

Bill O'Reilly reportedly out at Fox News as he meets with the Pope

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Bill O'Reilly is out at Fox News.

Rupert Murdoch announced that he was terminating the network's most popular host in a letter on Wednesday afternoon that was signed by himself and his sons, Lachlan and James.

Rupert reportedly made this decision to fire O'Reilly after being pressured by his two sons.

'After a thorough and careful review of the allegations, the company and Bill O'Reilly have agreed that Bill O'Reilly will not be returning to the Fox News Channel,' 21st Century Fox said in a statement

O'Reilly, who recently signed a multiyear contract worth over \$20million a year, was halfway around the world at the time, having spent the morning meeting Pope Francis in Vatican City.

The popular host was in St. Peter's Square with his son for Pope Francis' weekly address, and afterwards stood in a VIP line to shake hands with the holy leader.

Pope Francis likely had no idea whose hand he was shaking however as the pontiff has said in interviews that he does not watch television.

He released a statement on Wednesday afternoon saying: 'It is tremendously disheartening that we part ways due to completely unfounded claims.'

Scroll down for video

Farewell friend: Bill O'Reilly (above last June) is out at Fox News after 20 years with the network

Big day: O'Reilly was in Vatican City with his son on Wednesday where he met with Pope Francis (above)

Time to go: Rupert Murdoch was reportedly pressured to fire the host by his two sons, James and Lachlan (l to r: Lachlan, Rupert and James Murdoch in March 2016)

Decree: Rupert Murdoch made the announcement in a letter signed by himself and sons James and Lachlan (above)

'Over the past 20 years at Fox News, I have been extremely proud to launch and lead one of the most successful news programs in history, which has consistently informed and entertained millions of Americans and significantly contributed to building Fox into the dominant news network in television,' O'Reilly said in the beginning of his statement.

'It is tremendously disheartening that we part ways due to completely unfounded claims. But that is the unfortunate reality many of us in the public eye must live with today.

'I will always look back at my time at Fox with great pride in the unprecedented success we achieved and with my deepest gratitude to all my dedicated viewers.

'I wish only the best for Fox News channel.'

Fox News announced that starting on Monday, Tucker Carlson will move to 8pm, 'The Five' will move to 9pm and Sean Hannity will stay in his 10pm slot.

Eric Bolling will take over in the 5pm slot formerly occupied by The Five beginning on May 1, and Martha MacCallum will stay on in the 7pm hour.

The new lineup of 'The Five' will feature six hosts: Kimberly Guilfoyle, Dana Perino, Bob Beckel, Greg Gutfeld, Jesse Watters and Juan Williams.

WHO IS SARAH MURDOCH?

Rupert Murdoch was reportedly convinced to fire Bill O'Reilly at the urging of his sons James and Lachlan.

James had been against O'Reilly since the allegations of sexual harassment against the Fox News host became public, while Lachlan was reportedly swayed by his wife Sarah.

Sarah, 44, was born in London but raised in Australia and prior to marrying Lachlan in 1999 was one of the most successful models in the world.

She appeared in campaigns for the likes of Yves Saint Laurent and Ralph Lauren, twice appeared in the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit issue and was featured in the film 'Head Over Heels.'

Sarah was also the face of Wonderbra at one time.

She and Lachlan have three children, sons Kalan (12) and Aidan (10) and daughter Aerin (7).

Since their marriage she has packed in the modelling in favor of hosting, appearing for three seasons on the popular show Australia's Next Top Model.

Sarah currently resides with her husband and children in Los Angeles.

Both 'Tucker Carlson Tonight' and 'The Five' will air live each night.

New York magazine reported earlier in the day on Wednesday that executives at Fox News were reportedly discussing the best way to sever ties with O'Reilly ahead of a 21st Century Fox board meeting on Thursday, during which O'Reilly is expected to be the primary talking point.

Fox News staffer reportedly felt that O'Reilly would be staying on last week, but Rupert is said to have had a change of heart after speaking with his two sons.

James had wanted O'Reilly out from the start while Lachlan was on the fence.

Lachlan then reportedly changed his mind on the matter when his wife Sarah convinced him that O'Reilly had to go.

This comes one day after a new accuser came forward to make sexual harassment allegations against O'Reilly.

Several unnamed Fox News employees are preparing to file additional complaints against the network, according to their attorney Doug Wigdor. He said the allegations will 'shed further light on

the abhorrent, intolerable, and unlawful working conditions that our clients have been forced to endure.'

Wigdor told Dailymail.com on Wednesday that he expects to file 'a handful' of complaints against the network 'in the coming days.' He declined to comment on whether the specific allegations included sexual harassment.

In a press statement, Wigdor also rejected claims by O'Reilly's attorney that the Fox News host is the target of a 'smear campaign' orchestrated by 'far-left organizations bent on destroying O'Reilly. Wigdor said he backed Donald Trump's presidential campaign and frequently watches Fox News.

'I can categorically deny, and find it offensive, that my Firm is being accused of being controlled by far-left organizations,' he said.

Wigdor is representing several current and former Fox News employees who are currently suing the network for racial discrimination.

Moving on up: Tucker Carlson (above) will reportedly be taking over for O'Reilly at 8pm

Welcome to primetime: The Five will tape live at 9pm every night starting Monday (l to r: Hosts Kimberly Guilfoyle, Bob Beckel, Eric Bolling, Dana Perino and Greg Gutfeld)

Gunning it: Jesse Watters (left) will join 'The Five' and Sean Hannity (right last week with Megyn Kelly) will stay in his 10pm slot

Attorney Lisa Bloom told The Hollywood Reporter that the woman in question worked for another network back in 2008 but had a desk near O'Reilly's office, and claimed that he would refer to the African-American woman as 'hot chocolate' when he walked by during the day.

The woman is not asking for any money, just 'accountability' according to Bloom.

'He would never talk to her, not even hello, except to grunt at her like a wild boar,' alleged Bloom on O'Reilly's treatment of this latest alleged victim.

FOX NEWS LINEUP

5pm: Eric Bolling program TBD (premieres May 1)

6pm: Special Report with Bret Baier

7pm: The Story with Martha MacCallum

8pm: Tucker Carlson Tonight

9pm: The Five (with Kimberly Guilfoyle, Dana Perino, Bob Beckel, Greg Gutfeld, Jesse Watters and Juan Williams)

10pm: Hannity

'He would leer at her. He would always do this when no one else was around and she was scared.'

Marc E Kasowitz, attorney for Bill O'Reilly said in a statement: 'Bill O'Reilly has been subjected to a brutal campaign of character assassination that is unprecedented in post-McCarthyist America.

'This law firm has uncovered evidence that the smear campaign is being orchestrated by a far-left organization bent on destroying O'Reilly for political and financial reasons.

'That evidence will be put forth shortly and is irrefutable.'

An earlier statement from O'Reilly's lawyer said: 'It is outrageous that an allegation from an anonymous person about something that purportedly happened a decade ago is being treated as fact, especially when there is an obviously orchestrated campaign by activists and lawyers to destroy Mr. O'Reilly and enrich themselves through publicity driven donations.'

Efficient: Lachlan and James were also reportedly behind the decision to ax Roger Ailes for his perch as CEPO of Fox News (Lachlan and Rupert above last July)

Key player: Lachlan was reportedly on the fence when it came time to decide if O'Reilly should be fired from his post (left in 2017 and right in 2016 with wife Sarah)

Lend an ear: It was Lachlan's wife Sarah (far right in 2014) who reportedly convinced her husband that O'Reilly had to go

Viewership of 'The O'Reilly Factor' dropped 26 per cent in the days after he went on vacation.

Nielsen company figures show that so far Bolling did the best with his 3.11million viewership, down 16 per cent from O'Reilly's performance a week earlier.

The 2.32million who watched Gutfeld on Friday was down 39 per cent from the previous Friday.

O'Reilly's viewership spiked in the days following the report on the harassment allegations.

O'REILLY 'SUBJECTED TO BRUTAL CAMPAIGN OF CHARACTER ASSASSINATION'

Marc E Kasowitz, attorney for Bill O'Reilly said in a statement: 'Bill O'Reilly has been subjected to a brutal campaign of character assassination that is unprecedented in post-McCarthyist America.

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'That evidence will be put forth shortly and is irrefutable.'

In the week that followed, viewership increased to an average of 3.71 million, up 12 per cent from the week before the report and 28 per cent over the same week in 2016.

It has still remained the most watched cable news show and won its timeslot.

Bloom is also representing Dr. Wendy Walsh, who previously accused O'Reilly of harassment.

Walsh said that in 2013 O'Reilly asked her to dinner one night at the Hotel Bel-Air in Los Angeles and then made the network contributor an offer, telling her that he was friends with Roger Ailes and could make secure the lucrative position for the psychotherapist.

It was after dinner when things began to shift according to Walsh, who said that O'Reilly asked her to come up to his hotel suite.

She politely declined and decided to steer the two towards the bar, where she claims O'Reilly became hostile over drinks and said she could forget his career advice.

Then, as a coup de grace, Walsh claims that O'Reilly said her purse was ugly.

It was revealed earlier this month that five women had been paid by the network after making accusations against the popular host.

Walsh was not one of those women and had never publicly accused O'Reilly until the release of The New York Times report.

First case: The first known person to accuse O'Reilly of sexual harassment at Fox News was Andrea Mackris (above with her lawyer in 2004)

The report claimed that close to \$13 million had been paid to five women who accused O'Reilly of inappropriate behavior in the workplace: Rachel Witleb Bernstein, Andrea Mackris, Rebecca Gomez Diamond, Laurie Dhue, and Juliet Huddy.

It was Mackris' lawsuit that made headlines when it was settled back in 2004 by the network for a formerly undisclosed sum which over the weekend was revealed to be \$9million.

In her complaint, Mackris claimed she had been sexually harassed by O'Reilly and detailed their phone sex conversations in which he allegedly listed off his female conquests.

O'Reilly also allegedly detailed a sex fantasy he had about Mackris using 'that little loofah thing' in the shower, but towards the end accidentally called it a 'falafel thing'.

According to the complaint, O'Reilly called Mackris one night to inform her he was watching pornography and then began to engage in a phone sex fantasy about having her come to the Caribbean with him.

'So anyway I'd be rubbing your big boobs and getting your nipples really hard, kinda kissing your neck from behind... and then I would take the other hand with the falafel thing and I'd put it on your p***y, but you'd have to do it really light, just kind of a tease business,' said O'Reilly according to court papers filed by Mackris.

Her complaint went on to say that during his monologue O'Reilly also suggested Mackris perform oral sex on his 'big c***' and that 'it became clear that he was using a vibrator upon himself and had ejaculated.'

When the two reached a settlement a statement was released from both parties that said 'no wrongdoing whatsoever' occurred while Mackris worked with O'Reilly.

She was also not allowed to speak about the suit in public before or after the settlement, while O'Reilly was able to say that Mackris' complaint was 'the single most evil thing I have ever experienced' to his millions of viewers.

Mackris was also written about negatively in a number of articles at the time.

It was seven years until the next woman received a settlement, with Diamond being handed an unknown amount from O'Reilly himself according to multiple sources after confronting him with a recording of comments he had made to and about her while she worked as a host on the Fox Business Network show 'Happy Hour.'

The payout was so secretive that 21st Century Fox was not even aware of the what had transpired between the two parties until last year, when it was revealed during an internal investigation into sexual harassment claims being brought against Ailes.

Laurie Dhue, who worked as a reporter on the television show Geraldo at Large and was the host of Fox Report Weekend for eight years between 2000 and 2008 also received a payout after accusing Ailes and O'Reilly of sexual harassment.

She received \$1million over the summer from the network, shortly after she announced her plan to write a tell-all book.

The network quietly paid Dhue (left) more than \$1million in 2016 after the anchor claimed she was sexually harassed by both O'Reilly and Ailes while Huddy (right) got \$1.6million

Fox News also settled with Huddy for \$1.6million back in September after she claimed that O'Reilly had tried to pursue a sexual relationship with her while she appeared on the network as a guest on his show.

Huddy stated that O'Reilly would repeatedly call her at home in Long Island and once tried to kiss her, which caused her to fall over as she pulled away from the host.

Soon after she stopped being asked to appear on O'Reilly's program.

Both Dhue and Huddy's stories had been reported before, but it was not known Dhue had complained about O'Reilly's behavior in addition to Ailes.

The fifth settlement came back in 2002 after O'Reilly reportedly screamed at junior producer Rachel Witlieb Bernstein, who left soon after with a settlement.

That incident did not involve sexual harassment.

O'Reilly fired back soon after the release of the report, releasing a personal statement on his website in which he said that he had to consider his children when settling these claims.

'Just like other prominent and controversial people, I'm vulnerable to lawsuits from individuals who want me to pay them to avoid negative publicity. In my more than 20 years at Fox News Channel, no one has ever filed a complaint about me with the Human Resources Department, even on the anonymous hotline,' O'Reilly began his statement.

'But most importantly, I'm a father who cares deeply for my children and who would do anything to avoid hurting them in any way. And so I have put to rest any controversies to spare my children.'

He added: 'Those of us in the arena are constantly at risk, as are our families and children. My primary efforts will continue to be to put forth an honest TV program and to protect those close to me.'

O'Reilly has a daughter Madeline, 18, and son Spencer, 13, with his ex-wife Maureen.

The couple divorced in 2011, and it was in the years after that divorce that three of the five women who received settlements claimed they were sexually harassed by O'Reilly.

He currently makes \$18million annually as the host of his Fox News show, which he launched back in 1996 at the birth of the network.

Rebecca Diamond (right) a host on the Fox Business Network, revealed her recorded conversations with O'Reilly after the network told her they would not be renewing her contract

O'Reilly made comments similar to his official statement last year while appearing on 'Late Night With Seth Meyers' and defending Ailes after women began coming forward claiming he had sexually harassed them over the years.

'In this country, every famous, powerful or wealthy person is a target,' O'Reilly told Meyers.

'You're a target. I'm a target. Any time somebody could come out and sue us, attack us, go to the press or anything like that.'

O'Reilly then began to say 'until America,' but quickly interrupted himself to explain what he has to deal with in his life because of his fame.

'It's a deplorable situation because I have to have bodyguards. I have to hire bodyguards, physical bodyguards.'

He then continued with his previous thought, telling Meyers: 'Until the United States adopts the English system of civil law, whereby, if you file a frivolous lawsuit, and you lose, the judge has a right to make you pay all court costs.'

'Until we adopt that very fair proposition, we are going to have this out of control, tabloid society that is tremendously destructive.'

O'Reilly also went after then co-worker Megyn Kelly on CBS This Morning back in November when she publicly accused Ailes of sexual harassment in her memoir.

'I'm not interested in basically litigating something that is finished that makes my network look bad. Okay?'

O'Reilly.

'I'm not interested in making my network look bad at all. That doesn't interest me one bit. '

Kelly, an actual victim of sexual harassment in the workplace, refused to be silenced or shamed by O'Reilly and fired back the following day, saying: 'I believe that Roger Ailes made the company look bad.'

Ailes made a remarkably swift exit from the company back in July, packing up his office just three weeks after he was accused of sexual harassment in a lawsuit filed by former host Gretchen Carlson.

He still managed to walk away with a reported \$40million severance package after leaving his post, and maintains that the allegations being made by Carlson in her lawsuit are false.

Carlson recounted a conversation she had with Ailes in September of 2015 in her court filing, during which he allegedly said to her: 'I think you and I should have had a sexual relationship a long time ago and then you'd be good and better and I'd be good and better.'

That conversation allegedly occurred when Carlson went to speak with Ailes about what she believed were discriminatory practices at the network.

The popular host of 'The Real Story with Gretchen Carlson' claimed in her lawsuit that her refusal to have a sexual relationship with her boss was why she was let go on June 23 after 11 years with the network.

She was eventually awarded \$20million, and told she could not speak about the lawsuit.

Former Fox News event planner Laurie Luhn received a settlement following her relationship with Ailes, which she claimed required her to perform sexual acts with the man and for two decades and eventually caused her to suffer a mental breakdown.

It was after that breakdown that Luhn decided to tell the network about the years of sexual harassment at the hands of Ailes and how he would allegedly tape her and once forced her to engage in bed with another women while seeking out younger women for him to meet.

The network quickly responded by giving Luhn a \$3.15million payout, and making her sign 'extensive nondisclosure provisions.'

It was also revealed just last month that Tamara Holder and 21st Century Fox reportedly worked out a deal in February that awarded the lawyer and author \$2.5million following an incident that occurred two years ago.

Other clients: Bloom is also representing Dr. Wendy Walsh (above earlier this month)

Holder, who joined the network in 2010 and has appeared on Hannity and guest hosted The Five, approached Fox News' executive vice president for business and legal affairs Dianne Brandi back in September and alleged that she had been sexually assaulted by Francisco Cortes.

She alleged that Cortes, the vice president of Fox News Latino, tried to force her into performing oral sex on him when the two were alone in his office.

Fox News also fired Cortes, who in 2004 was personally selected by Roger Ailes as the first member of the disgraced CEO's apprentice program.

Kelly wrote about what she saw as problems with the way Ailes handled complaints in her memoir, saying that the 'entire structure was set up to isolate and silence' victims.

Finally, there is Andrea Tantaros, who is still suing the company for \$50million.

The former Fox News host claims that Ailes and O'Reilly both subjected her to unwanted sexual advances while she was an employee.

'Fox News masquerades as a defender of traditional family values, but behind the scenes, it operates like a sex-fueled, Playboy Mansion-like cult, steeped in intimidation, indecency and misogyny,' claimed Tantaros in her lawsuit.

Tantaros, 37, went on to claim in the suit that she was taken off the air when she complained about being sexually harassed by Ailes.

She also claimed that Ailes once asked her to perform 'the twirl' for him; said 'come over here so I can give you a hug'; and told her 'I bet you look good in a bikini.'

O'Reilly meanwhile invited Tantaros to his Long island home to stay with him, telling her it would be 'very private' she claimed in her lawsuit, also telling her that he could 'see [her] as a wild girl' and that she had a 'wild side.'

Tantaros said that she and her agent told Shine, Scott, and Brandi about numerous examples of Ailes's alleged harassment.

'Ailes did not act alone,' claims Tantaros in her lawsuit.

'He may have been the primary culprit, but his actions were condoned by his most senior lieutenants, who engaged in a concerted effort to silence Tantaros by threats, humiliation and retaliation.'

In a statement released over the weekend regarding the O'Reilly report, 21st Century Fox said: 'Notwithstanding the fact that no current or former Fox News employee ever took advantage of the 21st Century Fox hotline to raise a concern about Bill O'Reilly, even anonymously, we have looked into these matters over the last few months and discussed them with Mr. O'Reilly.'

'While he denies the merits of these claims, Mr. O'Reilly has resolved those he regarded as his personal responsibility. Mr. O'Reilly is fully committed to supporting our efforts to improve the environment for all our employees at Fox News.'

Fox News referenced the 21st Century Fox statement when asked for comment over the weekend.