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**BRONX MOTORIST CONVICTED OF FIRST-DEGREE ASSAULT FOR SERIOUSLY
INJURING E-BIKE RIDER**

Defendant Sped Past 26 Red Lights, 14 Stop Signs Before Hitting E-bike Rider; Victim Suffered Traumatic Brain Injury; Defendant Faces More Than 25 Years in Prison at Sentencing

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced that a jury convicted Harold Vega of first-degree assault, reckless endangerment, resisting arrest and other charges for a July 2024 hit-and-run collision that left a 39-year-old father gravely injured. Vega, evincing a depraved indifference to human life, recklessly led police on a high-speed chase through Astoria past dozens of traffic signals as he drove onto sidewalks and hurtled past intersections crowded with motorists before he struck the cyclist. He then continued without stopping until he rammed into a parked car. Vega was finally arrested after he attempted to run from the scene on foot.

District Attorney Katz said: “This defendant led police on a high-speed chase. He defied instructions by the police to pull over for more than 10 minutes all while blowing through traffic signals and stop signs. He maneuvered against traffic and onto sidewalks on a very busy afternoon in a residential neighborhood. He hit a cyclist who was obeying the rules of the road and left his victim in perilous condition, with severe head trauma that still affects his health and future to this day. A jury has now convicted him of first-degree assault and other serious charges and he is facing more than 25 years in prison.”

Vega, 48, of the Bronx, was convicted Friday by a jury of assault in the first degree; reckless endangerment in the first degree; assault in the second degree; unlawful fleeing a police officer in a motor vehicle in the second degree; leaving the scene of an accident without reporting; resisting arrest; criminal possession of a controlled substance in the seventh degree; reckless driving; aggravated unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle in the second degree; operating a motor vehicle or permitting it to be operated in this state without having in full force financial security; operating or driving a motor vehicle without a license; operating or driving an unregistered motor vehicle; and driving without proper license plates.

Trial openings took place on August 24 and closing arguments on August 27. The jury deliberated for one day before convicting Vega. Queens Supreme Court Justice Michael Hartofilis ordered Vega to appear for sentencing on September 16 when he faces a cumulative sentence in excess of 25 years in prison.

DA Katz said, according to the charges and trial testimony, on July 3, 2024, at approximately 4:33 p.m., Vega was driving a gray 2003 Nissan Altima near the intersection of 36th Avenue and 21st Street in Astoria. A police officer in an unmarked patrol car noticed the car’s license plate was obscured with a tinted cover. Further investigation revealed the obscured plate belonged to a different car and the police officer attempted to conduct a traffic stop after activating lights and sirens on his vehicle. Vega briefly paused as if he was stopping then made a U-turn in violation of the nearby traffic light and sped away from the officer.

Vega continued to drive, accelerating at a heightened speed through 25 additional steady red lights and 14 stop signs. He also drove against the flow of traffic, disregarded double yellow lines, wove in and out of traffic and drove on the sidewalk, endangering multiple pedestrians.

After going through a red light at 31st Avenue and Crescent Street, Vega struck Arturo Aguirre Matias, as the victim rode his electric bicycle with pedals across Crescent Street. Matias was inside the designated bike lane, traveling with the flow of traffic and had a green traffic signal in his favor. The force of the impact knocked Matias into the air before he landed causing severe head trauma.

After colliding with the victim, Vega did not stop and continued until he hit a parked car with sufficient force to deploy his car’s airbags. Vega then got out of the car and fled on foot.

Vega was confronted by good Samaritans, who thwarted his run near 24th Drive and 23rd Street where police caught up to him. During his arrest, police discovered a glassine envelope containing a quantity of cocaine in Vega’s pants pocket and determined his driver’s license was suspended. Vega had been previously convicted of unlicensed vehicle operation within 18 months of the incident. The vehicle he was driving was unregistered and uninsured.

Matias needed extensive hospital care for head trauma and requires extended, ongoing medical treatment for head trauma including a permanent and severe speech impairment and debilitating seizures.

Assistant District Attorney Brian Cox of the District Attorney’s Homicide Bureau is prosecuting the case with the assistance of Assistant District Attorney Angel Semerdzhiev under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Jonathan Selkove, Vehicular Homicide Unit Chief and Deputy Bureau Chief, John Kosinski, Bureau Chief, and Karen Ross, Deputy Chief, and under the overall supervision of Chief Assistant District Attorney Shawn Clark.

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