

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
QUEEN'S BENCH DIVISION
MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS LIST**

CLAIM NO: QB-2022-002023

BETWEEN:

ALEXANDRA PETTIFER

Claimant

- and -

THE BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Defendant

AGREED STATEMENT IN OPEN COURT

The Claimant's Solicitor:

My Lord, in this matter I, Louise Prince, appear on behalf of the Claimant, Alexandra Pettifer, who was more widely known at the relevant time as Tiggy Legge-Bourke. The Defendant, The BBC, is represented by Mr Scherbel-Ball, of Counsel.

Summary

In late 1995 a number of false and malicious allegations about the Claimant were made to others. These falsehoods had serious personal consequences for all concerned and notably the Claimant, and have resulted in substantial damage and upset being caused to her over the past 25 years without the Claimant ever knowing their source. The Dyson Investigation, commissioned by the BBC, has since shed some light on the way in which the BBC Panorama interview with Diana, Princess of Wales was secured. Taken with other evidence, it is likely that these false and malicious allegations arose as a result and in the context of BBC Panorama's efforts to procure an exclusive interview with Diana, Princess of Wales. For its part the BBC accepts that the allegations were totally baseless and should never have been made. The BBC is now here today publicly to set the record straight and to apologise to the Claimant, as well as to agree to pay to her a substantial sum in damages together with her legal costs.

Detail

The allegations included the very serious and totally unfounded allegations that the Claimant was having an affair with HRH The Prince of Wales, resulting in a pregnancy which was aborted.

These allegations were fabricated. They also appeared to exploit some prior false speculation in the media about the Claimant and HRH The Prince of Wales. The Claimant did not have an affair with HRH The Prince of Wales, did not become pregnant with his child, and did not have an abortion.

At the time the allegations were published the Claimant was a personal assistant to HRH The Prince of Wales. Her duties included looking after Prince William and Prince Harry, who were then children. After Diana, Princess of Wales, became aware of the allegations in late 1995, she became upset with the Claimant without apparent justification.

On 19 September 1995 Earl Spencer, Diana, Princess of Wales' brother, was told that HRH The Prince of Wales was in love with the Claimant, and that they had been on a secret holiday together. In October 1995, while BBC negotiations with Diana, Princess of Wales, for her appearance on Panorama were at a critical stage, Diana, Princess of Wales, told her solicitor Lord Mishcon that *"she had also been told that Miss Legge-Bourke had been operated on for an abortion, and that she (HRH) would shortly be in receipt of "a certificate"*. Also in October 1995, Diana, Princess of Wales, wrote of allegations that she may fall victim to an accident, in order for HRH The Prince of Wales to 'marry' the Claimant. Then in December 1995 Diana, Princess of Wales confronted the Claimant publicly with the allegation of an abortion. Shortly afterwards, in December 1995 Diana, Princess of Wales also told a senior member of The Royal Household that she had documentary evidence of an abortion in the form of a hospital letter. As the allegation of an abortion was totally false, any such letter could only have been fabricated.

The Claimant was extremely upset and confused by these events. She felt she had to prove to others that the allegations were completely untrue by revealing highly sensitive matters, including private medical information. Sadly Diana, Princess of Wales could not be convinced, even when incontrovertible evidence was presented.

To the Claimant's great distress the falsehoods were also published very prominently in the national press at the time and repeated over the intervening 25 years. Although much of the reporting expressed doubt about the allegations, nonetheless both she and her family have until the present day continued to face suspicion and disbelief. A long shadow has been cast over relationships with those close and dear to her.

As the Dyson Report concluded, the BBC's investigations at the time were "*flawed and woefully ineffective*", and the BBC "*covered up in its press logs such facts as it had been able to establish about how*" the interview was secured, thereby falling "*short of the high standards of integrity and transparency which are its hallmark*".

In all the circumstances the Claimant therefore holds the BBC liable for the serious impact the false and malicious allegations have had. Had the BBC not fallen short the Claimant and her family could have been spared 25 years of lies, suspicion and upset.

The Claimant is relieved that the BBC accepts that the allegations are completely untrue and without any foundation whatsoever. She is also pleased that the BBC has agreed to apologise unreservedly, and to join in making this Statement in Open Court in order to assist her in repairing the substantial harm it has caused her. The BBC has agreed to pay to her a substantial sum of damages for the purposes of vindicating her reputation, and attempting to compensate her for the serious harm and distress caused to her by the length of time it has taken for these matters to come to light. It has also agreed to pay her legal costs.

The Defendant's Legal Representative:

On behalf of the BBC I accept all that my friend has said. The BBC wishes to publicly apologise to the Claimant without reservation for these matters.

The BBC accepts that the allegations made against the Claimant were wholly baseless, should never have been made, and that the BBC did not, at the time, adequately investigate serious concerns over the circumstances in which the BBC secured the Panorama interview with Diana, Princess of Wales. Had it done so, the BBC accepts that this may well have led to these false statements being addressed and corrected far earlier and that this may well have diminished the harm caused to the Claimant and her family over many years.

The BBC is extremely sorry for the serious and prolonged harm caused to the Claimant and the historical investigative shortcomings. It is pleased that the parties have been able to resolve these issues amicably by joining in this Statement in Open Court and by the BBC paying her substantial compensation and her legal costs.

The Claimant's Solicitor:

My Lord, given the public apology and other steps agreed by the BBC, the Claimant is content to let this matter rest. It therefore only remains for me to ask for leave to withdraw the record.

Dated: 21 July 2022

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