

Seven 'survivors of abuse by Weinstein' denounce settlement in open letter

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Seven female accusers of the convicted rapist [Harvey Weinstein](#) are calling on the New York attorney general [Letitia James](#) to renegotiate the terms of the [global settlement](#) in the class-action civil suit against him, which they denounce as unfair and unjust.

The women sent an [open letter](#) to James on Monday pleading with her to reconsider her office's backing of the civil settlement, which they say is detrimental to the interests of many Weinstein victims.

[The deal](#) was reached in December with the involvement of the attorney general and has been fiercely disputed ever since.

The intervention of the women comes two days before Weinstein is set to be sentenced in his criminal case. Last month the disgraced movie mogul was [found guilty](#) at the New York supreme court of raping a woman whom the Guardian is not naming as her wishes over identification are not known, and forcing oral sex on a production assistant, Miriam Haley.

He faces a combined punishment of up to 29 years in prison.

The seven women who have jointly written the open letter to James are: [Zoë Brock](#), Alexandra Canosa, [Rowena Chiu](#), Wedil David, [Dominique Huett](#), [Zelda Perkins](#) and [Kaja Sokola](#). Describing themselves as "survivors of sexual abuse by Harvey Weinstein", they exhort the attorney general to use her power as top law enforcement officer in New York state to "hold Weinstein and the people who enabled him accountable".

They go on: "It is time to step up and come out of the shadows, your voice needs to be heard."

In the letter, the signatories outline several complaints about the settlement. Its most egregious element, they say, is that it would potentially fund Weinstein's own defense against future civil lawsuits against him.

If certain survivors refuse to join the class-action settlement, the letter says, their portion of the funds reserved for claims would be handed over to Weinstein and his brother Robert to defend themselves in court.

In effect, the seven women state pointedly, James is supporting a deal that would see money intended for survivors being redirected "to fill a war chest to be used by Weinstein, a

convicted felon, for his ongoing campaign against his victims”.

The women say that provision is offensive, and tell James: “We cannot believe that such a champion of justice would allow an agreement which bankrolls the defense of our abuser if we do not agree to participate.”

The women also object to the fact that Weinstein will not have to pay a penny of his own money towards the settlement, and that a large portion of the funds go to “ultra-wealthy former members of the board of directors of the Weinstein Company who turned a blind eye, allowing Harvey Weinstein to victimize us and so many others”.

Douglas Wigdor, the lawyer who represents five of the seven women, told the Guardian that the settlement as it currently stood “does not send the right signal”.

Wigdor said he was “dumbfounded” when he first saw terms of the agreement. “I hope that the attorney general, as the chief law enforcement officer of the state of New York, finds the courage to stand up to Harvey Weinstein and his associates so as to ensure a fair settlement.”

James is a Democratic politician who was elected to the role of attorney general in 2018. She is the first woman and the first African American in the position.

The Guardian asked her to respond to the criticisms in the joint letter but she did not immediately respond.