

# [***NYC real estate developer charged with driving into woman at pro-Palestinian protest***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6C06-GBB1-DYMD-61CK-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Byline:** JAKE OFFENHARTZ, Associated Press

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**Body**

NEW YORK — A New York real estate developer was charged with felony assault after police said he hit a woman with his car during a pro-Palestinian demonstration led by students connected to the Columbia University protest movement.

Reuven Kahane, 57, was arrested Tuesday morning after driving his car into a 55-year-old safety marshal for the protest, according to witnesses and a New York police department spokesperson.

The woman, who was treated at a hospital for minor injuries, was also arrested, but charges of criminal mischief against her and another demonstrator were dropped Wednesday by the Manhattan district attorney. Kahane was released from custody while he awaits trial.

Kahane is related to Rabbi Meir Kahane, the Brooklyn-born founder of the Jewish Defense League, a group that advocated for the removal of Arabs from Israel and orchestrated a string of violent attacks in the U.S. and abroad. Kahane’s political party was banned from the Israeli parliament in the 1980s, and the U.S. classified the Jewish Defense League as a terrorist group. He was assassinated in New York in 1990.

Reached by phone on Wednesday afternoon, Reuven Kahane, who lives in the Manhattan neighborhood where the protest took place, declined to comment on the events leading up to his arrest, but he said he had no link the Jewish Defense League.

“What does my being a distant cousin of someone who passed away 35 years ago have anything to do with this?” he said, describing his ***politics*** as “pro-peace.”

Police said the arrest followed a verbal dispute started by protesters involved in the demonstration. The vehicle moved during the confrontation, police said, but Kahane is not accused of trying to mow down a group of protesters.

Several students at the scene disputed the NYPD's version of events. They said they were leaving the home of a university trustee, where they had spent the morning picketing and passing out flyers, when Kahane began heckling the protest from inside his car.

They said Kahane tried to drive through a crosswalk where the protesters were walking in a group, prompting one of the volunteer safety marshals, Maryellen Novak, to step in front of the vehicle to block its path.

“I saw her put her hands on the hood of the car trying to stop it,” said Ava Garcia, one of the protesters. “The car kept moving, and she was pushed to the hood of the car because it was accelerating. It was only when she fell to the ground that the car stopped.”

Ha Vu, another safety volunteer, described herself as “scared and shocked” by the scene. “Maryellen jumping in front of the car helped save a bunch of people,” she said.

Police took Kahane into custody, along with Novak and another 63-year-old safety volunteer.

The incident came one week after [*police stormed Columbia University*](https://apnews.com/article/israel-palestinian-campus-student-protests-war-c6e5549532c85f13493daa22d0d143ac) to end the occupation of a university building and clear an encampment set up by pro-Palestinian student demonstrators.

In a statement, Columbia University Apartheid Divest, a student group affiliated with the encampment, described the altercation as the “latest example of anti-Palestinian violence from Israel to the US.”

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