

# Former Fox News anchor Ed Henry accused of sexual assault in new lawsuit

[washingtonpost.com/media/2020/07/20/former-fox-news-anchor-ed-henry-accused-sexual-assault-new-lawsuit](https://www.washingtonpost.com/media/2020/07/20/former-fox-news-anchor-ed-henry-accused-sexual-assault-new-lawsuit)

By Jeremy Barr

Two former on-air personalities for Fox News Media on Monday filed suit against the network and several of its most prominent hosts, including recently fired anchor Ed Henry, alleging sexual assault and harassment.

The legal complaint was filed by Jennifer Eckhart, a longtime employee at Fox Business Network, and Cathy Areu, a frequent guest who appeared as a commentator. The most startling and graphic charge in the suit alleges that Henry raped Eckhart — an allegation Henry's attorney denied.

Fox announced July 1 it had fired Henry, saying that he had been credibly accused by a former colleague of "sexual misconduct in the workplace years ago." But, the new lawsuit alleges the network's statement "intentionally downplayed the severity of the situation" in an attempt "to avoid taking accountability for what actually happened."

In the complaint, Eckhart accuses Henry of sexually assaulting her in a guest office on the 17th floor of the Fox News office building in New York in September 2015, and raping her in a New York hotel room in 2017, after handcuffing her and taking naked photographs of her.

After Eckhart reported details of her "toxic work environment" to a human resources executive and her supervisor in February 2020, the lawsuit alleges, Fox News terminated her as an act of retaliation in June, once it realized that Eckhart "engaged in protected activity by hiring counsel and putting Fox News on notice of her intent to bring legal claims."

The lawsuit also alleges Tucker Carlson, Sean Hannity, Howard Kurtz and Gianni Caldwell engaged in inappropriate and suggestive behavior.

Fox News released the following statement to The Washington Post: "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 and Howard Kurtz and its contributor Gianni Caldwell, are false, patently frivolous and utterly devoid of any merit."

It continued: “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. 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.”

Henry released a statement through his attorney, Catherine M. Foti: “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. This is not one of those cases. The evidence in this case will demonstrate that Ms. Eckhart initiated and completely encouraged a consensual relationship.”

As part of the complaint, Areu, who made hundreds of appearances on Fox News programs as a commentator, alleges that Fox News “strung [her] along as a candidate for a full time position, all while she was being sexually harassed and retaliated against.”

She alleges that Henry “sent [her] a slew of wildly inappropriate sexual images, messages and videos through the first half of this year, including many texts in which he implied that Ms. Areu should have sex with him and that he would assist Ms. Areu’s career if she did so.”

Areu also alleged that prime-time host Tucker Carlson made an advance toward her after an appearance on his show in 2018. “Following the show, Mr. Carlson ... began telling Ms. Areu that he would be alone in New York City that night, and specifically said that he would be staying alone in his hotel room without any wife or kids,” the complaint alleges. After Areu “declined to spend the night at his hotel,” the complaint asserts, he “retaliated” against her by inviting her on his show only three times in 2019 and this year.

In addition, Areu recounts an alleged incident in March 2018, after an appearance on prime-time host Sean Hannity’s show. Areu alleges that Hannity “threw \$100 on the set desk” and “began calling out to the men in the room and demanding that someone take Ms. Areu out on a date for drinks” at a local New York restaurant.

“Ms. Areu was completely mortified and made clear that she was incredibly uncomfortable with Mr. Hannity’s misogynistic behavior,” according to the complaint.