

U.S.

Ghislaine Maxwell Lawyers Request New Trial After Juror Interviews

Prosecutors also call for an inquiry in case of Jeffrey Epstein associate who was convicted of sex trafficking



Ghislaine Maxwell's lawyers are seeking a new trial after juror says in interviews that sharing his experiences as a sexual-abuse victim influenced deliberations.

PHOTO: JANE ROSENBERG/REUTERS

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Lawyers representing convicted sex-trafficker Ghislaine Maxwell asked a federal judge Wednesday to grant the British socialite a new trial after a juror told media outlets that sharing his experiences as a sexual-abuse victim influenced deliberations.

In a separate letter to U.S. District Judge Alison Nathan, federal prosecutors said that while jurors were free to talk to the media after the verdict, the juror's statements merited an inquiry.

Judge Nathan hasn't ruled on the matter.

Since the jury convicted Ms. Maxwell last week, the juror has given at least three interviews to media outlets, including Reuters, which quoted him as saying he was a sex-abuse victim. The juror, a 35-year-old man, said he talked about his experience during deliberations when some jurors questioned the accuracy of the memories of Ms. Maxwell's accusers, according to Reuters.

“When I shared that, they were able to sort of come around on, they were able to come around on the memory aspect of the sexual abuse,” the juror said, according to Reuters.

The New York federal jury found Ms. Maxwell, 60 years old, guilty on five of six criminal counts against her of helping disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein sexually abuse underage teens between 1994 and 2004. The prosecutors' case relied on the testimony of four accusers who said Ms. Maxwell recruited and groomed them for sex acts with Epstein when they were teens.

The juror told Reuters that during jury selection he “flew through” a prospective juror questionnaire and didn't recall if it asked whether he was a victim of abuse. He said if the questionnaire did, he would have answered honestly, according to Reuters.

A publicly filed version of the questionnaire has a question that asks prospective jurors if they were a victim of sexual abuse.

A spokesman for the U.S. attorney's office in Manhattan declined to comment. Lawyers for Ms. Maxwell didn't immediately respond to a request for comment. They have previously said they plan to appeal her conviction.

The juror couldn't be reached for comment. The judge ruled that jurors in the case would be identified in court only by numbers, not names.

Courts don't lightly overturn verdicts, although they are typically sensitive to issues that may have infected jury deliberations, said trial lawyer Mark Zauderer, who focuses on jury issues. Even if the verdict stands, the juror issue could provide the defense another argument during an appeal, added Mr. Zauderer, a partner at firm Ganfer Shore Leeds & Zauderer LLP.

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