



(Above: Rep. Hakeem Jeffries with tenants of 2770 West 33rd Street and advocates from Legal Services NYC and Brooklyn Jubilee)

April 5, 2013, Brooklyn, NY—Tenants and advocates in Coney Island today announced legal action against a landlord who has failed to repair an elevator damaged by Superstorm Sandy, leaving several disabled and mobility-impaired tenants effectively stranded in their apartments for months.

[Press Coverage: [NY Daily News](#), [NY1](#), [News 12](#)]

2770 West 33rd Street is a five-story building. The elevator in the building has not been in service since Hurricane Sandy, more than five months ago. The only elevator access tenants currently have is through the third and fifth floors of an adjoining building by means of an approximately 150-foot external catwalk and passage. For those tenants who do not live on the third or fifth floor, they must use the stairs to reach the catwalk. Because many of the tenants in this building, including most of the petitioners, are disabled, climbing even a single flight of stairs is an enormous obstacle. It has become extremely difficult for most, and impossible for some, to live normal daily lives.

One tenant has suffered a stroke and is not able to negotiate the stairs by himself. Before the storm he used a wheelchair; however this is not possible anymore because there is no elevator access to his 2nd floor apartment. When he needs to go to the doctor, his wife, a cancer patient herself, must assist him up and down the stairs. They are worried that it is only a matter of time before one of them falls.

Tenant **Melvin Thompson** is disabled and lives on the fifth floor of the building. “I have to use a long outdoor catwalk to get across to the other building to use the elevator,” he said. “But I use a walker, and the catwalk is uneven. I’m afraid I will trip, or that there might be an emergency and the walkway might be blocked. Then I would be trapped.”

In an event of a fire or other emergency, many residents could indeed be trapped in their homes. Despite the immediate threat to their lives, health, and safety, some tenants have been told the elevator will not be fixed for at least another four months.

“The hardship that tenants in this building have been forced to endure more than five months after the storm struck is reprehensible,” said **Representative Hakeem Jeffries (NY-8)**. “Seniors have been isolated, people with disabilities have been stranded and calls for the landlord to help have been ignored. This situation is unacceptable, and that is why we are asking the courts to step in and compel the landlord to do the right thing.”

“It has been five months since Sandy hit this community, and for the landlord to have made no efforts to repair an elevator that keeps tenants trapped in their apartments is unconscionable,” said **Brent Meltzer**, Housing Unit Co-Director at **South Brooklyn Legal Services, a program of Legal Services NYC**. “The tenants have reached out to the landlord repeatedly, only to receive stony silence. As the City continues to rebuild after Sandy, the needs of the elderly and disabled poor must be central in our plans. Preserving low-income housing and ensuring that the basic needs of all New Yorkers are met is essential to an equitable recovery.”

“As a lawyer working constantly in Coney Island since Sandy, I’ve heard many stories of suffering, but few have angered me more than this one,” said **Sandhya Reju Boyd**, Executive Director of **Brooklyn Jubilee**, which is also representing the tenants in their legal action. “It is shocking that so long after the storm, low-income, disabled tenants can’t use their wheelchairs, or must endure severe pain just to get down the stairs to a doctor’s appointment.”

The building’s conditions constitute violations of the City’s Housing Maintenance Code and the Multiple Dwelling Law. With this action, South Brooklyn Legal Services and Brooklyn Jubilee are asking the Court to order the landlord, Coney Island Site 4A-1 Houses, Inc., and managing agents Anthony Hill and Grenadier Realty Corp. to immediately complete the

repairs so that the tenants may finally resume their normal lives.

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