

Women overcome community pressure to send man to prison

By AIMEE GREEN
The Oregonian/OregonLive

The intense pressure to keep quiet began almost immediately after four girls reported that they'd been molested by a well-known member of their community: You're lying. Take it back. Change your stories.

Two of the four girls did.

But after a trial last month, a Portland judge found Hassan Mohamed-haji Noor — a 46-year-old married father of six and member of the local Somali immigrant community — guilty of sexual abuse, including for targeting the two girls who recanted.

In a strongly worded statement, Multnomah County Circuit Judge Leslie Roberts made clear that the urge to hide abuse by squelching the voices of victims happens in all kinds of settings, not just within a Portland immigrant community that numbers about 8,000.

"It is familiar in the history and reality of many communities near to home and far from it," Roberts said.

Child sex abuse is a relatively common crime. An estimated one in four girls and one in six boys will be sexually abused by the time they turn 18, according to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center.

But child abuse experts say most cases go unreported for some of the very reasons two of the young women in this case may have felt compelled to back down. Victims fear they won't be believed and often are embarrassed to talk about what happened.

They're also concerned that the person who abused them will carry out threats to hurt them or they worry that their family or community will ostracize them. Some even feel guilt over sending someone they once liked to prison. One victim also said that in her Somali-American community, girls and women were made

to feel like they couldn't speak out against men.

The four-day trial opened a rare window into this maelstrom of emotions as Noor's crimes and the vigorous campaign to cover them up were aired in open court.

The trial also came at a time of national reckoning over sexual harassment and abuse, beginning with the explosive allegations against Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein and followed by accusations of sexual misconduct by dozens of high-profile men in politics, media and entertainment.

The judge didn't cite the current climate but she did single out a culture of silence and said she believed the girls' families were among those pushing hard for them to retract their statements.

They valued the "fraudulent appearance of propriety" over the importance of protecting women or children, she said. The judge explained that it was her job to see past that to uphold her court's commitment to justice.

A sense of denial
Noor was a respected member of Portland's Somali-American community — known as a loving father and husband and a devout Muslim who prayed five times a day. He supported his large family by working full-time as a Lyft driver.

He was a success story — a man who immigrated from Somalia about 20 years ago and built a life for himself from scratch.

The allegations against Noor surfaced months or years ago — when each of the four girls confided in trusted adults.

They described a similar set of circumstances leading up to the abuse: Noor would have them massage his legs, work their way up to his thighs and ultimately touch his genitals when they were as young as 12 or 13, they said.

Each also said they were

urged to say nothing. They told investigators that family members and community members claimed that speaking about the abuse would bring shame to them and their families. That no men would want to marry them after learning they'd been molested. That it was up to Allah to decide Noor's punishment.

The girls didn't talk to police until last year for various reasons.

When Noor was arrested in March, news quickly spread through his community.

The accusations were so disturbing that some people simply couldn't believe them, said Musse Olol, president of the Somali American Council of Oregon.

"It's a sense of denial — just like with any shameful act, any criminal act, anything bad that the community wished did not happen but sometimes happens," Olol said.

Uphill battle
Although the prosecution's case against Noor seemed straightforward in the beginning, it grew more complicated when Noor's two youngest victims — now ages 16 and 18 — recanted.

Compounding matters, although the two other victims stood by their stories, Noor was indicted for sexually abusing only one of them. That's because the statute of limitations had passed for the oldest one, now 23. She was allowed to testify, but Noor couldn't be convicted of abusing her.

On the opening day of trial, a standing-room-only crowd of members of the Somali community filled the courtroom gallery. The 16-year-old took the stand first.

Deputy District Attorney Amber Kinney chose her words carefully. She knew the girl had changed her story. She needed to get the teen's original statements on the record.

Kinney played a 911 recording of the girl — the call that had set the case in motion nine months earlier.

"I was molested," the girl can be heard saying, before stating that it was Noor and

describing the abuse.

The prosecutor stopped the recording. "Who was that calling 911?" Kinney asked.

"Sounds like my voice, but I was lying," the girl responded.

The prosecutor noted that the girl also repeatedly told her story to others: a patrol officer, a child abuse investigator with the Oregon Department of Human Services, a police detective and ultimately a grand jury.

But the girl offered a startling explanation: She had been under the influence of "black magic."

"I wasn't in my right state of mind," she said on the witness stand. "It is as if I wasn't speaking myself."

The two other young women testified that they had refused to change their stories even though their families disowned them.

The most emotional account came from the 20-year-old, who said Noor repeatedly made her touch his genitals when she was 11. She told her parents after encountering him trying to molest one of her siblings, she said.

She said her parents distanced the family from Noor, but didn't call police. She said she remembers her father telling her that the abuse could never be reported.

"He basically started crying," she said. "And he was like, 'I know what (Noor) did to you was wrong, but you know, what can I do? What can I do? Your reputation is going to be ruined if I say something, if I fight him.'"

Noor is scheduled to be sentenced in February.

He faces a minimum prison term of 6 1/4 years if he serves the sentences at the same time. But he also could get a maximum of more than 68 years — 6 1/4 years for each of the 11 charges of first-degree sexual abuse against him.

As Roberts announced her verdict, Noor revealed no visible emotion. As deputies handcuffed him and led him out of the courtroom, he smiled slightly and shrugged at the crowd of spectators who gathered around him.

BRIEFLY

Lack of snow hurting S. Oregon resort

ROSEBURG (AP) — A lack of snow is hurting business at a southern Oregon resort, forcing cutbacks and layoffs.

The Diamond Lake Resort is used to seeing a throng of visitors at this time of year looking to enjoy snow sports or a just a casual snowball fight, the *News-Review* reported.

This year is different, said John Jonesburg, the resort's marketing and events coordinator. He said he has never seen business so slow in his 28 years of working at the resort.

Jonesburg estimates that the amount of visitors, revenue and business is down by 60 percent this year. Outside the difference is visible with pansies are already blooming in places where snow should be.

The lack of snow has led the resort to shut down some of its operations and lay off more than half of its winter staff. They tried to keep its snow tubing hill open, but gave up once costs became too much, Jonesburg said.

Cat skiing at Mount Bailey remains closed and snowmobiling from the snow-less lake level is not possible. Ice fishing may not be possible this season since Diamond Lake was briefly frozen during the holiday season, but has since thawed.

"We need a lot of snow to get things open again," Jonesburg said.

Despite the current snow shortfall, the resort is still inviting guests to come enjoy hiking trails and fishing.

Man swept out to sea at Depoe Bay

DEPOE BAY (AP) — Oregon State Police say a man has been swept out to sea at Depoe Bay.

Witnesses told police that the man went over a sea wall Thursday morning to look at the big waves from a storm. He was then swept off the rocks.

The Coast Guard and local rescue crews searched for the 47-year-old man Thursday. The Coast Guard said Thursday night that the search had been suspended "due to negative results."

North Lincoln Fire & Rescue reported damage to a restaurant, two motels and other businesses on the beachfront in Lincoln City and said one person had been hospitalized after being hit by a wave. Fire officials also posted photos of damage to the establishments on Facebook.

The waves also forced the closure of beaches and access points along the coast.

Large "sneaker" waves have killed more than two dozen people along the Oregon coast since 1990.

Yakima approves emergency proclamation ahead of landslide

YAKIMA, Wash. (AP) — A city in central Washington state issued an emergency proclamation in response to a mass of rock and soil crawling down a ridge that officials say could turn into a landslide.

The *Yakima Herald-Republic* reports the Yakima City Council on Tuesday approved a resolution for city officials to request state or federal assistance should the city require help in responding to the effects of about 4 million cubic yards of material inching down Rattlesnake Ridge.

Emergency management officials say the proclamation would aid agencies in coordinating and tracking funds for emergency response efforts.

Officials say the mass is moving less than 2 feet each week, but it could slide from the ridge at any time.

Corrections

The *East Oregonian* works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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AccuWeather Forecast

TODAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
Mostly cloudy	Mostly cloudy	Cloudy, a shower in the p.m.	Clouds and sunshine	A few showers in the afternoon

PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST
48° 37° 47° 35° 48° 36° 48° 33° 44° 34°

HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST
51° 38° 50° 34° 50° 37° 51° 33° 47° 34°

ALMANAC

PENDLETON
through 3 p.m., yesterday
TEMPERATURE
HIGH 50° LOW 38°
Yesterday 50° 38°
Normals 42° 28°
Records 63° (2005) -20° (1922)
PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.25"
Month to date 1.04"
Normal month to date 0.93"
Year to date 1.04"
Last year to date 1.32"
Normal year to date 0.93"

HERMISTON
through 3 p.m., yesterday
TEMPERATURE
HIGH 47° LOW 39°
Yesterday 47° 39°
Normals 42° 29°
Records 65° (1961) -11° (1930)
PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.08"
Month to date 0.72"
Normal month to date 0.75"
Year to date 0.72"
Last year to date 1.30"
Normal year to date 0.75"

SUN AND MOON
Sunrise today 7:30 a.m.
Sunset tonight 4:43 p.m.
Moonrise today 8:59 a.m.
Moonset today 7:32 p.m.

First	Full	Last	New
Jan 24	Jan 31	Feb 7	Feb 15

AccuWeather

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REGIONAL CITIES

	Today			Sat.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Astoria	49	41	sh	49	44	sh
Baker City	43	23	sf	40	22	pc
Bend	41	28	sf	40	29	pc
Brookings	48	40	sh	49	44	sh
Burns	39	18	sn	37	18	pc
Enterprise	39	25	sn	38	23	c
Eugene	46	36	c	46	37	sh
Heppner	47	36	pc	46	33	c
Hermiston	51	38	c	50	34	pc
John Day	41	28	sn	40	28	pc
Klamath Falls	37	20	sf	37	25	c
La Grande	43	31	sn	41	28	c
Meacham	40	30	sn	39	28	c
Medford	43	32	c	44	33	c
Newport	48	40	sh	48	44	sh
North Bend	49	40	sh	51	44	sh
Ontario	47	25	pc	44	24	pc
Pasco	49	38	c	50	33	pc
Pendleton	48	37	c	47	35	c
Portland	47	40	c	47	41	sh
Redmond	45	24	sf	43	27	pc
Salem	48	39	c	48	41	sh
Spokane	38	30	sf	37	29	c
Ukiah	39	29	pc	38	27	c
Vancouver	47	41	c	47	42	sh
Walla Walla	48	37	c	46	34	pc
Yakima	49	32	c	49	32	pc

WORLD CITIES

	Today			Sat.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Beijing	46	22	s	40	19	pc
Hong Kong	70	63	c	71	63	pc
Jerusalem	47	42	sh	54	41	pc
London	44	35	pc	42	35	pc
Mexico City	64	43	pc	71	45	s
Moscow	23	15	c	21	19	sn
Paris	44	39	sh	52	40	sh
Rome	59	44	pc	57	48	pc
Seoul	41	27	pc	43	23	pc
Sydney	86	65	s	84	68	s
Tokyo	49	40	pc	47	41	r

WINDS

(in mph)	Today	Saturday
Boardman	SW 6-12	SW 8-16
Pendleton	SW 6-12	WSW 7-14

UV INDEX TODAY

0 1 1 1 0 0

8 a.m. 10 a.m. Noon 2 p.m. 4 p.m. 6 p.m.

0-2, Low 3-5, Moderate 6-7, High; 8-10, Very High; 11+, Extreme

The higher the AccuWeather.com UV Index™ number, the greater the need for eye and skin protection.

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REGIONAL FORECAST

Coastal Oregon: Cloudy today with showers; chilly in the south. Rain tonight.

Eastern Washington: Cloudy today; a snow shower near the Idaho border and in the mountains.

Eastern and Central Oregon: A few rain and snow showers today. Snow level around 3,000 feet; 1-3 inches of snow expected.

Cascades: A bit of snow today, but a rain or snow shower in central parts.

Western Washington: Considerable cloudiness today with a couple of showers. Rain tonight.

Northern California: A shower or two today; snow, accumulating 1-2 inches in the interior mountains.

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Portland	47	40	c	47	41	sh
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Paris	44	39	sh	52	40	sh
Rome	59	44	pc	57	48	pc
Seoul	41	27	pc	43	23	pc
Sydney	86	65	s	84	68	s
Tokyo	49	40	pc	47	41	r

WINDS