

Cohen Taxi Partner Ordered to Pay \$1.3 Million in Harassment Suit

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By

Erik Larson

A longtime business partner of Michael Cohen, Donald Trump's former personal lawyer and fixer, was ordered by a federal judge to pay \$1.34 million in damages to a former accounts-payable manager who alleges she was sexually harassed and wrongfully fired.

The default judgment against Evgeny "Gene" Freidman, known as the Taxi King, and his company, Taxi Club Management Inc., was handed down Monday by U.S. District Judge Ann Donnelly in Brooklyn, New York. The award to Elaine Gutierrez includes back pay and damages for emotional distress.

Freidman, who operated taxis for Cohen's family and others, was accused of making unwanted sexual comments, bullying Gutierrez throughout her employment, making explicit comments about her body and throwing papers on the floor and forcing her to pick them up. Freidman failed to show up for a hearing after the suit was filed in January 2017, Donnelly said.

"In the #MeToo era, the message is clear: no one, not even the so-called 'Taxi King,' is above the law when it comes to workplace sexual harassment," Lawrence Pearson, Gutierrez's lawyer at Wigdor LLP, said in a statement.

No lawyer was listed for Freidman in the lawsuit. His criminal defense lawyer, Patrick Egan, said he didn't represent Freidman in the Gutierrez case.

In an unrelated case, Freidman pleaded guilty in May to state tax charges and appears to be cooperating with prosecutors.