

Indian rape victim sues Uber for privacy violations

usatoday.com/story/tech/news/2017/06/15/uber-sued-defamation-privacy-violations-indian-rape-delhi/102893560/

Elizabeth
Weise

6/15/2017



(Photo: Justin Sullivan, Getty Images)

SAN FRANCISCO — A woman who was raped by an Uber driver in India in 2014 is now suing the company after learning the CEO and two other high-level employees obtained her medical records without consent.

The Uber executives who viewed her files, which included CEO Travis Kalanick and senior vice president Emil Michael, had started to believe the incident had somehow been orchestrated by Indian ride-hailing company Ola, according to reports.

The woman's attacker, Shiv Kumar Yadav, was convicted in a criminal proceeding in India eleven months after he raped and beat her and sentenced to life in prison.

According to Thursday's suit, less than a week after the woman was assaulted, Uber's head of Asia Pacific operations Eric Alexander went to Delhi in India where he illegally obtained her private and confidential medical records. He then shared them with Kalanick and Michael.

Alexander [was fired by Uber on June 7 after the story first broke](#) on tech media site Recode.

Attempts to discredit rape victims were common in the United States decades ago but are now very rare, said Kelly Dermody, a lawyer with Lieff Cabraser Heimann & Bernstein in San Francisco.

"Going 'scorched earth' against a woman's background and character has been pretty sternly rebuked by judges," she said.

The suit, filed Thursday, does not name the plaintiff, calling her only Jane Doe. It states that she did not learn of the statements the three men had made about her until June 7 of this year. The suit alleges intrusion into private affairs, public disclosure of private facts and defamation of character and asks for unspecified damages.



While expressing its support of her in public, the suit alleges that in private Uber was actually speculating whether she was working with a rival ride-hailing company in India in an attempt to harm Uber's business there.

"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," said her lawyer, Douglas Wigdor.

In an emailed statement Uber said that "no one should have to go through a horrific experience such as this one and that it is sorry the plaintiff has had to relive it over the last few weeks."

[Michael resigned from Uber on June 12](#). [Kalanick announced an indefinite leave of absence on June 13](#).

In 2015 the woman previously settled out of court with Uber over its failure to maintain safety procedures.