

Ghislaine Maxwell given 20 year sentence for sex trafficking

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A courtroom sketch of Ghislaine Maxwell who was convicted on five of the six counts she faced for helping the late financier and convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein sexually abuse underage girls [Jane Rosenberg/Reuters]

New York, June 29 (RHC)-- Ghislaine Maxwell was sentenced to 20 years in prison on Tuesday for helping the sex offender and globetrotting financier Jeffrey Epstein sexually abuse teenage girls.

The 60-year-old British socialite was convicted in December of five charges, including sex trafficking a minor, for recruiting and grooming four girls to have sexual encounters with her then-boyfriend Epstein between 1994 and 2004.

Speaking at her sentencing hearing in Manhattan federal court before learning the sentence, Maxwell called Epstein a “manipulative, cunning and controlling man” who fooled everyone in his orbit. She said she was “sorry” for the pain that his victims experienced. “It is the greatest regret of my life that I ever met Jeffrey Epstein,” Maxwell said.

In imposing the sentence, U.S. Circuit Judge Alison Nathan said Maxwell did not appear to express remorse or accept responsibility. “Maxwell directly and repeatedly and over the course of many years participated in a horrific scheme to entice, transport and traffic underage girls, some as young as 14, for sexual abuse by and with Jeffrey Epstein,” Nathan said.

In often emotional and explicit testimony during the trial, Annie Farmer, a woman known as “Kate,” and two other women testified that Maxwell, who was found guilty on five counts, was a central figure in their abuse by Epstein.

During Tuesday’s hearing, Farmer, now a psychologist, said her experience being exploited by Maxwell “resulted in significant shame” that sometimes left her feeling like she wanted to “disappear.” Kate said she was proud to help hold Maxwell accountable.

“Today, I can look at Ghislaine and tell her that I became what I am today in spite of her and her efforts to make me feel powerless and insignificant, and I will cast that empowerment on my daughter,” Kate said.

Maxwell’s monthlong trial in late 2021 was widely seen as the reckoning that Epstein – who died in a Manhattan jail cell in 2019 at age 66 while awaiting his own sex trafficking trial – never had.

It was one of the highest-profile cases in the wake of the #MeToo movement, which encouraged women to speak out about sexual abuse, often at the hands of wealthy and powerful people.

Maxwell’s lawyers had said that she should have been sentenced to no more than 5-1/4 years, arguing that she is being scapegoated for Epstein’s crimes and had already spent significant time in jail.

Prosecutors had suggested Maxwell be sentenced to between 30 and 55 years behind bars.

“Ms Maxwell cannot and should not bear all the punishment for which Epstein should have been held responsible,” her attorneys pleaded. But the prosecution contended in its own court filing last week that Maxwell “was an adult who made her own choices.”

They argued that she had shown an “utter lack of remorse” for her crimes, committed between 1994 and 2004. “Today’s sentence holds Ghislaine Maxwell accountable for perpetrating heinous crimes against children,” said Damian Williams, the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York.

“This sentence sends a strong message that no one is above the law and it is never too late for justice,” he added. Maxwell has already been held in detention for some two years following her arrest in New Hampshire in July 2020.

“Ghislaine must die in prison,” Maxwell and Epstein accuser Sarah Ransome told reporters outside court.

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