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METRO NEWS BRIEFS: NEW YORK; Brooklyn Rabbi Charged With Witness Tampering

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A prominent Hasidic rabbi in Brooklyn has been accused of making death threats against a woman scheduled to testify against her father on rape charges, law enforcement officials said yesterday.

The rabbi, Bernard Freilich, was charged with misdemeanor witness tampering on Thursday, said Kevin Davitt, a spokesman for the Kings County District Attorney's office. Mr. Davitt added that prosecutors would seek to upgrade the charge to a felony next week.

Prosecutors at his arraignment could have already charged Rabbi Freilich with the felony. But Mr. Davitt said that they chose to wait because the police in Borough Park, where the rabbi lives, insisted that he be charged with a misdemeanor.

Marilyn Mode, a spokeswoman for the Police Department, refused to comment on Mr. Davitt's statement, except to say, "It is the District Attorney who decides the charges."

Rabbi Freilich, who has been active in political and civic issues in Borough Park and is a special assistant to State Police Superintendent James McMahon, went to the woman's home in Borough Park on April 25 and warned her that she "would end up in the cemetery" if she testified against her father, according to officials with the Kings County District Attorney's office. Rabbi Freilich pleaded not guilty to the charges during his arraignment on Thursday.

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