

Uber's Sexual-Harassment Crisis Just Got Even Darker

VF [vanityfair.com/news/2017/06/uber-india-rape-survivor-sues-medical-files](https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2017/06/uber-india-rape-survivor-sues-medical-files)

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By Udit Kulshrestha/Bloomberg for Getty Images.

Less than 48 hours after Uber held an [all-hands meeting](#) to finally address the company's roiling sexual-harassment scandal, and a day after a member of Uber's board resigned for making a [sexist joke](#) at said meeting, the ride-hailing giant is facing yet another crisis. A woman who was raped by her Uber driver in 2014 is now suing Uber for defamation and intrusion of privacy after [an investigation](#) revealed last week that a company executive had obtained her medical records and shared them with other executives. *The New York Times* [reports](#) that the unnamed woman is also suing C.E.O. [Travis Kalanick](#), who is currently on an indefinite hiatus from the company, and two of the company's former senior executives, **Emil Michael** and **Eric Alexander**, who were both fired in recent days.

The local backlash to the rape, at the time, was swift: Uber was temporarily banned in Delhi [until the following year](#), and the attack prompted an international conversation about how ride-hailing companies should protect female customers. The driver in the attack was found guilty and [sentenced to life](#) in prison. But some Uber executives had a hard time believing the incident had happened, according to a report from [Recode](#) last week. While Kalanick had released a statement denouncing the "horrific" assault, privately, he and other top executives speculated that Ola, an Indian ride-hailing competitor, was responsible for the incident and was using it to sabotage Uber. Alexander, who had been Uber's president of business in the Asia Pacific region, obtained the medical records of the victim while he was in India (it's unclear by what means the records were obtained) and shared them with both Kalanick and Michael. All three men looked at the medical records, [Recode](#) reports, though none are medical professionals. Alexander reportedly carried around the victim's medical records for a year.

“It is shocking that Travis Kalanick could publicly say that Uber would do everything to support our client and her family in her recovery when he and other executives were reviewing illegally obtained medical records and engaging in offensive and spurious conspiracy theories about the brutal rape she so tragically suffered,” the victim’s attorney, **Douglas Wigdor**, [said in a statement](#). “Rape denial is just another form of the toxic gender discrimination that is endemic at Uber and ingrained in its culture. Hopefully, this lawsuit coupled with the changes recommended by the independent counsel will create real change and reform at Uber and elsewhere.” An Uber spokesperson told the *Times*: “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.”

Alexander was fired last week after Recode told Uber it was looking into the incident. And on Monday, Michael also announced that he had left the company, joining some two dozen others who have resigned or been laid off as a result of investigations into Uber’s corporate culture and allegations of harassment. Kalanick, too, is temporarily out of the picture as Uber does some long-overdue soul-searching. But the “rape denial” lawsuit by Jane Doe shows that despite Uber’s best efforts to clean house, its past scandals won’t be dislodged so easily. The leadership positions once occupied by Kalanick and his deputies now lie vacant, temporarily replaced by an unwieldy [14-person managerial committee](#). Uber’s \$70 billion brand continues to see its name dragged through the mud in the press. And despite recent efforts to add more female executives, Uber is still reeling from an exodus of top talent and anemic morale among the rank and file. The ride-hailing company remains a globe-spanning behemoth with few rivals, but a spate of scandals has ripped the aura of invincibility from the world’s most valuable private start-up. As the reemergence of another sex scandal makes clear, Uber’s toxic history won’t easily be whitewashed.