

Disabled Man Arrested for Stopping Attacker Denied Right to Attorney, Medical Help, Held on \$1 Million Bail

BUENA PARK, Calif. – A physically disabled man claims he was attacked during a verbal dispute with his landlord, but police arrested him instead of the attacker. He has been in jail since December 14 on charges of attempted murder, and he has not been granted medical help or a public defender.

Michael A. Matthew, 50, lives on the edge of homelessness. He has been living in a room of a home owned by the man he claims attacked him. Even though he is unable to work at regular employment, he does volunteer work for a local church that helps the homeless.

Pastor Wiley Drake of the First Southern Baptist Church, operates the "Here's Hope Social Ministry Center," 6801 Western Ave. where he feeds the homeless and permits them to sleep in his church. Drake claims the Buena Park Police Department regularly harasses the homeless, Drake, and anyone who tries to help.

“Our ministry has long been a thorn in the side of the ‘Buena Park Entertainment Zone.’ Anything we, or our friends like Mike do, upsets them. They have used everything they can to get us to stop,” explained Drake.

He believes Matthew is just the latest victim of the alleged harassment, aimed at eliminating the homeless from the area of the church, which is very close to the entrance of Disney Land.

“On Sunday, December 14, Mike called me on my cell phone and said, ‘Pastor, get over here my landlord is attacking me,’ then the phone went dead,” explained Drake.

Matthew was allegedly attacked by his landlord, Constantin Stanilla, who a witness says was on top of Matthew choking him with his hands.

Drake arrived at the scene after the police arrived, and tried to tell them about the call for help he received, but the police refused to let him talk to them. Drake said they knew who he was, and that Matthew was one of his volunteers.

“Mike told me that Stanilla was on top of him, choking him with his hands. Mike said he was about to pass out and couldn’t get him off, even though a neighbor was trying to pull him off,” described Drake. “As a last resort to save his own life, he reached up and stabbed the attacker with a small pocket knife.”

Stanilla was taken to a hospital, treated and released for his injury. No charges were filed against him.

Matthew was arrested on a charge of attempted murder and bail was set at \$1 million. He has been denied medical attention, and he has not been given his medication. He has also not been permitted to consult an attorney.

“Mike’s in a lot of pain. He needs his medication but they will only give him Tylenol. He is getting very weak in jail, and I’m afraid he might not survive,” said Drake.

“Many times Mike gives food and clothing to a family when we run out. He does this even though he is on disability and has a very low income himself. He has had a series of arguments with his landlord, who has been trying to get him to leave,” said Drake.

Drake says he plans to continue to operate his church and provide services to the homeless, despite what he believes is continued harassment from the Buena Park Police.

“We are asking our congregation and others who are concerned, to please send a fax to district attorney Mike Lubinski (714-773-4487), and ask him to give Mike medical attention and to please investigate,” said Drake.

Buena Park Police Department officials refused comment, other than to confirm that Matthews is being held on charges of attempted murder in the Central Men’s Jail in Santa Ana.

Drake has not been afraid to speak out on controversial issues. In addition to his local disputes, he has spoken out nationally through the Southern Baptist Convention on issues such as a boycott of Disney, and he attempted to have President Bill Clinton ex-communicated from the church.

He has also been actively involved in providing counseling to women who are seeking abortions, which has caused problems between him and the local Planned Parenthood facility.

Matthew is scheduled for a court hearing on January 5.

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Information:

Case # 03NF3981
Central Men's Jail, 550 N. Flower St., Santa Ana, (714) 647-4500, cjx@ocsd.org

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