

Israeli president plea bargains

by UPI

JERUSALEM - The Israeli attorney general says President Moshe Katsav has signed a plea bargain clearing him of rape charges.

Attorney General Menahem Mazuz said the president, who is resigning over the controversy, will instead face other charges including seven counts of committing an indecent act using force, sexual harassment and harassing a witness, the Jerusalem Post reported Thursday.

"The president has accepted responsibly for his actions," Mazuz said. "The fact is, the case was very complex and although there was still a chance of a conviction, with a plea bargain a conviction is certain even though it is more limited."

Katsav reportedly told associates he decided to admit to hugging and kissing the complainants because he did not want a court battle, Ynetnews reported.

"I am tired, my family is wrecked, I do not have the stamina for a battle in court, so I admitted to hugging and kissing out of affection," he reportedly told associates.

The plea bargain was criticized sharply by a leading women's organization, Haaretz reported.

"Katsav's plea bargain spits in the face of women and conveys a lack of faith in the police and prosecution. It is an unambiguous message to women who make complaints," said Talia Livni, the chairwoman of the Na'amat organization.

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