

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE

CHANCERY DIVISION

BETWEEN:

HUGH GRANT

Claimant

- and -

MGN LIMITED

Defendant

STATEMENT IN OPEN COURT

Solicitor for the Claimant (Anjee Saigol of Taylor Hampton Solicitors)

1. In this action for misuse of private information, I appear for the Claimant, Hugh Grant. My learned friend [Alex Wilson] appears for the Defendant.
2. The Defendant is MGN Limited, a subsidiary company of Trinity Mirror plc and the publisher of three highly popular and influential newspapers: *The Daily Mirror*, *The Sunday Mirror* and *The People*, as well as their online versions. On any view, these were high circulation newspapers which were read by millions during the 10-year period when the unlawful activities to which this case relates were widespread within these titles
3. Mr Grant brought this action in relation to alleged illegal misuses of his private information, obtained by hacking into his voicemails, as well as blagging and surveillance, committed by MGN's journalists at all three of its newspapers over, as MGN now accepts, many years.
4. Although Mr Grant now has some clarity as to the extent of MGN's unlawful activities in relation to him, one of his principle reasons for pursuing this case was to uncover and establish the wider truth about MGN's investigations into

and knowledge of its unlawful activities before it finally admitted these practices in September 2014.

5. This was of importance to Mr Grant since he gave evidence to the Leveson Inquiry about his own experiences of press abuse and intrusion, and the extent to which he thought it had been covered up and not properly investigated. Mr Grant voiced his belief then that the *Daily Mirror* had illegally accessed and listened to his voicemails. He was therefore frustrated certain editors and executives gave evidence denying knowledge of phone hacking at MGN's titles and suggesting that they had seen no evidence to show it had taken place.
6. Mr Grant found the evidence given to the Inquiry on behalf of Trinity Mirror difficult to believe. He was convinced that there could be no doubt that Trinity Mirror became aware of its journalists' illegal activities in at least 2006, when Glenn Mulcaire and Clive Goodman were arrested and the Information Commissioner published a report about unlawful information gathering methods that included references to Trinity Mirror's newspapers.
7. Mr Grant was vindicated in his belief that MGN's journalists were illegally, habitually and covertly obtaining private information following the findings of the Court in the Mirror Group phone hacking civil trial, *Gulati v MGN* in 2015. These findings included the fact that there was "*a widespread culture of phone hacking*" at all three of MGN's national newspapers, "*extending from journalists up to editors*" and that "*editorial staff not only knew about the practice, but were also likely to have conducted it themselves*". The Judge also held that "*wrong, not just disingenuous*" statements were made to the Leveson Inquiry by at least two executives giving evidence on behalf of Trinity Mirror. MGN accepts these findings of the Judge in *Gulati*.
8. Despite this, Mr Grant remained deeply concerned to understand what Trinity Mirror knew about the illegal activities carried out on an institutionalised basis within the *Daily Mirror*, the *Sunday Mirror* and the *People*, and importantly, when this became known, given the three years between the strong denials issued by Trinity Mirror's executives at the Leveson Inquiry and the first admissions of wrong-doing in September 2014. Through this action, Mr Grant sought to uncover the answer to this question,

and, upon meeting repeated resistance from MGN, issued an application in Court requesting documentary evidence that would, in his belief, finally expose the truth of Trinity Mirror's concealment of its wrongdoing.

9. As part of the settlement, to meet Mr Grant's concerns:

a) MGN admits that a number of its senior employees, including executives, editors and journalists, condoned, encouraged or actively turned a blind eye to the widespread culture of unlawful information gathering activities at all three of its newspapers for many years and actively sought to conceal its wrongdoing from its many victims of intrusion.

b) MGN admits that its repeated and prolonged intrusions into innocent people's lives over, in some instances, a decade, could have been prevented or interrupted. Instead, Trinity Mirror failed to properly investigate these disgraceful actions and/or to act sufficiently when the allegations of MGN's journalists' unlawful activities were first alleged and publicly emerged in 2006 and when the first inquiries into these wrongdoings were made.

10. MGN Ltd has paid substantial damages to Mr Grant, which he will be donating to Hacked Off to assist others vindicate their rights, and has agreed to pay his reasonable legal costs and to join in this statement. Furthermore, MGN Ltd has also undertaken not to access Mr Grant's voicemail messages and emails.

11. Mr Grant is therefore now prepared to resolve his claim.

Counsel for the Defendant

12. My Lord, MGN accepts what my learned friend has said. MGN accepts that the unlawful interception of voicemail messages and procurement of private information about the Claimant and others should never have happened. MGN acknowledges that was morally wrong and deeply regrets the wrongful acts of its former employees which caused damage and distress to those affected, including the Claimant.