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MailOnline apologises and pays substantial damages to Sand Van Roy for revealing her rape complaint against French film director

MailOnline has today apologised in the High Court to Sand Van Roy (the Dutch-Belgian actor and former comedian) over revealing her identity as a complainant in a rape case against a French film director (allegations which the individual strongly denies), together with publishing false details about her complaint. MailOnline has also agreed to pay Ms Van Roy substantial damages, as well as her legal costs.

As MailOnline has accepted, the publication of Ms Van Roy's identity as a complainant in a rape case and of the other (actual and purported) private information caused Ms Van Roy enormous distress.

In recognition of the falsity, and gravity, of the information published, MailOnline's publisher Associated Newspapers joined in a Statement in Open Court today before Mr Justice Murray (a copy of which is enclosed), expressing a full apology to Ms Van Roy. A full apology has also been published on MailOnline (see [here](#)).

Speaking today, Ms Van Roy said:

"The distress I suffered as a result of the publication of my identity as a complainant in a rape case cannot be overstated. I had always intended to remain anonymous in my complaint, and to have that choice taken away from me so soon after the event was almost too much to bear. To this day, many people still believe that I chose to go public myself.

I am pleased that MailOnline has apologised, that this distressing matter has now been brought to a successful conclusion and that the record has been set straight. I would like to thank my legal team for their support in this matter."

All enquiries should be directed to Nigel Tait, Helena Shipman or Katherine Hooley on + 44 20 7353 5005 and at helena.shipman@carter-ruck.com

Notes to Editors

The film director in question denies the allegations which are the subject of Ms Van Roy's complaint. He has currently been given assisted witness status in respect of Ms Van Roy's complaint against him in France. The term "assisted witness," which can precede a formal indictment, may be applied to any person accused by a witness, or whose evidence indicates may have been complicit, acted as perpetrator or as an accomplice in the crimes being examined by the investigative judge. Ms Van Roy continues to pursue her case against the relevant individual in France.

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE

Claim No. QB-2020-002703

QUEEN'S BENCH DIVISION

Media and Communications List

BETWEEN:-

SANDRINE VANROY

Claimant

-and-

ASSOCIATED NEWSPAPERS LIMITED

Defendant

STATEMENT IN OPEN COURT

Counsel / solicitor for the claimant

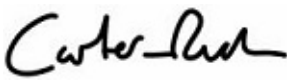
1. My Lord, I appear for the Claimant in this matter, Sandrine Vanroy
2. Ms Vanroy is a Dutch-Belgian actor and former comedian who resides in Belgium and France. She has appeared in internationally acclaimed films and television series, including films directed, written and/or produced by Luc Besson, such as *Taxi 5* and *Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets*. Ms Vanroy dealt with Mr Besson in a professional capacity and did not, at any time, consider herself to be in a romantic relationship with him.
3. On 18 May 2018, Ms Vanroy filed a complaint with Paris police that in the early hours of 18 May 2018 she had been raped by Mr Besson at the Hotel Bristol in Paris. Ms Vanroy made the complaint in private and intended to remain anonymous, pursuant to her rights under French law. Notwithstanding this, information about Ms Vanroy's complaint was leaked to and widely reported by the French press, including *Journal du Dimanche*, against Ms Vanroy's wishes and in breach of her right to anonymity.
4. On 29 May 2018, the Defendant published an article on Mail Online entitled "*Blood tests on actress Sand Van Roy 'are negative' after she accused French filmmaker Luc Besson of raping her at a Paris hotel when she drunk a cup of tea and 'lost consciousness'*" (the First Article).

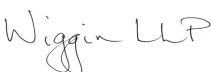
5. On 25 February 2019, the Defendant published an article on Mail Online entitled *“Luc Besson rape probe is dropped due to lack of evidence after he was accused of drugging and sexually assaulting a woman at a Paris hotel”* (the Second Article).
6. On 8 October 2019, the Defendant published an article on Mail Online entitled *“‘I’ve never raped a woman’: French director Luc Besson denies sex attack on actress Sand Van Roy and eight other women as he speaks publicly about allegations for first time”* (the Third Article).
7. The First Article revealed that Ms Vanroy had complained to police that she had been raped by Mr Besson. This was the first time that a publisher in this jurisdiction reported this information. MailOnline published this information in breach of Ms Vanroy’s right to privacy. Under French law, Ms Vanroy was entitled to anonymity in respect of the fact that she had complained about being a victim of rape and the information relating to the complaint. Ms Vanroy, as the Defendant accepts, had not waived her right to anonymity at the time of publication of the First Article.
8. MailOnline also published false private information about Ms Vanroy’s complaint against Mr Besson in the First, Second and Third Articles, including that Ms Vanroy had accused Mr Besson of drugging her before he raped her. As the Defendant now accepts, Ms Vanroy has never accused Mr Besson of drugging her.
9. The publication by the Defendant of Ms Vanroy’s identity as a complainant in a rape case and of the other (actual and purported) private information caused Ms Vanroy great distress. In recognition of the impact the Articles have had on Ms Vanroy and of the breaches of her privacy and Data Protection rights, the Defendant has published an apology on its website and agreed to join in the reading of this Statement in Open Court. Further, the Defendant has agreed to pay Ms Vanroy a substantial sum in damages, as well as her legal costs.
10. As a gesture of goodwill, the Defendant has also agreed to remove a photograph of Ms Vanroy with Mr Besson at a premiere for the film Taxi 5, which had been cropped from a larger group photograph. The photograph was taken by Agence France Presse, and had also been published elsewhere in the media.

Solicitor/Counsel for the Defendant

11. My Lord, on behalf of Associated Newspapers Ltd, I confirm all that my friend has said. The Defendant apologises unreservedly to Ms Vanroy.

Dated 23 March 2021

Signed: ...  ... Carter-Ruck, Solicitors for the claimant

Signed:  Wiggins LLP, Solicitors for the Defendant