Toledano’s buildings started organizing against their landlord. Now the coalition includes tenants from 22 different Toledano-owned buildings in lower Manhattan.

Michael Jaszcz, a member of the Stop Croman Coalition, runs an education nonprofit out of his East 10th Street apartment. He’s been a Croman tenant for almost a decade and says he had to deal with dangerous living conditions when Croman renovated the apartment below his. “Everything in my apartment was filled with dust,” he said, including his clothes, desk and toothbrush.

Jaszcz said tenants’ demands are simple: “We want to live comfortably and dream the dream that New York is.”

Tamalyn Miller, a Croman Tenant at 521 East 5th St., said that even though Croman’s case was pushed back, she’s happy. “The court case may go on and on,” she said, but Croman’s reputation is forever tarnished. “When we were going through this in 2009, 2010, nobody would listen to us,” she added.

Luis Cortes, a Croman tenant at 338 East 100th St. since 1999, voiced similar sentiments. Cortes says he's gone nearly a year without cooking gas and months without heat, along with facing frivolous lawsuits, illegal rent hikes and other forms of harassment from Croman. Of the courts, he said, "they didn't want to hear it. I feel like somehow they were pro-Croman."

"But now I feel good," Cortes said. "Since [the indictment] happened, we can tell what happened to us as tenants. Now we can be heard."

UPDATE 7:59 p.m. An earlier version of this article didn't specify why Toledano was in housing court. We've learned more about his hearing since publication, and the story has been updated to reflect the new information.



Tenants and supporters wait for Croman to leave the courthouse. Photo: Alex Gerald

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