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Contact: Yonatan Tadele – [yonatant@coopersquare.org](mailto:yonatant@coopersquare.org), 212-228-8210 x6

## **TENANTS TO ICON REALTY: WE DEMAND AN END TO CONSTRUCTION-AS-HARASSMENT**

### **TENANTS PREPARE TO FILE 2 MORE LAWSUITS AGAINST LANDLORD ICON REALTY**

#### *ELECTED OFFICIALS ACROSS MANHATTAN CONTINUE THE FIGHT AND STAND WITH TENANTS AGAINST UNJUST PRACTICES*

**WHEN:** Monday, May 9, at 11:30 AM

**WHERE:** First press conference at 445 East 9th Street, march through the East Village, second press conference at 57 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave

**New York, NY** – Today, tenants of two Icon Realty-owned East Village buildings, 445 East 9<sup>th</sup> Street and 57 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, along with local elected officials and community groups, call on Icon Realty to end their alleged campaign of construction-as-harassment against tenants and to meet the tenants’ demands. If Icon refuses to do so, the tenants – represented by the Urban Justice Center and Manhattan Legal Services – will file lawsuits against the landlord.

For years now, Icon Realty has been aggressively displacing rent-regulated tenants to make room for ultra-high rent paying tenants. Like other bad-acting landlords, Icon Realty has exposed tenants to hazardous health and safety threats, brought dozens of lawsuits against tenants, and continue to deny tenants their right to live in these buildings without fear of extreme tactics to remove them.

Today, Icon Realty tenants will announce their demands for proper lead mitigation, safe construction practices, unobstructed building entryways, no disruption of elevator service (an essential service for mobility impaired tenants at 57 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave.), and for Icon Realty to respect rent-regulated tenants’ rights. The Stand for Tenant Safety Coalition is calling for reform of the Department of Buildings to better protect tenants during construction. Stabilizing NYC is calling for an end to harassment by predatory equity landlords.

“At the end of the day, we don’t know what we’re coming home to. In two years of bad communication, bad accounting, loss of basic services, cycles of neglect and disregard, we are now accustomed to uncertainty where none should exist,” said **Ben Coopernsmith a member of the 445 E. 9<sup>th</sup> Street Tenants Association**. “We will demand fair play for our tenancies with Icon Realty Management beyond the glad-handing of their representatives, the unfulfilled promises, even the possibility that they will flip us once the paint dries.”

“It was scary getting a buyout proposal for the rent stabilized apartment I have lived in for three and a half decades, especially since there are so few places to live anymore that are affordable. In my opinion, landlords like Icon force out tenants to profit from their multi-million dollar investments in buildings; it’s a business model that causes tenants misery, stress, and uncertainty. Construction has been our biggest concern at 57 2nd Ave; just this week, Icon tore up the lobby floor with no advance notice to tenants, some of whom rely on canes, walkers, and wheelchairs. I’m disabled and use a walker, and I’m thankful I didn’t have to leave the building when the floor was an expanse of rubble,” **said Marion Farrier, a member of the 57 2nd Avenue Tenants Association.**

“Our building had been like a family, but within months of taking over the building, Icon removed many families from their homes. They started turning vacated apartments into luxury ones while cutting essential services for the remaining tenants and leaving occupied apartments in disrepair. Tenants in Brooklyn are now coming together to make sure that Icon does not continue this harassment.” – **Nicole DeNuccio of 36 Linden Street in Bushwick.**

“Since Icon Realty Management bought 331 Keap Street, living here has been a nightmare. I’ve experienced harassment and discrimination in many ways. After they took over I’ve been living with noise, dust and health hazard conditions caused by construction. There have been constant service cut offs and getting repairs is nearly impossible. When you call for repairs you are asked if you live in a new or old apartment. ICON has numerous tactics to try to get rent stabilized tenants out. It is loud and clear that tenants with rent stabilized apartments do not receive the same treatment as market tenants. As a fellow tenant living under the management of Icon Realty I stand in solidarity with the tenants of Icon Community United.” – **Daniela N. Durán of 331 Keap Street in Williamsburg.**

The local elected officials that took a stand with the tenants include Council Member Rosie Mendez, Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer, and State Sen. Brad Hoylman.

“Every tenant has the right to safe, clean housing,” said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer.** “Unaddressed structural damage, unfinished construction, and the failure to provide legally-required services like heat, hot water, and access to cooking gas are all unacceptable violations of tenants’ rights. The Urban Justice Center and Manhattan Legal Services have my thanks and my office’s full support in their efforts to protect Icon’s tenants.”

“I am deeply disturbed by the frequent and continued complaints of serious health, safety, and quality of life issues in Icon-owned buildings -- many of which have gone unresolved for months,” said **State Senator Brad Hoylman.** “My constituents are fed up with lengthy gas shut-offs and delayed repairs, and they feel pressured to leave their rent-regulated homes. These conditions are unacceptable. Tenant harassment has no place in New York, and my colleagues and I will be standing side by side with Icon tenants until it ends.”

“For the past several years, tenants who reside in Icon Realty buildings have contacted our office or the community based organizations with assistance on getting notice of scheduled repairs and a timeline for the projected renovations and restoration of essential services. However, tenants continue to live in construction zones with no relief in sight and long wait-times for repairs even after a meeting with tenants, elected officials and Icon Realty staff this past November. It is unclear why repairs are not done expeditiously and communications with tenants does not improve their daily living conditions. I can only conclude that Icon Realty and/or their staff do not want to conduct business in a professional and amicable manner.” – **Councilwoman Rosie Mendez, District 2.**

“It should be appalling to any reasonable New Yorker that our city government is allowing bad-acting landlords to every day deplete our incredible resource - over 1 million affordable, rent regulated apartments,” said **Harriet Putterman, Tenant Organizer, Cooper Square Committee.** “Even worse, the city is providing little protection to the long-term, stable tenants living there in frighteningly unsafe conditions. Landlords use construction as harassment - recklessly renovating apartments in still tenanted buildings - and mainly get away with it. The Stand for Tenant Safety Coalition (STS) is promoting 12 bills in the City Council that would give the Department of Buildings the “oomph” it needs to protect tenants and keep that vast affordable housing resource intact.”

“The tenants at 445 East 9th Street will not be driven from their homes by unsafe construction practices,” said **Rini Fonseca-Sabune, Staff Attorney at the Urban Justice Center’s Community Development Project.** “They demand that Icon comply with all legal requirements moving forward. They are not willing to sacrifice their health and wellbeing.”

“The tenants at 57 Second Avenue deserve safe and clean homes, free from the harassment and disruption they have been experiencing on a daily basis,” said **Daniel Freeman, Staff Attorney at Manhattan Legal Services.** “We hope that Icon Realty will finally take meaningful steps to bring an end to the hazardous conditions in the building, but we stand ready to represent these tenants in court if they do not.”

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### **ABOUT THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT AT THE URBAN JUSTICE CENTER**

The Community Development Project (CDP) at the Urban Justice Center strengthens the impact of grassroots organizations in New York City’s low-income and other excluded communities. CDP partners with community organizations to win legal cases, publish community-driven research reports, assist with the formation of new organizations and cooperatives, and provide technical assistance in support of their work towards social justice.

## **ABOUT MANHATTAN LEGAL SERVICES**

Manhattan Legal Services, a program of Legal Services NYC, fights poverty and seeks racial, social, and economic justice for low-income New Yorkers. For more than 45 years, LSNYC has challenged systemic injustice and helped clients meet basic needs for housing, access to high-quality education, health care, family stability, and income and economic security. LSNYC is the largest civil legal services provider in the country, with deep roots in all of the communities we serve. Our neighborhood-based offices and outreach sites across all five boroughs help more than 80,000 New Yorkers annually.

## **ABOUT THE COOPER SQUARE COMMITTEE**

The Cooper Square Committee (CSC) works with area residents 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.