

Fox News Accusers Give Evidence to U.K. Regulator Reviewing Fox's Sky Deal

[hollywoodreporter.com/news/fox-news-accusers-give-evidence-uk-regulator-reviewing-foxs-sky-deal-1060173](https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/fox-news-accusers-give-evidence-uk-regulator-reviewing-foxs-sky-deal-1060173)

Kelly Wright, Jessica Golloher and lawyer Douglas Wigdor spoke to the competition authority before a meeting of a parliamentary committee that also featured former Roger Ailes protege Joe Lindsley.

Fox News anchor Kelly Wright, who is suing the network for racial discrimination, provided evidence in London on Monday to Britain's Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), which is reviewing 21st Century Fox's bid to take full ownership of pay TV giant Sky, in which it already owns a 39 percent stake.

She was joined by Jessica Golloher, a former Fox News radio correspondent suing the channel for gender discrimination and retaliation, and Douglas Wigdor, the lawyer representing them and dozens of victims of alleged racial and sexual harassment at the company.

They, along with Joe Lindsley, a former protege of late Fox News founder Roger Ailes who later fell out with him and has a book on fake news coming out, spoke out at a meeting with British members of parliament, chaired by Ed Miliband, the former Labour Party leader who has been speaking out against the Sky deal. The meeting at the Houses of Parliament in the British capital was organized by activist group Avaaz, which has also opposed the deal.

While the CMA session wasn't public, an Avaaz representative said it lasted for about 90 minutes. Wright and Wigdor told *The Hollywood Reporter* at the parliamentary committee meeting that they and Golloher in the CMA session gave evidence that was more detailed, but similar to their comments in the parliamentary meeting. They said they also answered questions during the Monday morning session with the CMA.

The CMA, which is looking at the proposed deal's effect on media plurality and the companies' commitment to broadcasting standards, is scheduled to report its findings to U.K. culture secretary Karen Bradley next year. Bradley will then make a final decision on the proposed deal.

Wright has accused Fox News of institutionalized racism that fails to give members of minorities opportunities for career advancement and fails to attract more multicultural audiences. Fox News has denied the claims.

During the Monday meeting in the British parliament, Wright said there was a "racial bias" at Fox News, arguing that "somewhere along the way ... we failed to be fair and balanced to all our employees."

He also said: "Fox has systematically marginalized my career. At times, they have turned down my suggestions of developing more positive stories about people of color, claiming that would be bad for their ratings." And Wright highlighted: "They repeatedly have given me roles that are normally done by more junior people." Emphasizing that "we must do better," he said that hopes "to be part of the solution."

Golloher summarized her claims she was marginalized because of her gender, mentioning that while she was based in Moscow as the Russia correspondent, a London-based male colleague got the lead reporting job ahead of the Sochi Olympics, and she was asked to translate for him, among other things. "I was basically his secretary," she said Monday. "Her allegations of discrimination and retaliation are baseless," Fox has previously said. "We will vigorously defend the matter."

Lindsley told the parliamentary committee meeting that he left his job because he felt his higher-ups "had no regard for the truth and were poisoning" the discourse in the U.S. He said getting together with other critics he hoped to

stand up to "the tyranny of the Murdochs."

Miliband on Monday said he and others believe that Fox News, which earlier this year ended its U.K. feed, "has a poisonous effect on the political debate in the United States." He said what is at stake regarding the decision on the Sky deal is whether Sky "should be placed solely in the hands of people responsible for this dreadful output." He also said: "Our contention is that Rupert Murdoch uses his media outlets to pursue a particular political point of view."

Alaphia Zoyab, senior campaigner at Avaaz, said during the meeting: "Fox's takeover is deeply threatening to U.K. news and democratic values and should be stopped."

Fox, which has also been approached by other entertainment giants about selling some of its businesses, has said the takeover would allow it to invest more in Britain and to innovate.

During a Q&A after the parliamentary committee comments, Miliband was asked what he thought of Sky's recent filing with the CMA, saying that it may have to shut down Sky News if the Fox deal doesn't win regulatory approval.

While some interpreted the warning from Sky as a strategy for leverage over regulators, others said it was simply an acknowledgment that Sky News isn't profitable enough to warrant further investment, and therefore could be shut down as a business decision without Fox's pledge to keep financing it. "I got confidence that the CMA will see it as what it is, blackmail," Miliband said on Monday. "This seems to me to be an empty threat and classic Murdoch tactics."

One finance professional who attended Monday's meeting in parliament said he felt the comments were mostly summarizing known criticism and didn't include any "smoking gun."