

## Press Release:

# Brown Rudnick Launches Landmark Case Against Human Trafficking and Child Pornography in the Online Porn Industry

June 17, 2021

**NEW YORK** – International law firm **Brown Rudnick LLP** today filed a lawsuit against **MindGeek, the parent company of tubesite Pornhub**, various of its affiliates, owners, and officers, as well as Visa, on behalf of over 30 victims of child pornography, rape, and human trafficking. **Michael Bowe, Partner and Chair of the Litigation & Arbitration Practice Group, and Lauren Tabaksblat, Partner and Practice Group Leader of the Litigation & Arbitration Practice Group**, are leading a battle-ready team of trial lawyers fighting to end the exploitation of these brave victims and those similarly situated.

Filed in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California, the complaint alleges that Pornhub and MindGeek knowingly profited from videos depicting rape, child sexual exploitation, revenge porn, trafficking, and other nonconsensual sexual content.

The lawsuit alleges claims under the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, which provides a private right of action for victims of human trafficking against any entity that engages in trafficking or benefits from a trafficking venture. The statute allows for recovery of punitive damages and attorneys' fees. The complaint also alleges federal racketeering claims, federal child pornography claims, as well as various state statutory and common law claims. Brown Rudnick is seeking damages for the devastation this exploitation has caused these victims, protection for them and thousands of other victims from further exploitation, and the imposition of stringent policies and procedures that ensure only legitimate, legally compliant consensual content is permitted on MindGeek's platform.

With 3.5 billion visits per month to MindGeek's flagship tubesite, Pornhub, and its other tube and pay sites, and a library of tens of millions of videos, MindGeek is the most dominant online pornographer in the world.

**Michael Bowe** has been publicly advocating for and giving voice to the countless victims of Pornhub and MindGeek.

In April 2021, **Bowe** appeared at a U.S. Congressional Briefing. He spoke alongside client victims and advocacy organizations, including the National Center on Sexual Exploitation and Traffickinghub. **Bowe** stated, in part, that, "Pornhub has made a fortune off millions of exploitation videos. On top of that, they employ a business model that puts no restrictions on content because the more content they get, the better their Search Engine Optimization. Nobody is better acquainted of this than MindGeek. They knew that this trafficked, illegal content was on there and they didn't care. The industry is a rogue industry, and they will not self-police. These companies don't think the law applies to them. We think it does."

In January 2021, **Bowe** was interviewed on *The Dr. Oz* network television show, which has a global audience. In February 2021, **Bowe** was invited to testify twice before Canada's House of Commons Ethics Committee, part of a Canadian government inquiry into MindGeek. **Bowe** testified that MindGeek and its tubesites like Pornhub made a "knowing decision to commercialize" the content and that this is "part of the business model." "The fact of the matter is that this company is the largest depository of child pornography in North America, which we all know is flat out a crime."

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**The complaint also alleges** MindGeek went even further by pursuing an aggressive “astroturf” campaign in the press and on social media over the course of the last year in an attempt to shame, discredit, and intimidate victims and advocates who dared to speak out. **Lauren Tabaksblat** said, “Pornhub has been conducting a gaslighting campaign in the media and social media to discredit the victims. With the filing of this suit, we want to put an end to these shameless attacks, give voice to these and other countless victims, and force MindGeek to adopt practices that ensure only consensual content is on its platform.”

**Bowe** is an experienced trial lawyer who for thirty years has successfully litigated virtually every type of high-stakes business and personal case, on both the plaintiff and defense side, and at both the trial and appellate level. **Tabaksblat** represents clients through all stages of complex commercial litigation from pre-litigation advisory services through trial and appeal.

### About Brown Rudnick’s Litigation & Arbitration Practice Group

Brown Rudnick’s global Litigation & Arbitration Practice Group boasts extensive experience and a strong track record for large-scale, highly complex disputes. We represent clients on both the plaintiff and defense side, at the trial and appellate level, and often regarding matters that pose an existential threat. Our brave, trial-ready lawyers routinely implement creative and novel solutions to high-stakes disputes.

### About Brown Rudnick LLP

Brown Rudnick combines ingenuity with experience to achieve great outcomes for our clients. We deliver partner-driven services, with a focus on collaboration in the client’s best interest. Brown Rudnick is an international law firm, serving clients around the globe. With more than 250 lawyers and government relations professionals, the Firm has offices in key financial centers across the United States and Europe. We are recognized for our market-leading practices covering several targeted industries, including commercial litigation, white-collar defense and government investigations, civil fraud, cross-border deals and disputes, bankruptcy and corporate restructuring, life sciences, technology, special situations, corporate finance, strategic capital, distressed debt, intellectual property, real estate, and M&A.

### Media Contact

Diana Dixon  
Greentarget Global Group  
+1 (312) 252-4118  
[ddixon@greentarget.com](mailto:ddixon@greentarget.com)