



WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT NEW YORK AND ARIZONA'S FIGHT OVER EXTRADITING SUSPECT IN GRISLY HOTEL KILLING - ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Photo: Maricopa County Attorney Rachel Mitchell

A man wanted in the killing of a woman found bludgeoned to death with an iron in a Manhattan hotel was [apprehended in Arizona](#) this week. But in a legal twist, Arizona officials [are balking](#) at sending him to New York to answer to authorities.

The top prosecutor in Maricopa County has said the suspect must first answer to his alleged crimes in Arizona, which include the stabbings of two women.

Rachel Mitchell, a Republican, criticized the progressive policies of Manhattan's top prosecutor, Alvin Bragg, who is a Democrat, and suggested his record on crime is reason enough for denying New York's extradition request.

But legal experts say a denial on those grounds would be extraordinary.

Here's what you need to know:

WHO IS THE SUSPECT AND WHAT IS HE ACCUSED OF?

Raad Almansoori is a 26-year-old man wanted in the killing of Denisse Oleas-Arancibia at the SoHo 54 Hotel in lower Manhattan.

The 38-year-old Queens resident, who police say had been working as an escort, was found dead on a hotel room floor by staff on Feb. 8. New York City police say her death was caused by blunt force trauma to the head, and a broken iron was found at the scene.

Almansoori was arrested on Feb. 18 in Arizona after police there say he stabbed a female McDonald's worker in the bathroom of the fast food restaurant in a Phoenix suburb. Police say he's also the suspect in the stabbing of another woman during a robbery attempt a day earlier in the Phoenix area.

Almansoori has been formally charged with two counts each of attempted murder, aggravated assault and attempted sexual assault for

the Arizona stabbings.

While in police custody in Arizona, police say Almansoori admitted to killing Oleas-Arancibia, telling Arizona police to [Google "SoHo 54 Hotel."](#) They also believe they have the suspect on surveillance video exiting the hotel [wearing Oleas-Arancibia's leggings](#) after having discarded his blood-soaked pants in the hotel room.



Police have also said they're looking into whether there are other alleged victims elsewhere in the country. The Maricopa County public defender's office, which is representing Almansoori, didn't respond to messages seeking comment Thursday.

WHO ARE THE TWO PROSECUTORS AT ODDS HERE?

[Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg](#) is preparing to bring the [first criminal case](#) against a former U.S. president. Next month's trial is centered on years-old accusations that Donald Trump sought to bury stories about extramarital affairs during his 2016 presidential run. Trump has pleaded not guilty.

Bragg, who is Manhattan's first black district attorney, has [been a frequent target of Republicans nationwide](#) for his office's decision not to prosecute certain low-level offenses.

Maricopa County Attorney Rachel Mitchell, meanwhile, is a Republican who played a key role in the 2018 confirmation hearings of conservative Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh.

Known nationally as a sex crimes prosecutor, she questioned Kavanaugh and accuser [Christine Blasey Ford](#) over her allegations that Kavanaugh had sexually assaulted her when they were in high school. Mitchell also wrote a memo casting doubts on the strength of Ford's claims.

Both are elected officials.

WHAT ARE THEY FIGHTING OVER?

In order to answer to charges in New York City, Almansoori would need to be formally transferred from Maricopa County, where he's been in custody since his arrest, through a legal process known as extradition.

Bragg's office hasn't made a formal extradition request, but said Thursday that it will make the decision after Almansoori tells a court in the coming days whether he consents or intends to fight such a request.

Either way, Mitchell said Wednesday she would oppose such a move because she believes it's safer to keep Almansoori behind bars in her county.

"Having observed the treatment of violent criminals in the New York area by Manhattan D.A. Alvin Bragg," she said, "I think it's safer to keep him here and keep him in custody so that he cannot be out there doing this to individuals either in our state, county, or anywhere in the United States."

Bragg's office fired back that Mitchell was "playing political games in a murder investigation," calling it a "slap in the face" to the victims in both states.

WHAT'S THE LEGAL ARGUMENT?

Mitchell's office has said other jurisdictions can't legally claim a defendant until after their cases are completed in Arizona.

"This applies to every fugitive case when the defendant is found/arrested in Arizona," the office wrote in an email, citing a [state law dealing with criminal prosecution](#). "All pending criminal matters in Arizona are to be resolved first before extradition to the outside state occurs."

Bragg on Thursday countered that extraditions are ultimately decided [governor-to-governor](#). Arizona's governor, Katie Hobbs, is a Democrat. So, too, is New York's governor, Kathy Hochul.

"In some ways that underscores the political grandstanding," Bragg said. "This is not the Maricopa County attorney's decision."

Mitchell's office didn't respond to requests seeking comment Thursday, but in a [morning appearance on Fox](#), she [doubled down](#) on her comments about Bragg, saying she was "putting the victims first" by intending to deny extradition to New York.

"Let me be clear: my heart goes out to the next of kin of the victim in New York," Mitchell said on the show "Fox and Friends." "We're not saying that he will never be prosecuted in New York for what he did, but we're saying we're going first."

"We have two very violent crimes here," Mitchell added. "We have two women that were stabbed, and he is facing a lengthy mandatory prison sentence here."

WHAT DO EXPERTS SAY?

Alissa Heydari, director of the Vanderbilt Project on Prosecution Policy at the university's law school in Nashville, Tennessee, said it's virtually unheard of for a prosecutor to refuse an extradition request solely because of their counterpart's prosecutorial policies.

Justin Murray, co-director of the Criminal Justice Institute at the New York Law School, dismissed Mitchell's rhetoric as political grandstanding.

Bragg's policies dealing with lower level crimes, he stressed, don't have any bearing on the treatment of suspects charged with murder.

"This accusation has no foundation whatsoever: while Bragg's office sometimes shows leniency in misdemeanor and lesser felony cases, his office continues to vigorously prosecute violent felonies and, especially, homicides," Murray wrote in an email.

Typically, the two jurisdictions work it out amongst themselves, said Alafair Burke, a professor at Hofstra Law in Hempstead, New York.

"This isn't unprecedented. Serial killers have been caught, leaving homicide charges in multiple states," she explained in an email. "The norm is for prosecutors to talk it out together and figure out a reasonable strategy for sequencing the cases."

HAS THIS EXTRADITION QUESTION COME UP BEFORE?

Bragg is no stranger to politically-charged, extradition dust-ups.

Last year, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis [said](#) he wouldn't cooperate with any request by Bragg's office to extradite Trump, a resident of the Sunshine State, as he faced possible indictment on the hush-money charges.

Like Mitchell, the one-time presidential hopeful who [ended his campaign](#) last month also cited Bragg's prosecutorial policies, saying the

Democrat “consistently bent the law to downgrade felonies and to excuse criminal misconduct. Yet, now he is stretching the law to target a political opponent.”



It all proved moot, though, as Trump [returned to his native New York](#) of his own accord to answer to the charges.