

Harvey Weinstein charged with multiple sex crimes in Los Angeles on the same day his trial begins in New York

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By Shayna Jacobs

The charges filed in Los Angeles should not affect plans to proceed with jury pre-screening in New York Supreme Court in Manhattan, scheduled for Tuesday morning, and a spokesperson for the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office said that Weinstein is not expected to appear in court there until his trial in New York concludes.

His lawyers had no immediate comment on the new charges.

Last month, Weinstein and many of his accusers reached a proposed \$25 million civil settlement, with the sum being paid to accusers by insurers for his former production company, which is in bankruptcy.

Weinstein remains under investigation by authorities in Dublin and London.

His case, first publicized in 2017 through detailed investigative reports published by the New Yorker and the New York Times, gave rise to the #MeToo movement and the professional downfall of several other prominent figures in entertainment, media and politics — men who found themselves accused of harassment, abuse and misconduct. #MeToo advocates say Weinstein's trial is historic and a symbol of women's voices being heard after generations of silence.

The charges in Los Angeles involve alleged encounters with two women, a day or two apart, in February 2013, authorities said. In all, eight people have come forward there to report crimes involving Weinstein, officials said. In three cases, the statute of limitations had expired, so charges were not filed. The other three remain under investigation.

Prosecutors in Los Angeles are recommending a \$5 million bail in a case for which Weinstein faces up to 28 years in prison.

One set of charges relates to an encounter with a woman inside her hotel room during a Hollywood film festival, authorities said. Weinstein forced her to perform a sex act on him before raping her, according to a criminal complaint. The woman told investigators she did not report the crime at the time because Weinstein threatened her life.

The second accuser said Weinstein violated her in a Beverly Hills hotel bathroom after meeting him at a restaurant for what she thought was a business discussion, according to the complaint. He allegedly trapped her in the bathroom, showered briefly, and then masturbated while grabbing her breast, according to court papers.

"We believe the evidence will show that the defendant used his power and influence to gain access to his victims and then commit violent crimes against them," Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey said in a statement. "I want to commend the victims who have come forward and bravely recounted what happened to them. It is my hope that all victims of sexual violence find strength and healing as they move forward."

At Monday's hearing in New York, which concluded before officials' announcement in Los Angeles, Weinstein lawyer Arthur Aidala asked that the jury be sequestered to preempt the possibility that charges could be brought in another jurisdiction while the trial is underway. The request was denied, though the judge hinted he would revisit the question should charges emerge elsewhere.

Dozens of women have accused the former producer of sex crimes or sexual harassment. Several were on hand for a news conference outside the Manhattan courthouse, vowing support for the alleged victims and others expected to take the witness stand.

"As one of the silence-breakers, I stand in solidarity with the brave survivors who will take the stand against Harvey Weinstein in this trial," said actress and early Weinstein accuser Rosanna Arquette. "While emotion on this day runs high, I join these other brave women who are also harmed by Harvey Weinstein to say we aren't going anywhere."

"Dear Harvey, no matter what lies you tell yourself, you did this. Today, Lady Justice is staring down a super predator. You brought this upon yourself by hurting so many," added Rose McGowan, another actress and activist.

Attorney Douglas Wigdor, who has two clients suing Weinstein and represents one of the supporting witnesses expected to testify, said #MeToo rang in a new era in terms of how women are treated when lodging sexual assault accusations. The jurors who will be called in Weinstein's case know that victims "aren't necessarily raped in dark alleys at gunpoint, that women often know their perpetrator, that women often speak to their perpetrator after the crime has been committed."

Weinstein and his legal team have insisted he engaged only in consensual sexual activity.

Before the announcement in Los Angeles, Weinstein lawyer Damon Cheronis told reporters that if a new case were to emerge during his trial, "it would be pretty obvious as to why" and "the timing would be very suspect." He did not elaborate.

Weinstein's team says he's anxious to have his day in court.

Aidala, in seeking the jury sequestering, said that "the worst thing that can happen" is for Weinstein's trial in New York to be interrupted after several weeks and suggested that such a development after jury selection could lead to a mistrial.

"He's not looking for a mistrial. He's looking for a conclusion to this," Aidala said.

Weinstein is out on \$2 million bail and required to wear a monitoring bracelet. He is not allowed to leave the New York area. Los Angeles authorities have issued a warrant for his arrest, but authorities there indicated they will not seek his extradition or surrender until his trial ends.

Weinstein is on trial in Manhattan over allegations he raped a woman in 2013; she has not been publicly identified. The charges also include an allegation of forced sexual activity involving a former production assistant, Mimi Haleyi, in 2006.

A third woman, actress Annabella Sciorra, has accused Weinstein of sexually assaulting her in her Manhattan apartment in 1993. Prosecutors are expected to call her as a witness to support the multiple-victim requirement in the top count against Weinstein: predatory sexual assault.

Three additional women, including one who will say she was raped in 2005, are expected to be called as supporting witnesses but are not formally a part of the charges.

A lengthy jury selection process is expected, and testimony will not begin for at least two weeks.