

## Jeffrey Epstein is dead but sex criminal's legal legacy may have years to run

The financier's associates, such as Prince Andrew and Ghislaine Maxwell, and his victims are unlikely to see closure any time soon

By Victoria Bekiempis

The legal fallout from Jeffrey Epstein's arrest for sex trafficking and subsequent suicide in jail is likely to go on for years, ensuring that those caught up in the saga – like Prince Andrew – will face scrutiny and negative headlines for years to come.

Federal authorities in the US have repeatedly said that the investigation into the sex trafficking case is ongoing, raising the prospect of a lengthy multi-pronged and international inquiry into the wealthy financier's jet-set lifestyle.

There is already one criminal prosecution in relation to Epstein's death: two Manhattan correctional center guards were indicted for allegedly trying to hide their failure to check on him in his cell the night he killed himself.

“There has to be some sort of legal proceeding” involving persons suing his estate, [Dror] Bikel said. “The first thing you want to do is get an order restraining anybody from touching any assets at all.”

About one dozen accusers have also filed lawsuits against the convicted sex offender's estate, and more litigation is likely, ensuring a multitude of legal cases wending their way through the courts.

Finally the whereabouts of Epstein's alleged procurer, Andrew's friend and British media heiress Ghislaine Maxwell, remain unknown, sparking a global guessing game about one of the key figures in Epstein's life.

None of this is good news for the Duke of York, whose bumbling BBC Newsnight interview – in which he denied sexual activity with Epstein's then 17-year-old accuser, Virginia Giuffre – has resulted in chaos for the royal family.

While the disgraced prince has now been removed from public duties,

the Epstein affair seems virtually endless for him, both in time and scope, and is likely to make any return to prominence difficult, when at any moment a new wrinkle in the case might spur more bad headlines and tricky legal questions.

Those wanting answers are unlikely to get them immediately. The wheels of justice can be grindingly slow, experts told the Guardian.

“It’s complicated in knowing when the Epstein cases will come to a close, because we do not yet know all of the cases – both criminal and civil – that could find their way into the courts,” said attorney Robert Gottlieb, who has practiced criminal defense for more than four decades.

If the only new criminal case related to Epstein involved the jail guards, it could be resolved in a year or so, Gottlieb said, but he added: “I highly doubt that that is going to be the only case.”

Veteran defense lawyer Ron Kuby also said the timeline for wrapping up the Epstein saga wasn’t clear.

“The great thing about saying the phrase ‘the investigation is continuing,’ that’s a phrase that papers over everything – from ‘indictment of others is imminent’ to ‘we’re never going to do anything, but we don’t want to say it,’ and everything in between,” he said.

Kuby said of Maxwell, “if there was a specific human subject of the investigation, she strikes me as somebody who would be named most likely, but thus far [there’s]

nothing.”

Maxwell has repeatedly denied wrongdoing. Her lawyers did not respond to requests for comment.

As for a timeline of potential charges related to the Epstein case, this depends on many factors – **from the statutes of limitations** for certain crimes to whether allegations can be proved.

“It’s very, very hard to know what the future holds in terms of criminal prosecutions,” Kuby said.

He also opined on the extent of future prosecutions.

“The only people who are likely to face the wrath of the carceral state are the two black guards,” he continued, referring to corrections officers Tova Noel and Michael Thomas, who have pleaded not guilty.

“You have this massive sprawling international sex trafficking conspiracy involving the richest, whitest people on the planet who, with their white-skinned privilege and political connections and money, escape unwhipped by justice – and the only people who end up actually facing the criminal system are two overworked, underpaid black prison guards because that’s the nature of racism in America,” he continued. “You constantly have people at the very bottom who tend to be poor and black answering for crimes of people at the very top, who happen to be rich and white.”

As for the civil litigation, finding and retrieving Epstein’s assets could

be a complicated process as lawyers seek compensation for his victims, said Dror Bikel, a high-profile New York City divorce lawyer versed in tracking finances.

“There has to be some sort of legal proceeding” involving persons suing his estate, Bikel said. “The first thing you want to do is get an order restraining anybody from touching any assets at all.”

To determine Epstein’s assets, one would start by analyzing tax returns and there could well be “painstaking forensic accounting work”, he said. Plus, assets which don’t generate income – such as art – would not show up on a tax return.

The late financier signed a will two days before his death, indicating he was worth \$577,672,654 when he died, according to the New York Post, which broke the news of this document.

The money, approximately \$18m more than what Epstein declared when asking for bail, was put into a trust. The full extent of his wealth – which includes properties and \$18,551,700 in “Aviation Assets, Automobiles and Boats”, among other assets – is not clear.

His “fine arts, antiques, collectibles, valuables”, for example, had not been appraised when the will was signed. The newspaper reported that while his brother, Mark, is the sole potential heir, trust beneficiaries were not detailed.

“It depends – if money is really hidden it can take a lot of time. If

the person's really transparent, it doesn't really take that much time at all," he said. "So, a billionaire whose money is available, it's easy. But if money is not available and money is all over the place and all over the world, then that can take years." ■