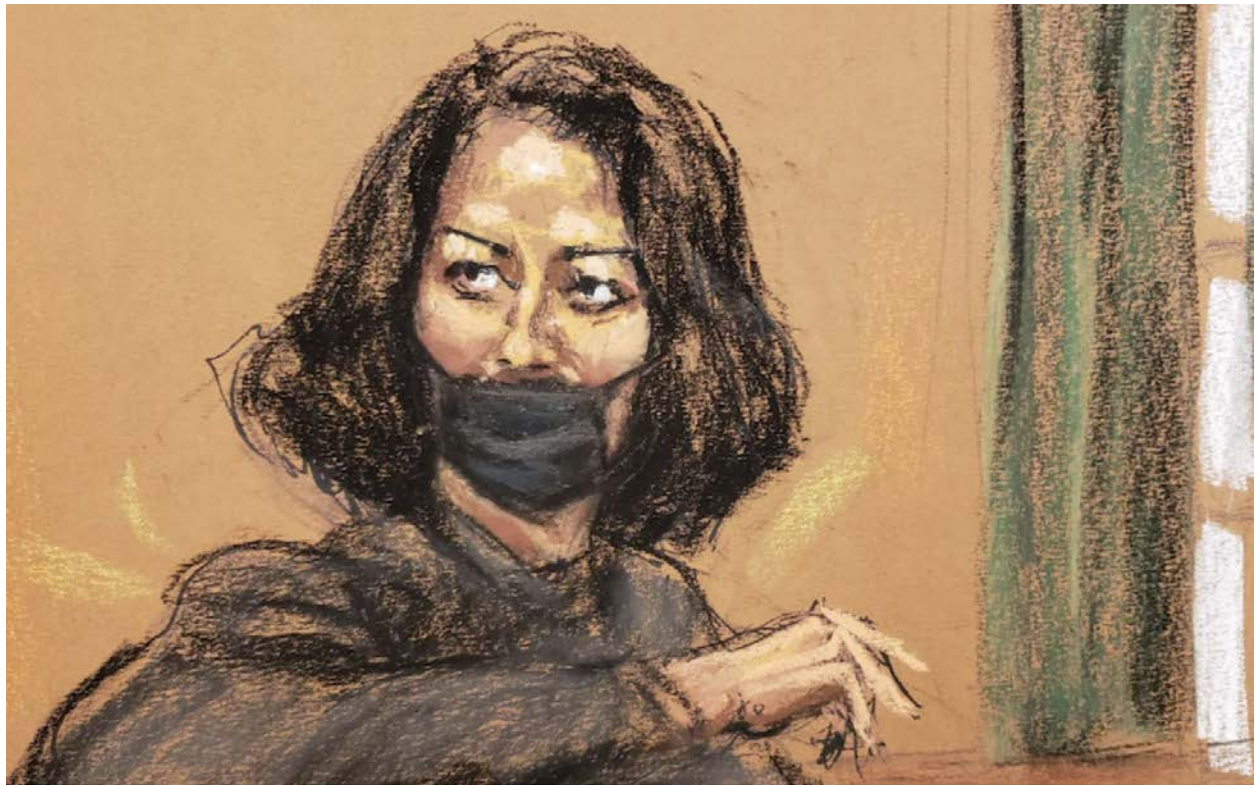


## Ghislaine Maxwell's prison treatment worse than 'a terrorist on death row', says her family

Relatives of former socialite complain that she is being 'dehumanised' in jail ahead of her trial on charges of child sex abuse this month



By [Robert Mendick](#), CHIEF REPORTER and [Josie Ensor](#), US CORRESPONDENT, IN NEW YORK

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Ghislaine Maxwell's family has filed a legal claim with the United Nations to investigate the US legal system over her "arbitrary detention" and ["dehumanising" treatment](#), claiming it is worse than "a terrorist on death row".

Lawyers for Ms Maxwell's six siblings filed a 22-page complaint with the UN on Tuesday, calling for her immediate release on the eve of her [trial for alleged child sex abuse and trafficking crimes](#).

The legal case accuses US prosecuting authorities of helping to "demonize" Ms Maxwell, 59, by staging a "melodramatic press conference" following her arrest last year, so that "she was and remains treated as guilty even though ... she has still not been tried".

It also highlights the ["inhumane" conditions of her ongoing detention](#) which have ["weakened" her "physically and psychologically"](#), placing her in a "seriously imbalanced position" to defend herself against the charges.

Ms Maxwell will stand trial next week for allegedly grooming four teenagers for her then-boyfriend Jeffrey Epstein. She denies the charges.

## 'Violation of her rights'

The legal action claims she was made a "substitute culprit" after [Jeffrey Epstein](#), her former boyfriend, was found hanged in a New York cell. Ms Maxwell was arrested and charged a year later.



The legal action claims Ghislaine Maxwell was made a 'substitute culprit' after Jeffrey Epstein's death CREDIT: Joe Schildhorn/Patrick McMullan via Getty Images Ms Maxwell, according to the claim, remains in isolation in a cell measuring 9ft by 7ft and is “awakened constantly at night” during more than 500 days of detention. The prison conditions, it added, “are a marked attack on her dignity, health, safety and psychological well-being”.

It went on: “In this case, the conditions of detention imposed on Ghislaine Maxwell are particularly harsh. According to some prison officials, they are more stringent and dehumanizing than for those ... sentenced to death for terrorism or murder.”

The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, based in Geneva, is being asked to investigate her detention, which includes being subjected to “up to seven body searches per day”. She has also made allegations that she was “touched in a sexually inappropriate manner by corrections officers on multiple occasions”.

Francois Zimeray, who is one of the world’s leading human rights lawyers and a former senior French diplomat, is calling on the US authorities to release Ms Maxwell “without delay”. He has also called for an independent investigation into her “arbitrary detention” and the “violation of her rights”.

Any investigation by the UN of Ms Maxwell’s treatment would be deeply embarrassing for the US.

The [criminal trial, which begins at the end of the month](#), looks set to be one of the court cases of the century.

## False memory syndrome expert to give evidence

On Monday, a judge ruled that Ms Maxwell - the daughter of Robert Maxwell, the disgraced media tycoon - will be allowed to call on a false memory expert who testified in OJ Simpson’s defence.

Elizabeth Loftus, a cognitive psychologist and University of California professor, has testified at more than 300 trials, including those of [Harvey Weinstein](#), [Ted Bundy](#), [Bill Cosby](#) and [OJ Simpson](#).

Ms Loftus has studied the supposed unreliability of witness accounts and memory repression and has used it against sexual assault survivors.

Judge Alison Nathan ruled on Monday that the defence could put Ms Loftus on the stand, but said some of her evidence would be barred, without elaborating.

Ms Maxwell's team has previously said they wish to draw on Ms Loftus's expertise on "the mechanism of creation of false memories, the characteristics of false memories, how memory fades and weakens over time, and how memory becomes more vulnerable to contamination".

Her lawyers have said Ms Loftus, 77, will testify that false memories can be triggered by "suggestive activities", like media coverage.

False memory syndrome has not been ratified by the American Psychological Association. It is labelled as "controversial" and is "not [an] accepted diagnostic term".

Ms Loftus failed to convince the jury that Annabella Sciorra's memory was defective at Weinstein's trial. [Ms Sciorra accused him of rape](#) in the early 1990s.

"The world is full of people who support accusers," Ms Loftus said in a 2020 interview with the Los Angeles Times. "I think people who are accused deserve some modicum of support as well."

Following her testimony in the Weinstein trial last year, Ms Loftus had a speech cancelled and her students wrote a letter to the dean asking her to be removed from faculty.

“If the MeToo movement had an office, Beth’s picture would be on the 10 most wanted list,” Ms Loftus’ brother Robert told the New Yorker magazine for a profile.

Another expert the defence wants to use is Park Dietz, a leading forensic psychiatrist who has 40 years experience and has been part of more than 1,000 evaluations of allegations of sexual abuse.

Ms Maxwell’s attorneys have also said they want to question the delay in the time it took for her accusers to come forward with their claims. Some waited until after Epstein’s death in 2019 to report Ms Maxwell, decades after the alleged sexual abuse took place.