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**Department of Justice**

U.S. Attorney's Office

Eastern District of New York

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Saturday, May 22, 2021

## **Brooklyn Man Arrested for Arson of Yeshiva and Synagogue**

A criminal complaint has been filed in federal court in Brooklyn charging Ali Alaheri with setting fire to a yeshiva and synagogue in Brooklyn on May 19, 2021. Alaheri was arrested in Dobbs Ferry, New York, yesterday and will make his initial appearance this afternoon before United States Magistrate Judge Vera M. Scanlon.

Mark J. Lesko, Acting United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York; John B. DeVito, Special Agent-in-Charge, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF); Dermot Shea, Commissioner, New York City Police Department (NYPD); and Daniel A. Nigro, Commissioner, New York City Fire Department (FDNY), announced the arrest and charge.

"As alleged in the complaint and detention letter, Alaheri deliberately set fire to the sacred home of a yeshiva and synagogue, and viciously attacked a man wearing traditional Hasidic garb, demonstrating a violent hatred that cannot be tolerated," stated Acting U.S. Attorney Lesko. "This Office strongly condemns these sorts of intentional acts of violence and we will go to every length possible to prosecute this type of conduct to the fullest extent possible." Mr. Lesko praised the special agents, detectives and fire marshals of the Strategic Explosive and Arson Response Task Force for their outstanding investigative work on the case.

"The defendant's alleged actions endangered the lives of numerous individuals, from the congregants and students at the synagogue and yeshiva, to the first responders who arrived to extinguish the flames, to the neighboring members of the community," stated ATF Special Agent-in-Charge DeVito. "The members of ATF's Arson and Explosives Task Force, in partnership with NYPD's Hate Crime Unit, worked diligently to quickly identify the defendant and bring him to justice. I thank them for their efforts, as well as those of the U.S. Attorney's Office, in sending a clear message that crimes such as this will not be tolerated."

"Ali Alaheri, as alleged in today's federal complaint, set fire to a school and religious institution and threatened public safety for all. I commend our NYPD investigators, our government partners and the prosecutors in the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York for their work in bringing swift justice in this case," stated NYPD Commissioner Shea.

"Arson is a callous and senseless crime that endangers the lives of innocent residents and our firefighters who bravely respond to protect life and property," stated FDNY Commissioner Nigro. "I commend our Fire Marshals and their partners in law enforcement for their outstanding efforts to investigate this incident and apprehend the suspect."

As set forth in the complaint and detention letter, in the pre-dawn hours of May 19, 2021, Alaheri was captured on surveillance video piling garbage bags against the side of a building on 36<sup>th</sup> Street in Brooklyn that housed a yeshiva (a Jewish school) and a synagogue. Alaheri was recorded igniting the garbage bags. Firefighters responded to a fire alarm at the location and extinguished the blaze. Several hours later, Alaheri was again captured on surveillance video, this time repeatedly punching a man wearing traditional Hasidic garb. There was no interaction between Alaheri and the victim prior to the assault. When Alaheri was arrested on May 21, 2021, he appeared to be wearing the same clothing he was wearing in the video footage of the assault.

The charge in the complaint is an allegation, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty. If convicted, Alaheri faces a mandatory minimum sentence of five years' imprisonment, and a maximum of 20 years' imprisonment.

The government's case is being handled by the Office's Civil Rights Section. Assistant United States Attorney Rachel Shanies is in charge of the prosecution.

**The Defendant:**

ALI ALAHERI  
Age: 29  
Brooklyn, New York

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 21-MJ-624

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**Attachment(s):**

[Download Alaheri arson complaint](#)

**Topic(s):**

Civil Rights  
Violent Crime

**Component(s):**

[USAO - New York, Eastern](#)

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Updated May 22, 2021