

Leon Black Fails to Win Approval to Punish Accusers' Law Firm



Leon Black, a billionaire private equity investor and co-founder of Apollo Global Management Inc., has lost his bid to impose sanctions on the law firm representing two women who have accused him of sexual abuse.

New York County Supreme Court Justice David Cohen denied Black's motion to sanction Guzel Ganieva and her lawyers at the Wigdor law firm. In the same ruling, Cohen also denied a competing request by Ganieva for sanctions against Black. Ganieva, a Russian model, sued Black in 2021 and alleged he abused her sexually and then lied and falsely accused her of extortion when she spoke out. The billionaire has consistently denied any wrongdoing throughout the legal proceedings. Jeanne Christensen, a partner at Wigdor representing Ganieva, expressed her satisfaction with Cohen's decision to deny Black's request. In a statement released after the ruling, she said that Leon Black has been waging a "campaign of harassment" against her and her firm for representing Ms. Ganieva in this litigation.

In December, Black had requested "substantial" sanctions against Wigdor for filing what he described as "frivolous, unsubstantiated, and damaging accusations of sexual assault." In response to the ruling, Susan Estrich, a lawyer for Black, said the decision does not change the fact that the allegations against him are "complete works of fiction and riddled with falsehoods."

According to Christensen, oral arguments over Black and Wigdor's sanctions motions are scheduled to take place on Feb. 23 before a different New York judge. The outcome of this hearing will determine if either party is subject to punishment that could have significant implications for the ongoing lawsuits.

The cases of both Ganieva and another woman named Cheri Pierson, who claims Black raped her two decades ago in the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein's Manhattan mansion, will continue to be closely watched as more information emerges over the next few weeks.

In the meantime, the lawyers representing both sides of the case will prepare their arguments for the upcoming hearing to ensure their clients come out on top. Whichever way it goes, Cohen's ruling has made it clear that Black's accusers will not be successful. That is a significant victory for both Ganieva and Pierson, and it will hopefully give other victims of sexual assault the courage to speak out.

REFERENCES:

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