

Sean Hannity, Tucker Carlson, and other Fox News personalities accused of sexual misconduct in lawsuit

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Two women have sued Fox News over claims that its most popular on-air talents sexually harassed them.

Jennifer Eckhart, a former associate producer on Fox Business, and Cathy Areu, a network guest, filed a lawsuit in federal court on Monday accusing Tucker Carlson, Sean Hannity, Howard Kurtz, Gianni Caldwell, and Ed Henry, who was fired earlier this month, of sexual misconduct ranging from inappropriate comments to rape.

In the suit, Eckhart accused Henry, who was fired after the network said it received a sexual misconduct complaint, of having "preyed upon, manipulated and groomed [her] starting at the young age of 24, by exerting his abuse of power over her and her career."

"Ms. Eckhart's counsel also explained to Fox News, in graphic and specific detail, that Ms. Eckhart was violently raped while helpless and restrained in metal handcuffs, as Mr. Henry preformed sadistic acts on her without her consent that left her injured, bruised and battered with bloody wrists," the lawsuit said.

It went on to claim that Henry took naked photos of her restrained without her consent "as an intimidation tactic to silence her, and to be filed away and retained for purposes of blackmail that could destroy her career."

Eckhart retained legal counsel in connection to her claims about Henry on June 25, days before he was fired. The suit claimed that the network neglected to discipline Henry when it first found out about allegations of inappropriate behavior and instead only fired him when it "realized that it was on the precipice of a public relations nightmare and wanted to get out ahead of this suit and be able to claim that it had done the right thing."

"I stand for all victims who have been mistreated, harassed, assaulted, and even worse, at the hands of those in power, and the institutions that continue to support them," Eckhart said in a statement. "My decision to speak out was not an easy one, but I refuse to let fear of retaliation, victim shaming and further attacks intimidate me into remaining silent. I am hopeful that my decision to file this action will result in positive change for women at Fox, and for all victims in the workplace, and I am honored that other women have come forward since my decision to do so."

Areu also said she was harassed by Henry, who repeatedly sent her explicit messages and offered to help her career if she were to indulge his advances.

She also accused Hannity of encouraging any man in the studio to take her out on a date and offering them \$100. The offer was allegedly made on March 8, 2018, which was her late time on the show. Areu further accused Carlson and Kurtz of trying to get her to go to their hotel rooms in 2018 and 2019, respectively. She also said Caldwell tried to initiate a romantic relationship despite her repeated attempts to keep the relationship professional.

“Like Ms. Eckhart, I too was fearful to come forward,” she said. “However, I simply could not stay silent given the tremendous harm that Mr. Henry and others at Fox News have caused for women affiliated with the company. I chose to file this complaint because no woman should have to suffer the conduct to which I was subjected, much less the egregious conduct suffered by Ms. Eckhart.”

Fox News's leadership has faced sexual misconduct allegations dating back to the network's founder and CEO Roger Ailes, who resigned after Gretchen Carlson, a former network anchor, filed a lawsuit accusing him of sexual harassment in 2016. Additionally, a year later, then-prime-time host Bill O'Reilly was fired amid similar allegations and settlement payments.

“Based on the findings of a comprehensive independent investigation conducted by an outside law firm, including interviews with numerous eyewitnesses, we have determined that all of Cathy Areu’s claims against FOX News, including its management as well as its hosts Tucker Carlson, Sean Hannity & Howard Kurtz and its contributor Gianni Caldwell, are false, patently frivolous and utterly devoid of any merit,” Fox News said in a statement to the *Washington Examiner*.

“We take all claims of harassment, misconduct and retaliation seriously, promptly investigating them and taking immediate action as needed — in this case, the appropriate action based on our investigation is to defend vigorously against these baseless allegations,” the network added. “Ms. Areu and Jennifer Eckhart can pursue their claims against Ed Henry directly with him, as FOX News already took swift action as soon as it learned of Ms. Eckhart’s claims on June 25 and Mr. Henry is no longer employed by the network.”

Catherine Foti, Henry's lawyer, denied the allegations in a statement provided to the *Washington Examiner* after the initial publication of this story.

“The Me Too movement has helped to bring to light a number of injustices in our society, and everyone that has suffered deserves to be heard,” she said. “This is not one of those cases. The evidence in this case will demonstrate that Ms. Eckhart initiated and completely encouraged a consensual relationship. Ed Henry looks forward to presenting actual facts

and evidence, which will contradict the fictional accounts contained in the complaint. That evidence includes graphic photos and other aggressively suggestive communications that Ms. Eckhart sent to Mr. Henry.”

Foti declined to answer additional questions about what evidence Henry's team has to counter Eckhart's claims.