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LET THE TENANTS COOK AGAIN!

East Village Tenants to Jared Kushner: We've Gone Months Without Gas — Enough is Enough.

Tenants of 118 East 4th Street Demand Adequate Living Conditions and a Restoration of Cooking Gas

Tenants Have Been Without Gas for Nearly Five Months, Other Building Services are Grossly Neglected

New York, NY – Tenants of 118 East 4th Street in the East Village appear back in Manhattan Housing Court on Thursday March 3rd at 9:30AM as part of ongoing litigation against their landlord, **Jared Kushner**. Tenants are calling for the immediate restoration of essential services and for living conditions to be rectified.

The tenants have recently endured bouts of no heat, mounding trash, and have been without cooking gas since October 2015. Con Ed shut down all gas for the building and **Jared Kushner** has yet to take the necessary procedures with the city to restore it. This comes on top of the landlord's failure to repair a multitude of potentially dangerous conditions in the building, including:

- No cooking gas
- Collapsed ceilings
- Questionably safe electrical systems
- Mounding trash
- Deprivation of heat
- Apartments entered without notice
- Blocked mail delivery
- Vermin

The tenants filed an HP Action for repairs and services in January to seek a remedy for these unsafe conditions. The landlord received a default judgement at the first court appearance on February 4th as Kushner failed to appear in court to address matters – a sign the tenants interpret as further disregard for the issues they face. At the time of a previous court appearance, the building had a total of 17 open violations with the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, including 4 considered “immediately hazardous.” The current violation count is now 35 in total with 8 class “C” immediately hazardous violations. A motion was recently filed in court to hold Kushner in contempt of court due to the lack of restoration of services.

“It was nine whole days without heat and hot water; and it has been four and a half months without cooking gas!” said **118 E 4th Street tenant Ben Mackey**. “I’m forced to eat out because of the lack of gas. It has cost me thousands of dollars. I’m fed up with Westminster Management. They entered my apartment without permission and left my apartment unlocked. A few months ago we had mice and rats, both in the building and in the trash. It is obvious they don’t care about this building. The gas was shut off due to a leak over four months ago and their repairs keep failing inspections.”

“My bathroom ceiling has collapsed five times due to a leak in my neighbor’s sink that they just wouldn’t fix. They’ll just patch the pipe or hole, not tackle the root of the problem,” said **Jennifer Hengen, a tenant in the building for over 20 years**. “Rusty water dripped from two holes in my ceiling for a year and a half before management called the plumber. Is this harassment or neglect? That’s the question we’ve asked ourselves countless times here at 118 East 4th Street.”

“Every landlord must provide safe, clean housing with access to the basic services the law requires them to provide. Whenever I hear of a building that has been without cooking gas for months, I am enraged – and we all should be,” said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. “I urge the Court to ensure the law is enforced, and I thank the Cooper Square Committee and MFY Legal Services for their tireless work to protect tenants in our community.”

“It is unacceptable that for five months tenants at 118 East 4th Street have been without gas and beset by vermin, heat outages, and ceiling collapses,” said **State Senator Brad Hoylman**. “New Yorkers have a right to safe, livable apartments, and my colleagues and I demand that the landlord comply with the Court’s order and restore the gas to which these residents are entitled. We won’t stand by and watch families bullied out of their homes by landlords who flout the law and refuse to provide essential services. I’m grateful to Cooper Square Committee and MFY Legal Services for their steadfast support for tenants in the East Village.”

“Based on Jared Kushner’s current and past actions, I can only conclude that he is constructively evicting tenants from his buildings to deregulate rent stabilized apartments. Someone who owns as many buildings as he does should not have so many problems in addressing simple and/or complex repairs. The tenants of 118 East 4th Street have not had gas service for 5 months. Last year, tenants at 170-174 East 2nd Street didn’t have gas for over a year. I can only believe after all the problems at East 2nd Street that what is happening at East 4th Street is just a willful disregard for the tenants right to a safe and habitable apartment. So the question really is whether he can’t do repairs in a timely way or doesn’t want to. Based on all the work my office did with the East 2nd Street buildings, I believe that he doesn’t want to!” – **Councilwoman Rosie Mendez, District 2**

“Landlords are obligated to provide a reasonable standard of living for tenants regardless of their status as rent-regulated or market rate. Tenants deserve the best protection under the law and should not be forced to suffer under the weight of an abusive landlord.” – **Assemblymember Deborah J. Glick**

“This cooking gas outage has the tenants spending a lot more money on food – and the other issues in the building are serious as well,” said **Brandon Kielbasa, Director of Organizing and Policy at the Cooper Square Committee**. “It’s galling that some of these issues at 118 E 4th Street could be resolved without much of a commitment by the landlord. Things like proper garbage removal and basic plumbing repairs are not costly. However, when they are not tended to they lead to vermin infestations and collapsed ceilings, both of which the tenants recently experienced. It’s a shame this very wealthy landlord can’t commit the resources necessary to let these tenants have what they are entitled to – safe and decent homes.”

"MFY Legal Services is working with the tenants of 118 E. 4th Street to vindicate their rights in a court of law," said **Andrew Darcy, Staff Attorney at MFY Legal Services**. "Building owners are required by law to provide basic services – including gas and heat – and tenants have the right to expect these services when they pay hard-earned money on rent. When, as here, owners fail to do so, action must be taken."

The tenants are represented by lawyers from the MFY Legal Services. The Cooper Square Committee has provided organizing support for this lawsuit.

ABOUT MFY LEGAL SERVICES

MFY Legal Services, Inc. provides free legal assistance to tenants in Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx and also assists New Yorkers in the areas of public benefits, foreclosure, consumer, civil and disability rights, workers’ rights, and family law. MFY is committed to working to protect the safety and affordability of housing for low-income New Yorkers so they can continue to be an integral part of New York City communities.

ABOUT THE COOPER SQUARE COMMITTEE

The Cooper Square Committee (CSC) works with area tenants to contribute to the preservation and development of affordable, environmentally healthy housing and community/cultural spaces so that the Cooper Square area remains racially, economically, and culturally diverse. The Cooper Square Committee has spearheaded significant neighborhood victories in our history, comprising 50 years of tenant organizing, community-based planning, advocacy and development. They rely on the active involvement of our members in the organization's work to advance our affordable housing agenda.

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