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Tenants Relocated After City Declares Apartments at 159 Stanton St. Unsafe



159 Stanton St.

The Department of Buildings issued a partial "vacate order" today for 159 Stanton St., a building owned by notorious landlord Steve Croman. Now the residents of two apartments are having to relocate until unsafe conditions in the tenement are rectified. The Red Cross was on the scene this morning to help tenants find temporary housing.

A notice pasted to the front door reads, "Do Not Enter... The Department of Buildings has determined that conditions in this premises are immediately perilous to life." [In the building's online file](#), a DOB inspector added, "Construction activity in third floor apartments has caused the ceilings in apartment 1 and 2 on (the) second floor to become dislodged and in danger of further collapse."



This past December, the tenants sued Croman in housing court, saying he was subjecting them to unsafe conditions and harassment. They were back in court for a hearing this past Thursday. We were alerted to today's developments by the Cooper Square Committee and City Council member Margaret Chin.

This afternoon we spoke with Francis Francis Di Donato, who has lived in the building for 25 years, and has now been forced from his home, at least temporarily. The Red Cross has found accommodations for him tonight at a YMCA facility on 47th Street, but he'll have to find longer-term housing after the weekend. "Croman follows the same script in all of his buildings," said Di Donato. "He makes everyone's lives so miserable that they want to give up." Di Donato has a 12-year-old son who goes to school in the neighborhood. He's obviously unhappy about having to uproot him.

Another tenant, who asked not to be identified, said she noticed cracks in the ceiling Thursday afternoon. The tenant was so concerned that she didn't stay in the apartment last night. In this week's hearing, the judge declined to take action that would have forced Croman to make immediate repairs. "I feel very resentful," said the tenant, "that the judge didn't listen on Thursday and there was no adequate tenant protection plan... I was left unprotected."

On the scene this afternoon was Sherief Gaber, an attorney with the Urban Justice Center. He's representing the tenants in housing court. He noted that DOB inspectors singled out Croman's construction crews for working without a permit and performing illegal electrical work. The inspectors observed sagging ceilings, which were being supported by a temporary joist. While a loose schedule was established for the repairs, the judge refused to issue an order which would have held Croman to a tighter timeline, said Gaber. As for the displaced tenants, Gaber asserted, "I believe the landlord should bear the cost of relocation."

Last May, Croman was arrested and charged in criminal court with multiple felonies, including grand larceny, criminal tax fraud and falsifying business records. He's being prosecuted by the State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, who is also suing Croman in civil court.

Just four days ago, local elected officials sent a letter to Croman about "deplorable housing conditions" at 159 Stanton St. They demanded that he, "address all repair and safety issues right away."

In a statement this afternoon, Chin said, "I am saddened and angered by the plight of these families who have been forced to vacate their homes today as a result of the irresponsible actions of their landlord. I am calling on that landlord, Steve Croman, to stop using construction to harass and victimize his hardworking tenants."

We have contacted Croman's press representatives for comment. This story will be updated if and when they respond.

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