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Rabbi's Lawyer Expects to Face Charges in Death Threat Case

By ANDY NEWMAN
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The lawyer for a Brooklyn rabbi charged with making death threats against a woman scheduled to testify in a rape case expects to be indicted today, the lawyer's attorney said last night.

The lawyer, George S. Meissner, does not know what the charges are, only that "an indictment will be unsealed," said his attorney, Benjamin Brafman. But a person familiar with the case against the rabbi said that the charges against Mr. Meissner stemmed from the case involving the rabbi and might include conspiracy. The Brooklyn District Attorney's office declined to comment.

Mr. Meissner, a prominent, politically active lawyer with close ties to the Orthodox Jewish community, is defending Bernard Freilich, a rabbi in Borough Park who was indicted last month on charges of witness tampering, witness intimidation and harassment.

Prosecutors say that in April, Mr. Freilich went to the home of a woman who was scheduled to testify that her father had repeatedly raped her when she was a child and told her she would "end up in the cemetery" if she testified. Mr. Freilich was arraigned yesterday.

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Mr. Brafman said that whatever the charges against Mr. Meissner turned out to be, he was not guilty.

"All I can say is that Mr. Meissner is one of the most respected, talented lawyers in the city and this has got to be a terrible mistake," Mr. Brafman said. "We are confident that when all the facts come out, he will be completely vindicated."

Mr. Meissner, who has been a lawyer for more than 40 years, is known for his work in several high-profile cases. He was the lawyer for the Council of Jewish Organizations of Borough Park, a powerful vote-producing group.

Mr. Meissner was also a longtime paid director of the state Division of Servicemen's Voting until he resigned in 1991 under pressure from Gov. Mario M. Cuomo.

In another political era, he was the lawyer and associate of Meade Esposito, the longtime Brooklyn Democratic Party chairman.

