

# Tenants protesting 'harasser' landlord

BY BRENDAN BROSH

TENANTS OF a rent-stabilized apartment building in Sunset Park are fighting what they say are strong-arm tactics by their landlord to evict them.

People living in the 34-unit building at 961 42nd St. claim their landlord, Lazzo Realty, is attempting to make them leave through intimidation, buy-outs, harassment and denying services.

"They don't want to give us heat or hot water," said Louis Moreno, a resident of the building. "We were told that we had to move in two, three months. A lot of tenants are confused."

The four-story brick building has 192 violations, 20 of which require immediate attention for posing a threat to health and safety of the occupants, according to city records. The dispute includes broken pipes, shattered glass and crumbling walls.

"My mother was told she would be given \$1,000 to leave," said Milagros Cordero, 31, who grew up in the building. "You can't tell people to get up and leave. Where are they going to

go? Most of the people have been here 25 to 30 years."

Housing advocates said such tactics are on the rise in the area as real estate prices and rents climb.

It's a situation that is happening all over the neighborhood, said Julia Fitzgerald, executive director of the nonprofit group Neighbors Helping Neighbors.

"We are seeing some real changes in Sunset Park," said Fitzgerald. "There's an affordable housing crisis in New York City. There's not going to be any place for poor people to live."

Elected officials, including Rep. Nydia Velazquez, toured the building recently. Several Latino residents of the building told Velazquez that the landlord had threatened to call federal agents to the building to check their immigration status.

Lazzo Realty could not be reached for comment, and the superintendent of the building refused to contact the landlord for comment.

"We must send a message to owners and landlords in Sunset Park," Velazquez said. "Tenants have rights and immigrants have rights."



Tenants protest outside 961 42nd St., where they say their landlord is trying to oust them.

Photo by Linda Rosier