



**POLICE DEPARTMENT  
CITY OF BURLINGTON**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

INCIDENT TYPE:	DATE/TIME REPORTED:	
Multiple crimes	08/12/2021 0815 Hours	
INCIDENT NUMBER:	LOCATION:	
21BU012764	Grant Street	
SUSPECT:	AGE:	SUSPECT ADDRESS:
Micael Bizuneh	31	Undomiciled
SUSPECT DISPOSITION:		
Eighteen counts of felony and misdemeanor vandalism. Held on \$1,000 bail.		

**NARRATIVE:**

On Thursday, August 12, 2021, at approximately 0815 hours, Burlington Police dispatch received a call from a witness who observed a man “keying vehicles” on Grant Street while walking toward Union Street. Police officers responded and obtained witness descriptions and photos that identified the suspect as a person known to police for similar previous alleged acts in May, 2021. The suspect, Micael Bizuneh, 31, had also assaulted a police officer at that time. Officers canvased the area and located and documented 18 vehicles that had been damaged in similar ways.

Officers searched the area for Mr. Bizuneh and discovered that he had disembarked from a Green Mountain Transit bus from Middlebury at approximately 0800 hours Thursday morning.

While investigating Mr. Bizuneh’s recent history, officers made contact with other Vermont police agencies and determined that, over the past several days, Mr. Bizuneh was suspected of having vandalized approximately 50 vehicles in Middlebury, approximately 25 vehicles in Vergennes, and approximately eight vehicles in Bristol.

Based on Mr. Bizuneh’s prior history, supervisors at the Burlington Police Department worked with the office of the Chittenden County States Attorney to contact legal representatives of the Department of Mental Health. After officers located and apprehended Mr. Bizuneh at approximately 1255 hours, representatives of the Department of Mental Health stated that, despite Mr. Bizuneh being in the agency’s custody under an order of non-hospitalization, they did not support efforts to hospitalize Mr. Bizuneh at this time. Further, they stated that they felt his behaviors were not the product of his mental illness.

*Information is preliminary and subject to change.*



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Previous reporting by the Barre Montpelier Times Argus in March, 2021, noted that, sometime after Mr. Bizuneh allegedly committed crimes in August 2019, psychiatrist Dr. Jonathan L. Weker evaluated Mr. Bizuneh and determined that he was not competent. From the Times Argus:

“Weker said Bizuneh experiences symptoms of schizophrenia. He said Bizuneh suffers from delusions where he believes he’s been pursued by the FBI for a number of years. The psychiatrist said Bizuneh thinks the FBI is tracking him and trying to get him to give up information. Weker said Bizuneh has reported he believes the FBI has hired psychics to torture him and has planted listening devices in vehicles. The psychiatrist said Bizuneh damaged property so that he could draw attention to himself because he knew doing so would force the FBI to back off or risk being discovered.”

More recently, Mr. Bizuneh has made similar statements to law enforcement in Burlington and Rutland after repeated apprehensions for alleged acts of vandalism.

On May 17, 2021, Mr. Bizuneh vandalized six police cruisers at the Burlington Police Department, smashing their windshields with a rock. When confronted at gunpoint by officers, while still holding the rock, he asked; "Are you going to let them torture me? Let the FBI kill me?"

On May 22, 2021, Mr. Bizuneh made similar statements about the FBI after Burlington police apprehended him for allegedly vandalizing more than a dozen cars. At that time he also assaulted a female police officer.

In July 2021, Mr. Bizuneh allegedly vandalized 30 cars in Rutland. Sgt. Jon Dickerson of the Rutland City Police Department was quoted in the Rutland Herald as noting that “He thought the feds were in cahoots with us and they were after him. He wasn’t in his right mind at all.”

On Thursday, August 12, 2021, after Burlington officers apprehended him, Mr. Bizuneh again alluded to FBI involvement in his acts and capture.

In total, over the past four months, Mr. Bizuneh has allegedly caused many tens of thousands of dollars of damage to the personal property of more than one hundred people throughout

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Vermont. On Thursday afternoon, the court ordered Mr. Bizuneh to be lodged on \$1,000 bail. He is expected to be arraigned on Friday, August 13, 2021.

“Mr. Bizuneh’s circumstances are yet another example of our mental health system refusing to exercise its statutory authority and instead relying on police and prosecutors to provide mental health services to individuals in great need,” said Chittenden County State’s Attorney Sarah George. “Until the Department of Mental Health fills the void, the criminal legal system will continue to try, and will continue to fail. These people need significant services, not jail.”

“I’m frustrated by the lack of options for addressing this kind of serious, recurring criminal behavior,” said acting Chief of Police Jon Murad. “The men and women of the Burlington Police Department are very good at finding and safely apprehending people, even at risk to themselves. But in cases like this, jail is not the best answer. Although it temporarily keeps people and property safe, it doesn’t get at the causes of Mr. Bizuneh’s behavior. Instead, in cases like this, we need more access to custodial mental healthcare, where people can be helped even as they are safely prevented from continuing to victimize innocent Vermonters, and prevented from putting their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others at risk.”

Anyone with information about this incident is asked to contact the Burlington Police Department at (802) 658-2704.

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