

Lawyer asks that Fox News harassment victims be allowed to go public with their stories

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Douglas Wigdor, the attorney representing 21 [Fox News](#) employees alleging they were subjected to racial discrimination and sexual harassment, asked that previous victims who received settlements from the company be freed from confidentiality agreements they signed.

Wigdor said he made the request Thursday during his meeting with the Office of Communications, the British regulatory body that is considering the fitness of Fox News parent 21st Century Fox to take control of European pay TV giant Sky. Fox already owns 39% of the company and has a \$14.8-billion bid to take over the remaining stake.

“I told Ofcom that the only way for them to get the full truth of what the [Murdoch](#) media has done to its victims, is for the company to remove the choke hold clauses that bind victims to silence,” Wigdor said in a statement. “These are Fox’s ‘hidden figures’ — talented, brave people who fought for their rights, but were threatened, bullied and permanently gagged. 21st Century Fox must let them speak to Ofcom.”

Wigdor’s request comes a day after 21st Century Fox revealed in a regulatory filing that it has paid \$45 million to settle potential or pending lawsuits since the resignation of former Fox News Chairman [Roger Ailes](#).

Ailes left in July after he was sued for sexual harassment and retaliation by former anchor Gretchen Carlson. Fox News paid \$20 million to settle the suit, but has been beleaguered by sexual harassment claims and lawsuits ever since.

The network’s biggest prime-time star, Bill O’Reilly, was fired in April after it was revealed that he and Fox News had paid \$13 million to settle claims by women who said they had been sexually harassed or verbally abused by the anchor.

Wendy Walsh, the Los Angeles radio host who was a regular guest on “The O’Reilly Factor” and who has accused O’Reilly of sexual harassment, met with OfCom on Monday. She has also asked, in an open letter to 21st Century Fox Executive Chairman Rupert Murdoch, that the women who settled harassment claims be allowed to speak publicly about them as a way to get the company past the scandal.

“Unmuzzle the victims,” Walsh said in the letter posted on her website. “Give them back their voices.”

21st Century Fox said it has addressed the harassment issue at Fox News and has worked to change the culture within the division, which is the most profitable within the company, noting the departure of O’Reilly and the replacement of its top executives.

“The company’s management has taken prompt and decisive action to address reports of sexual harassment and workplace issues at Fox News,” a representative said in a statement. “These actions have led to an overhaul of Fox News Channel’s leadership, management and reporting structure, and have driven fundamental changes to the channel’s on-air talent and prime-time programming lineup.... The company has been focused on its long-held commitment to a diverse workplace that promotes racial and gender equality.”

Fox cited the recent appointment of Suzanne Scott to the post of president of programming, along with the hiring of a new female chief financial officer, Amy Listerman.

“This newly instituted leadership structure at Fox News brings it closer in line with the wider practices at 21CF,

where women serve as the chair and CEOs of its Fox film studio as well as its Fox television studio and the Fox television network,” Fox said in its statement.

Murdoch and his son Lachlan [told investors Wednesday](#) that the company remains confident it will get the necessary approvals to complete the Sky deal by year’s end.