

Member of 'modesty squad' indicted

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Suspect, 6 others broke into apartment of J'lem woman and brutally assaulted her with bat and tear gas.

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Haredim riots 298.88 (do not publish again). (photo credit:Flash 90 [file])

A 29-year-old man affiliated with Jerusalem's haredi "modesty squad" has been indicted in a Jerusalem court for allegedly assaulting a 31-year-old woman in her apartment, together with six other men, after they suspected she had carried out "improper" relations with other men, court documents released Sunday show. The suspect, Elhanan Buzaglo, who worked for the haredi modesty squad - a vigilante group active in the Mea Shearim and Geula neighborhoods that sees to it that the city's haredi residents conduct themselves in accordance with the conventions of their ultra-observant lifestyle - was allegedly paid \$2,000 for his services, the charge sheet states. The chilling three-page indictment relates how the seven men brutally assaulted their victim - a divorced woman who had previously led a haredi lifestyle - in her home in the Ma'alot Dafna neighborhood on the night of June 1. The men, armed with a bat and tear gas, barged into her home in the predominantly haredi neighborhood at 10:45 p.m., the charge sheet relates. "The defendant and the others shoved the complainant, dropped her to the floor, beat her, slammed her head against the floor and kicked [her] all over her body." "The defendant or one of the others sat on her head in a bid to prevent her from seeing what was going on and to prevent her from resisting," the charges continue. The men also allegedly tied a piece of cloth to the woman's mouth and warned her that should she open her eyes, they would spray tear gas into them, the indictment says. During the assault, the attackers checked the woman's two cellphones to see who had called her, and repeatedly called her a "whore" and a "liar." According to the charge sheet, before the men left, they reportedly told the woman that she must leave her apartment, or that night's attack would "only be the beginning," and that if she remained there she would be murdered. The woman suffered serious injuries all over her body and required medical treatment. She subsequently received threatening phone calls and letters, and as a result decided shortly thereafter to move out of her apartment, even though her lease was not up for another year. Buzaglo was arrested last month after his fingerprints were found in the plaintiff's apartment, police said. "A man who is allegedly willing to take part in the cruel beating of a young and helpless woman 'suspected' of socializing with married men, and all this solely for money, is a dangerous, conscienceless person with no inhibitions," Judge Nava Ben-Or wrote in her decision to extend his remand in custody. A second suspect has been arrested in the case, Jerusalem police spokesman Asi Aharoni said. The suspect, Binyamin Meirovitch of Jerusalem, is believed to be one of the modesty squad's leaders, and the person responsible for the illicit organization's operations. The other men involved in the attack remain at large.

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