

## Case dropped against hospital chaplain

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Associated Press

DANBURY — A judge has dismissed the case of a Fairfield Hills Hospital chaplain charged with interfering with police, but not before giving her a warning.

A hospital security officer arrested the Rev. Melvinia Parker May 12 as she walked on Queen Street in Newtown, near the entrance to the state mental health hospital.

When the officer, who was looking for missing patients, asked Parker to identify herself, she refused, said State's Attorney Walter D. Flana-

gan.

Flanagan said that the officer acted prudently in challenging and arresting the chaplain because he was concerned about the safety of patients.

Superior Court Judge Patricia A. Geen dismissed the case Tuesday, but scolded Parker for her conduct, saying she should have been aware of the problems hospital officers have in dealing with patients who might be absent without leave.

Parker's arrest prompted some hospital workers to raise the issue of racial bias because Parker is black

and because when she was arrested, no black female patient was missing.

Flanagan said "a heightened sensitivity exists" about security at mental health facilities because of the stabbing death last year of 9-year-old Jessica Short by a patient who had escaped from a Middletown mental health hospital.

Parker's lawyer, Judith Mauzaka, said Parker may file a civil lawsuit against the state and individuals involved. Parker declined to comment.