

Harvey Weinstein rape retrial begins in New York

Weinstein is accused of the third-degree rape of Jessica Mann

● Weinstein has hired a new legal team

● He has claimed to be under threat at the notorious Rikers Island jail complex

AFP | New York, United States

The retrial of disgraced movie mogul Harvey Weinstein on a rape charge on which a jury was previously deadlocked started yesterday, although he will remain imprisoned for other offenses regardless of the verdict.

Weinstein is accused of the third-degree rape of Jessica Mann, who starred in the 2015 romantic comedy "This Isn't Funny."

The judge declared a mistrial last June after the jury foreperson refused to return to deliberate the case amid a jury-room



Former Hollywood film producer Harvey Weinstein appears in Manhattan Supreme Court during his retrial in New York City

feud.

Weinstein is being retried on that count in the Manhattan court, and the process of jury selection began Tuesday after a number of rulings by judge Curtis Farber, who said the defense had sought to delay the trial.

Jury selection to pick 12 jurors could last several days.

Weinstein's spokesman Juda Engelmayer told AFP ahead of Tuesday's hearing: "He is hopeful and expects a fair process where the facts will vindicate him."

Weinstein, 74, and wheelchair-bound by ill-health, is already serving a 16-year prison term in a California case for the rape of a European actress more than a decade ago. He is appealing that conviction with a hearing scheduled for April 23.

He appeared gaunt as he was wheeled in Tuesday. He wore a gray-textured tie and dark suit, and a court officer unshackled

him before potential jurors entered court.

Weinstein spoke in a slow, deep voice to confirm he agreed to a legal technicality.

The Oscar-winning Weinstein has faced a litany of prosecutions since sexual assault allegations against him exploded into public in 2017 -- helping to spur the "MeToo" movement.

The jury in June's proceedings convicted Weinstein of sexual assault against movie producer Miriam Haley. He is appealing that conviction. He was acquitted of sexual assault against Polish-born actress, Kaja Sokola.

Farber said Weinstein could not be cross-examined on the convictions that are being appealed.

Haley testified in Weinstein's original 2020 conviction, which resulted in a 23-year prison term, which was thrown out

in 2024 after an appeals court found irregularities in the way witnesses were presented.

"Threatened and derided"

Weinstein has hired a new legal team, including Jacob Kaplan as well as Marc Agnifilo who represents high profile figures including rapper Sean "Diddy" Combs.

Weinstein has claimed to be under threat at the notorious Rikers Island jail complex in the Bronx where he is being held, leaving him mostly in solitary confinement.

"I'm constantly threatened and derided. I wouldn't last long out there," he told the Hollywood Reporter at the start of the year.

He claimed to have been punched "hard in the face" while waiting to make a telephone call in the prison.

"I fell on the floor, bleeding everywhere. I was hurt really badly," he told the Reporter.

US extends exemption of sanctions on Russia's Lukoil

AFP | New York, United States

US officials announced yesterday an extension of sanctions relief on Russian oil giant Lukoil for fuel stations outside Russia as the Trump administration seeks to mitigate spikes in crude prices.

The action by the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) means Lukoil-branded stations in countries like the United States can continue to serve customers through October 29.

The measure allows the gas-

oline stations to conduct transactions "in the ordinary course of business" such as procuring motor supplies, making insurance payments and processing employee payroll, OFAC said.

Oil prices have surged since US and Israeli forces struck Iran on February 28, kicking off a Middle East war that has seen Iran launch reprisal attacks on several countries in the region. The license represents an effort to "mitigate the effects of Lukoil's OFAC designation on retail consumers," the agency said.

Modi, Trump discuss Middle East tensions, stress Hormuz security



TDI | agencies

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump held a 40-minute phone call focusing on rising tensions in the Middle East and ways to deepen bilateral cooperation, in their first conversation since Washington and Tehran reached a ceasefire.

Both leaders underscored the importance of keeping the Strait of Hormuz open and secure, given its critical role in global energy supplies.

In a post following the call, Modi said the two sides reviewed "substantial progress" in India-US ties and reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership across sectors.

"We also discussed the situ-

ation in West Asia and stressed the importance of keeping the Strait of Hormuz open and secure," he said.

US envoy to India Sergio Goro described the conversation as "very positive and productive," noting that President Trump regularly keeps Modi informed on key developments.

"They just got off the phone a few minutes ago. The president shared updates on the Middle East and major developments in Washington concerning US-India relations," Goro said.

He added that Washington would welcome a potential role for New Delhi in ongoing peace efforts.

Goro also revealed a personal note from the call, quoting Trump as telling Modi: "I just want you to know we all love you."



Harvey Weinstein was once one of Hollywood's most powerful producers, but his career collapsed in 2017 after dozens of women accused him of sexual harassment and assault—helping spark the global #MeToo movement

Musk's father seeking Russian refuge for S.African farmers

● Nearly 5,000 white Afrikaners have entered the United States as refugees since Trump took office in January

● Musk, who regularly visits Russia and attended an April 12 Orthodox Easter mass in Moscow in the presence of President Vladimir Putin, did not give details of the project.

AFP | Johannesburg, South Africa

The father of tech billionaire Elon Musk is working on a project to provide refugee status in Russia for South African farmers, he told yesterday, in a project similar to one by the US government.

The initiative would resettle 50 families from the white Afrikaners minority, descendants of the first Dutch settlers, according to a Russian official.



Elon Musk, Errol Musk

The same group of South Africans have been offered refugee status by the government of US President Donald Trump, which has falsely claimed they face persecution under the post-apartheid government.

Nearly 5,000 white Afrikaners have entered the United States as refugees since Trump took office in January last year and all but halted refugee programmes for every other group.

The US programme has angered the South African gov-

ernment which denies any discrimination.

Contacted by AFP by telephone on Tuesday, Errol Musk told AFP from Moscow: "It's about providing refugee status to South African farmers."

50 families

Musk, who regularly visits Russia and attended an April 12 Orthodox Easter mass in Moscow in the presence of President Vladimir Putin, did not give details of the project.

In an interview with Russian media Gubernia 33, he justified the project by claiming white Afrikaner farmers were being targeted for murder, allegations strongly denied in South Africa.

Washington made similar claims in its justification for encouraging Afrikaners to resettle in the United States.

The governor of the Vladimir region which borders the Moscow region, Aleksandr Avdeyev, said last week that he had discussed the project with Musk.

"We discussed the development of agriculture and the prospects for settling 50 Dutch-origin families from South Africa," he said on Telegram.

While Afrikaners have been emigrating to Russia since at least 2018, according to reports, Musk's involvement appears to be new information.

Now in his late 70s, he is a polarising figure.

In an interview with CNN last year, he rejected there had been racial oppression under apartheid, a harsh system of segregation which denied the black majority basic rights.

Elon Musk, who left South

Africa in his late teens, regularly accuses the government of racism, particularly over its failure to grant his Starlink internet provider a licence.

In a new outburst on social media this weekend, he said: "South Africa won't allow Starlink to be licensed, even though I was BORN THERE, simply because I am not Black!"

South African laws designed to rebalance apartheid-era discrimination require large companies to be at least 30-percent owned by people from previously disadvantaged communities.

Elon Musk was peddling "lies and disinformation", President Cyril Ramaphosa's spokesman responded on X.

Puzzling

Errol Musk's Russia project was "puzzling", said Friedrich von Treskow, a former researcher at the South African Institute of International Affairs, who has worked on Russian influence in southern Africa.

Pretoria and Moscow have close ties that date back to the struggle against apartheid, when the Soviet Union provided sup-

port to the African National Congress and its military wing.

"It could create tensions with Pretoria," von Treskow told AFP of Musk senior's scheme.

"Pretoria has been very reluctant to criticise Russia on any issue whatsoever."

Ramaphosa in February expressed "heartfelt gratitude" to Putin for agreeing to facilitate the return of more than a dozen men lured into fighting alongside Russian forces in Ukraine.

Fifteen of them have since returned.

Last month, the Forbidden Stories investigative media outlet reported that ANC secretary-general Fikile Mbalula had in December 2024 thanked Russian influence agents for their "assistance" before the general election earlier that year.

He also "requested" at a secret meeting \$300,000 to fund an ANC party congress.

Mbalula, among the men tipped to replace Ramaphosa as head of the party, which could put him in the running for president, rejected the claims as "unfounded" and "part of a disinformation campaign."