

## 'Taxi King' Cooperating in Feds' Michael Cohen Probe Hit with \$1.34 Million Sexual Harassment Penalty

The so-called "Taxi King" and former business associate of **Michael Cohen**, whose cooperation with special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation was seen as potential game-changer, has been hit for \$1.34 million in damages in a sexual harassment lawsuit.

U.S. District Judge in the Eastern District of New York **Anne M. Donnelly** ordered **Evgeny "Gene" Freidman** and his company Taxi Club Management, Inc. to pay up \$1,340,914.97 to the "Taxi King's" former assistant **Elaine Gutierrez**.

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Wigdor LLP **Lawrence M. Pearson** invoked the #MeToo movement in a statement on behalf of his client, Ms. Gutierrez.

"Ms. Gutierrez is very pleased that the Court has formally adopted the recommendation and granted judgment against Mr. Freidman and his company. 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," he said. "The award of \$850,000 in punitive damages in particular shows that employers face serious consequences for harassment and retaliation, and that the law recognizes the need for and will uphold strong punishment and deterrence of inexcusable, abusive conduct like that of Mr. Freidman."

As mentioned, Freidman was an associate of former **Donald Trump** attorney Michael Cohen in the taxi business. According to The Real Deal, Freidman managed Cohen's cabs until April 2017. Much of Cohen's assets were invested in taxi medallions. Both he and Freidman have seen the taxi business take a huge hit with the rise of rideshare services like Uber and Lyft.

Reason reported in 2015 that Freidman filed for bankruptcy protection on a number of his taxi garages and said, "We want big poppa [government] paying attention to us [...] I want the government interested in me and protecting me....It's a scream for help and a scream by a child for attention."

Freidman happens to be a Russian immigrant and a disbarred attorney. His cooperation in the Mueller Probe was sparked by a plea deal involving a tax fraud case against him.

The New York Times reported Freidman had been accused of "failing to pay more than \$5 million in taxes and faced four counts of criminal tax fraud and one of grand larceny — all B felonies," with each count carrying a "maximum prison sentence of up to 25 years in prison."

Freidman was not pleased at the time about a *Times* article and called it "shameful."

Of Cohen, he said, "Michael is dear dear personal friend and a passive client! That's it!"

"I had been an officer of the court in excess of 20 years and now I am a felon!" he added. "I hate that I have been grouped in this runaway train that I am not a part of!"