

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## MAHFAR TENANTS COALITION DEMANDS PROPER MITIGATION OF LEAD DURING CONSTRUCTION

*Tenants find high lead concentrations in their buildings and speak out against the unsafe construction practices used by LES landlord Samy Mahfar.*

**WHAT:** Press Conference / **WHERE:** 210 Rivington St. / **WHEN:** 12:30pm – 1:30pm

**December 10, New York** – Tenants of two Samy Mahfar-owned Lower East Side buildings, 210 Rivington St. and 102 Norfolk St., have now both received reports from NYC’s Dept. of Health indicating unsafe levels of lead in their buildings. The lead was spread throughout both buildings by mismanaged gut-renovation construction, which has surged through the buildings for months as this landlord races to convert its rent-regulated units into luxury rentals.

The tenants of the Mahfar Tenants Coalition – a coalition of multiple buildings – are now calling for two concrete demands:

- 1) When doing construction work in his buildings, Mr. Mahfar must put in place a proper lead mitigation plan that utilizes an EPA-certified abatement contractor. This would apply to all construction work going forward that poses any risk of lead exposure to tenants.**
- 2) City agencies must better regulate existing lead laws, which are strong [on paper] but are rendered ineffective by poor on-the-ground enforcement. Additional measures must be taken to protect tenants across NYC.**

In addition to these lead findings, it has already been revealed that Mr. Mahfar employed Michel Pimienta – the AG-investigated, unlicensed “tenant relocater” known to use unscrupulous tactics – to move out rent-regulated tenants across a number of his buildings. Those tenants who remained were subjected to the effects of mismanaged construction, including (but not limited to) exposure to lead.

*"For fourteen months now, the residents of 210 Rivington St. have been exposed to hazardous construction practices. From last winter through this summer our hallways and homes were blanketed in dust. Even months after paint and plaster were blasted off common-area walls and stairs, and after multiple units in the building underwent gut-renovation, we still found confirmed lead levels over five times higher than federal regulations allow. We will never know our true level of exposure as these results from NYC’s Dept. of Health were gathered during the lighter stage of work. We suspect that earlier tests would have revealed immensely higher levels." – A statement from the 210 Rivington Street Tenants Assoc.*

*"It was disturbing for us to learn that our landlord exposed the families living in this building to extremely high levels of lead from the demolition in the building, up to 2,750 times the safe limit! Lead-based paint is a serious health issue and exposure can have long-term health effects. We are now forced to be tested regularly for years to come to see if there are any residual effects from the exposure." – A statement from the 102 Norfolk Street Tenants Assoc.*

**Council Member Rosie Mendez** said, *"Residents at 210 Rivington have been living in untenable living conditions with prolonged construction that is impacting their health, safety and peace of mind. Recent inspections have confirmed high levels of lead that the tenants are exposed to on a daily basis. The owner, Samy Mahfar, must put a lead mitigation plan in place that will address and prioritize the tenants’ safety, as well as minimize any health risk. NYC’s Department of Health should bring civil prosecution against Mahfar if he fails to put a plan in place considering that he is the owner of 102 Norfolk Street where lead levels were 2,700 times the legal limit."*

**Council Member Margaret Chin** said, *“I stand with the tenants of 102 Norfolk Street and 210 Rivington Street and our community housing organizations, as we continue working together to improve quality of life and safety conditions. I continue to strongly condemn any actions by the landlord, Samy Mahfar, to undertake dangerous construction that has already resulted in unsafe lead exposure for the victimized tenants of these Lower East Side buildings. Mr. Mahfar must have a legitimate lead mitigation plan in place before he does any further renovations in these buildings. In addition, I call on our city agencies to take a more proactive and collaborative approach to enforcing the law that should be protecting tenants from unsafe lead exposure.”*

**Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer** said, *“I’ve been fighting landlords like Samy Mahfar all over Manhattan - those who refuse to use safe procedures, harass rent-regulated tenants, and only erratically correct HPD violations. I’m proud to stand with tenants at 102 Norfolk, 210 Rivington, & and the Cooper Square Committee – along with Council Members Rosie Mendez and Margaret Chin, Speaker Sheldon Silver, and State Senator Daniel Squadron. We call on Mr. Mahfar to use proper lead mitigation techniques when doing renovations and help keep the tenants safe in their homes. I will also continue to work with my colleagues to see how we can strengthen regulations and enforcement to make sure that tenants are informed of lead levels in their buildings.”*

**State Senator Daniel Squadron** said, *“Landlords have an obligation to abate lead hazards in a way that is safe and consistent with city and state regulations. And when tenants ask for information about lead levels in their buildings, city agencies must be transparent and timely in their response. I look forward to working with the tenants at 102 Norfolk, 210 Rivington and other buildings affected by this landlord, the Cooper Square Committee, the NYC Coalition to End Lead Poisoning, my elected colleagues, UJC, CAAAV, and city agencies to enforce existing lead regulations and protect the safety and health of tenants.”*

**NYS Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver** said, *“It is completely unacceptable for residents to be exposed to dangerous levels of lead and the building owner must take immediate action to mitigate the danger and place the safety of tenants above all else. In order to ensure that all proper safety measures are taken, I am calling on the city to inspect the buildings in question and enforce the regulations that protect tenants from toxins.”*

**Garrett Wright, Senior Staff Attorney at the Urban Justice Center’s Community Development Project** said, *“During the past year, Mr. Mahfar has repeatedly violated the law by exposing tenants at 102 Norfolk Street and 210 Rivington Street to toxic lead paint and other hazardous substances. We are calling on the City of New York to take immediate action in order to protect these tenants from such serious dangers to their health and wellbeing.”*

**Wai Yee Poon, Chinatown Tenants Union Organizer at CAAAV Organizing Asian Communities** said, *“We have had tenants of Samy Mahfar coming to us to complain about construction, renovation, and even harassment issues, so unfortunately, I am not surprised that 210 Rivington St. and 102 Norfolk St. tenants are experiencing unsafe lead levels in their homes. We demand that Mr. Mahfar be transparent about his lead mitigation plan before he does any kind of renovation in all his buildings and coordinate with tenants. We also demand the city to improve their enforcement on the law requiring lead mitigation and actively educate tenants in multiple languages about the process.”*

**Yonatan Tadele, tenant organizer from the Cooper Square Committee** said, *“Speculative landlords seem to constantly pose problems for NYC’s rent-regulated tenants. We believe these tenants need additional protections in dealing with speculators – and that includes strengthening enforcement of our City’s lead laws.”*

These Dept. of Health reports, coupled with numerous Stop Work Orders and violations issued by the City’s Dept. of Buildings, confirm the obvious: that work done in Samy Mahfar’s buildings is unsafe. The Mahfar Tenants Coalition demands safe & habitable housing, during and after construction in their buildings. We are also urging the City to reform & strengthen enforcement surrounding Local Law 1, the City’s existing lead law, to sufficiently protect tenants in buildings undergoing mass gut-renovations.