

Brooklyn bar-brawl victim tells of FDNY thugs' threats

By [Dan Mangan](#)

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BATTERED: Sinan Selmani suffered shoulder and neck injuries.

Robert Miller

A St. Francis College coach crouched over — holding on for dear life to the door frame behind him — as up to nine drunken firefighters punched, shoved and kicked him, trying to force him into the bathroom of the Salty Dog bar in Brooklyn.

“I said to myself, ‘If you let go of the bathroom door, you’re dead,’ ” Sinan Selmani, 35, told *The Post* in his first interview since his horrific beating on Jan. 29.

“They were saying, ‘We’re going to kill you!’ . . . ‘You’re going to die, motherf- -er!’

“I can’t even tell you how many shots I took to my head,” said Selmani, who escaped to the basement of the Bay Ridge bar after a DJ — himself an off-duty firefighter — yelled, “What the hell are you doing? You’re going to kill the guy!”

Selmani — who wears a sling for his torn-up shoulder and has a bulging neck disc — last week broke his silence about the assault, during which up to 30 firefighters attacked him and six of his cousins. The Post first reported the story.

Selmani, of Staten Island, and his relatives were pounced on after the youngest cousin accidentally spilled a drink on a firefighter and tried to apologize. The ensuing melee, caught on surveillance video, has led to two arrests — those of firefighters Ryan Warnock and Michael Reilly — on riot and assault charges.

None of the cousins has been charged, and Selmani said none of them did anything to provoke the beatdown. The cousins have hired high-profile lawyer Joseph Tacopina.

Selmani, a former pro soccer player who is now assistant coach at St. Francis and a youth coach, said he and his cousins had gone to the Salty Dog for a nightcap after watching other cousins bowl in a league game.

The group sat in a rear section of the firefighter-themed bar, and the front area soon filled up with active and retired firemen from Engine Co. 310/Ladder Co. 174. After about an hour and a half, and a beer or two, Selmani said, he walked to the front of the bar to join other cousins in leaving, when “I see people just all over the place, fighting.”

Selmani saw one of his cousins, Bekim Leka, on the floor holding onto a man and then spotted five men attacking Leka’s brother, Tony. He was pounced on when he rushed over to help.

“They started pulling me by my arm and pulling my hair,” he said.

“I basically was fighting to stay alive.”

Selmani, who has a cousin and several friends who are FDNY firefighter, said, "I always respected firefighters, 100 percent."

But of those who attacked him and his cousins, he said, "They shouldn't be allowed to be firefighters anymore. None of them."

He said even though he escaped, the pain lingers. "I can't sleep — headaches every day. Every time I close my eyes, I picture the scene — over and over again."