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Gynecologist charged with rape, sexual battery

The Associated Press

CLEVELAND - A gynecologist was indicted on charges accusing him of raping and fondling patients during examinations.

A Cuyahoga County grand jury returned a 53-count indictment against Dr. Azzam Ahmed, 56, of suburban Moreland Hills, for rape, sexual battery and other charges.

Thirty-seven women ages 21 to 55 accused Ahmed, a doctor with 25 years' experience, of sexual wrongdoing, Assistant County Prosecutor James Gutierrez said.

The indictment covers examinations that took place in Ahmed's offices in Parma, Twinsburg and Newbury Township during 2001 and 2002.

Ahmed, accompanied by his attorneys, surrendered to sheriff's deputies Wednesday and pleaded not guilty.

Judge Christopher Boyko freed Ahmed on \$50,000 bond and ordered him to surrender his passport, stay away from his accusers and not to leave the county.

Gutierrez asked for a high bond, calling the Palestinian doctor a risk to flee the country based on his frequent visits to the Middle East, his wealth and the prospect of a lengthy prison term if convicted.

The penalty for rape is three to 10 years in prison.

At least eight women have sued Ahmed, seeking more than \$10 million.

Ahmed's attorneys said his accusers are leveling the criminal allegations to strengthen their civil suits against the doctor.

"I am confident that we will be able to defend Dr. Ahmed and his conduct, and nothing the grand jury has done in this case changes my conclusions in that regard," attorney Richard Haber said.

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