

New York court hears argument from “John Doe” that documents related to Jeffrey Epstein should remain sealed

By Kevin Reed
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A federal judge in Manhattan heard arguments on Wednesday regarding the imminent release of a trove of sealed documents collected during a 2015 defamation lawsuit filed against Ghislaine Maxwell, a longtime confidante of Jeffrey Epstein. Among the documents are 29 depositions, other investigative records and an “address book” that contains over 1,000 names of Epstein’s contacts.

A motion filed on September 3 by lawyers on behalf of an anonymous “John Doe” to Judge Loretta A. Preska in the Southern District of New York asked the judge not to release the names of himself or others in the documents, arguing they should either remain sealed or be released only with redaction because identifying the individuals would unfairly harm them.

Jeffrey Epstein, the multimillionaire investment consultant and elite socialite, was awaiting trial on charges of child sex trafficking when he was found dead in his New York City prison cell on August 10. All charges against Epstein were dismissed by a federal judge on August 29 amid many unanswered questions about the case, especially the suspicious circumstances of his death.

Following an autopsy on August 11, the New York Medical Examiner Barbara Sampson ruled that Epstein’s death was a suicide by hanging. However, Epstein’s legal team—along with the majority of the public—was not satisfied with this finding and are conducting their own independent investigation saying that the evidence concerning the prison death is “far more consistent” with murder than suicide.

In a letter to Judge Preska that accompanies his legal brief, John Doe asked for his name to remain shielded in any documents that may be released, arguing that he

and others could face serious damage to their reputations. He wrote that a previous judge revealed that allegations in the sealed documents include lurid details of the behavior of “nonparties to this litigation, some famous, some not” along with the names of people “who allegedly facilitated such acts.”

Non-parties are individuals not involved in the defamation lawsuit who are nonetheless named in the legal proceedings or were individuals deposed during the case. The John Doe attorney brief itself goes further saying that to release the names would “unfairly do irreparable harm to their privacy and reputational interests,” since those named would have no means of responding to the “out-of-context insinuations of wrongdoing.”

The lawyers also argued in the 10-page brief that releasing all of the names in the sealed document, whether the individuals are alleged to have committed misconduct or not, will provide the media with information that would serve to continue a “cycle of irresponsible, sensationalist reporting.”

The 2015 defamation case involved Virginia Roberts Giuffre, one of Epstein’s accusers, who said that she was coerced as a teenager into prostitution by Epstein and Maxwell. Although the case against Maxwell was settled out of court before trial in 2017, a cache of legal materials—depositions, police incident reports, photographs, receipts, flight logs and diaries—were accumulated by the lawsuit.

Among those listed in the document trove are significant US political figures such as Donald Trump, Bill Clinton, former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (Democrat from Maine) and former New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson. Giuffre, in the

course of her legal filings, has alleged that among those within Epstein's circle who abused her were "numerous prominent American politicians, powerful business executives, foreign presidents, a well-known Prime Minister and other world leaders."

The legal battle over the content of the materials from the defamation case has been ongoing for months. On August 9, an appellate court released 2,000 pages of the documents that provided significant details of Epstein's alleged behavior and abuse as well as that of his friends and associates. It should be obvious to anyone who does not have an interest in covering up the truth, that there is no accident that one day later Epstein was found dead in his Manhattan jail cell.

For her part, Judge Preska said she wanted to release all of the documents quickly and suggested that lawyers provide a framework for determining which ones the public had the right to see. Presumably basing herself on constitutional principles, Preska said that people accused of misconduct in the documents would have an opportunity to make arrangements with the court before she makes a final decision on what would be released to the public.

Given Epstein's connections with extremely wealthy and powerful individuals—alongside of his 2008 Florida guilty plea and conviction for procuring an underage girl for prostitution—it is clear there are something on the order of 1,000 people who want to see the case against Epstein shut down as soon as possible.

Many media outlets, with the *New York Times* in the lead, continue to assert as fact that "Mr. Epstein killed himself in a federal jail cell last month" even though there is ample evidence to the contrary. Among them is the recent report that at least one of two prison video cameras outside of Epstein's cell "malfunctioned" during the period of time leading up to his death. Apparently, these corporate media sources believe that if something unproven is stated as fact enough times, it will eventually be accepted as truth. However, as was reported last week, only one-third of Americans are buying this version of the story.

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