

Uber Is Sued by Woman Who Was Raped by One of Its Drivers in India

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Shiv Kumar Yadav, an Uber driver who was convicted of raping a passenger, being escorted by New Delhi police in 2014. Adnan Abidi/Reuters

SAN FRANCISCO — A woman who was raped by her Uber driver in India filed a lawsuit against the ride-hailing company and three current and former executives, after revelations that they had obtained and mishandled her medical records.

The woman, identified only as Jane Doe, a resident of Texas, is suing Uber and its chief executive, Travis Kalanick, as well as two former senior executives, Emil Michael and Eric Alexander, for intrusion into private affairs, public disclosure of private facts and defamation. She said in her suit that the three executives believed her rape, in 2014, may have been part of a conspiracy hatched by a competing ride-hailing company or a taxi company.

“Rape denial is just another form of the toxic gender discrimination that is endemic at Uber and ingrained in its culture,” said Douglas Wigdor, the lawyer representing Ms. Doe, who filed the suit in Federal District Court for the Northern District of California.

The lawsuit is the latest blow for Uber, which has endured a string of scandals in the last few months. In February, a former employee detailed in a public blog post a [history of what she said was sexual harassment](#) and unresponsive management, setting off a wide-ranging investigation that unearthed embarrassing corporate misbehavior at the company.

Uber, valued by investors at nearly \$70 billion, has tried to overhaul its raucous image by firing top managers. On Tuesday, [the company unveiled recommendations](#) from a law firm that investigated Uber’s culture; Uber’s board said it would follow the recommendations to revamp its workplace. Mr. Kalanick is also taking an indefinite leave of absence from running the company.

“Hopefully, this lawsuit coupled with the changes recommended by the independent counsel will create real change and reform at Uber and elsewhere,” Mr. Wigdor said.

An Uber spokesman said on Thursday: “No one should have to go through a horrific experience like this, and we’re truly sorry that she’s had to relive it over the last few weeks.”

Through a spokesman, Mr. Kalanick declined to comment. Mr. Michael and Mr. Alexander did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The suit stems from a sexual assault case against Uber in late 2014 in New Delhi. Ms. Doe requested an Uber and was picked up by Shiv Kumar Yadav, a driver for the ride-hailing company. The police said Mr. Yadav diverted from the intended route to Ms. Doe’s home, then switched off his cellphone so he was untraceable. He was later arrested, [convicted of kidnapping and sexual assault](#), and is serving a [life sentence](#).

At the time, Uber executives were publicly contrite, saying in a statement: “Our thoughts are with the victim of this terrible crime, and we are working with the police as they investigate. We will assist them in any way we can.”

Privately, investigators and Uber employees obtained and discussed the woman’s medical records as the case progressed, three people familiar with the matter but who were not authorized to speak publicly about it have said.

How those documents were obtained remains a question. But as [The New York Times and others have reported](#), Uber executives discussed the possibility that the rape could be tied to one of its competitors in India — such as a taxi company or Ola, the largest Indian ride-hailing company — as part of a plan to sabotage Uber’s momentum in the region. One day after the rape was made public, [Uber was banned by officials in New Delhi](#).

In 2015, Ms. Doe withdrew a separate lawsuit against Uber after agreeing to enter private mediation.

The new revelations about Ms. Doe’s medical records have had repercussions. This month, [Uber terminated Mr. Alexander](#), one of the executives who had obtained the medical records. On Monday, Mr. Michael announced he had left the company after the investigation into Uber’s workplace had resulted in a recommendation for his exit.

The complaint accuses Mr. Alexander of obtaining Ms. Doe’s medical records in India and then carrying them around with him, speaking about them and spreading the conspiracy theory to other members of Uber management. The suit said that Uber still had the woman’s medical records.

“Only by discrediting Jane Doe’s account of what happened, including her medical records about the rape, could Kalanick, Alexander and Michael have contrived such an irrational and fictitious story about a rival ride-sharing company being involved in her rape account,” the lawsuit said.

Mr. Wigdor’s firm also represents two employees of The Times in [a pending federal lawsuit](#) that accuses the company of age, race and gender discrimination.

