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New Haven rabbi charged with sexual assault



Daniel Greer New Haven Police DEPARTMENT

By Register Staff

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Outside the Yeshiva of New Haven / the Gan School on Norton Street Wednesday in New Haven. Esteban L. Hernandez / Hearst Connecticut Media

NEW HAVEN >> A city rabbi turned himself in to police Wednesday morning following a police investigation into an alleged sexual assault of a minor.

Rabbi Daniel Greer, 77, of West Park Avenue, was charged with second-degree sexual assault and risk of injury to a minor, police said. Bail was set at \$100,000.

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New Haven attorney William F. Dow Wednesday said Greer intends to plead not guilty during a court appearance, which Dow said likely will be in the second week of August.

“I proudly represent Rabbi Greer,” Dow said. “Rabbi Greer has a long history of positive contributions to the New Haven community. He intends to plead not guilty. He looks forward to addressing these unfounded charges in court.”

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Attorney Antonio Ponvert III confirmed Wednesday the victim in this criminal charge his is client, Eliyahu Mirlis, who was awarded \$15 million [in his civil lawsuit accusing Greer](#) in May. The New Haven Register generally does not identify people who allege sexual abuse, but Mirlis wanted to come forward. Ponvert represented Mirlis in the civil trail.

Mirlis, now 29, said the abuse has led him to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder as well as distress, humiliation, depression, low self-esteem and an inability to maintain emotional relationships, according to court documents.

“My client is relieved and gratified that the New Haven police department is pursuing criminal charges,” Ponvert said. “If the justice systems works, and all signs are that it does, Greer will spend his remaining days locked in a cell ... in a maximum security prison.”

Greer is also a real estate developer and founder of an Orthodox Jewish school. Greer is accused sexually abusing Girls for years while he attended Greer’s yeshiva. State law added \$5 million in punitive damages in Mirlis’ case.

No one answered the door at Greer’s home Wednesday afternoon.

One neighbor, who declined to be named, said Greer’s family is usually very quiet and Greer mostly kept to himself, with an occasional greeting.

Police were contacted in August 2016 by a man, through his attorney, alleging he had been the victim of sexual assaults from the early to mid-2000s. The suspect in the alleged assaults was Greer, the then dean of the Yeshiva of New Haven/the Gan School, where the victim was a high school student.

No one at the school Wednesday responded to several attempts to buzz-in at the facility on Norton Street.

Greer, who founded the Yeshiva in New Haven and the Gan School, also was a leader in the revitalization of the city's Edgewood neighborhood. He was accused in May 2016 of repeatedly sexually assaulting Mirlis, of New Jersey, over several years in the early- to mid-2000s. Mirlis attended the school from 2001 to 2005.

Greer has denied the allegations.

In addition to the lawsuit, a lawyer for the alleged victim also filed a criminal complaint with the police department in 2016. The investigation had remained open but during the civil trial advanced more quickly following the verdict.

Mirlis claimed in the federal lawsuit that Greer had sexually abused him in his sophomore, junior and senior years at the school, and that some of the abuse had occurred on school property. The federal complaint states that the abuse began when Mirlis was 15 and Greer was in his 60s. The alleged abuse included sexual acts and being forced to watch pornography while drinking alcohol. The suit also alleged these acts occurred in Greer's home, motels in Branford, and other properties owned by the school.

According to court documents, Greer invoked his right against self-incrimination at a deposition last year. He repeatedly invoked his Fifth Amendment rights last week when he was compelled to testify at the civil trial.

Greer's lawyers asked a judge to bar Mirlis from calling Greer to the witness stand, but the request was denied.

Ultimately, the jury was asked to decide whether the Yeshiva of New Haven was negligent in hiring and supervising Greer and whether Mirlis' claims of suffering a result of that negligence and whether Greer did cause the emotional distress Mirlis claimed to have suffered.

Judy Alperin, CEO of the Woodbridge-based Jewish Federation of Greater New Haven, said the organization is supportive of New Haven in its pursuit of justice. A child's safety is paramount, and children should never be placed at risk, Alperin said.

"It's very, very distressing to be aware of what was going on," Alperin said. "We hope that this will bring peace to those who suffered."

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