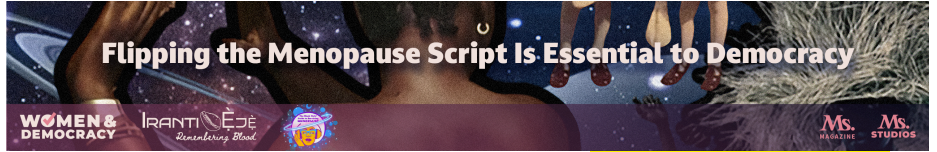


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If No One Is Held Accountable, What Are the Epstein Files For?

PUBLISHED 3/17/2026 by **OMNY MIRANDA MARTONE**

Releasing the Epstein files without real consequences risks turning a long fight for truth into yet another moment of exposure that leaves survivors without justice and systems of abuse intact.



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Epstein abuse survivor Jena-Lisa Jones holds up a photo of her younger self during a news conference with lawmakers on the Epstein Files Transparency Act outside the U.S. Capitol on Nov. 18, 2025. (Heather Diehl / Getty Images)

Releasing the Epstein files, *without* holding the exposed individuals and institutions accountable, will embolden rapists and pedophiles. Transparency alone is not justice. If we don't hold these monsters accountable, we will have allowed them to brag to all the world that they got away with rape, pedophilia and human trafficking.

Transparency without accountability tells victims, *We hear you. We see you. But, this is normal and acceptable.* It sends the same message to perpetrators: *We hear you. We see you. This is normal and acceptable.*

Transparency without accountability teaches abusers that secrecy is not necessary. Impunity is already protecting them. It emboldens them to continue or even escalate their abuse.

It also emboldens other potential perpetrators, reassuring them that, even if they're exposed, their abuse will be excused or ignored.

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Over time, this becomes normalization. Without accountability, transparency makes powerful networks of sexual exploitation a fact of life, rather than an urgent crisis demanding action.

Calls to expose Epstein and his accomplices have existed for [decades](#). In 2008, Jeffrey Epstein pled guilty to “soliciting prostitution with a minor,” and served just 13 months of an 18-month sentence as part of a controversial [plea deal](#). Immediately following this case, [victims requested](#) the details of the deal be made public.



A photo of Andrew Mountbatten Windsor is displayed as U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi testifies before the House Judiciary Committee in the Rayburn House Office Building on Feb. 11, 2026. (Win McNamee / Getty Images)

Since then, [victims](#), the [press](#) and the [public](#) have continued to call for transparency. Recently, calls for transparency have escalated to Congress with the [Epstein Files Transparency Act](#). Despite the law’s passage in November 2025, [lawmakers](#) and [investigative reporting](#) say [millions of files](#) have not been released. What has been published has been [sloppily redacted](#).



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“If we are not careful, the Epstein files will join the Panama Papers and the Catholic Church as another case study in transparency without impact.”

The years-long fight for transparency, though noble and necessary, has convinced the public that transparency itself is the final goal. It has turned the Epstein files into a spectacle. A constant. Even a [meme](#). Something normalized, diluted and [easier to dismiss](#).

We have seen these tactics before. The [Panama Papers](#), a scandal exposing financial corruption by the wealthy and elite, followed the same pattern: a years-long demand for transparency, then a flood of revelations so overwhelming that the spectacle of exposure overshadowed the fact that a majority of the powerful people involved never faced accountability.

The same dynamic happened with the [Catholic Church's sexual abuse crisis](#). The awe and shock consumed public attention, obscuring the lack of real consequences for many perpetrators and structural change that never came.

In both cases, a handful of low-level individuals were punished to prove that “something was done,” while powerful decision-makers and the systems that enabled abuse [were protected](#).

Scapegoats are not justice. Without real change, the harm continues. People are still taking advantage of the [offshore financial system](#) and [sexual abuse](#) continues in the Catholic Church. If we are not careful, the Epstein files will join the Panama Papers and the Catholic Church as another case study in transparency without impact.

Transparency is a diagnostic tool. A direction to go. Not a cure. Not a solution. It tells us where to act, not whether we will do

SO.

Real change requires a collective agreement that what has been exposed is so grave that individuals and institutions must be held accountable, in spite of the disruption it will cause the status quo, money and power.

So, I ask you: Is the abuse, pedophilia and exploitation exposed in the Epstein files grave enough? If so, we need a clear path to accountability for those named and a clear path to dismantling the systems that enabled this abuse.

1. Focus on Survivors

First, the focus must be on Epstein survivors. We must listen to their demands by enforcing [full compliance](#) with the [Epstein Files Transparency Act](#). We must also demand immediate accountability for the Department of Justice (DOJ)'s failure to redact victims' [identifying information](#) and [explicit photos](#), as legally mandated, exposing them to danger, retraumatization and further harm. To start, the DOJ must [immediately redact](#) all sensitive information and should be ordered by the courts and/or Congress to issue a [public apology](#) to victims.

2. Demand Thorough Investigations

Second, we must demand full investigations into every individual and institution that participated in or enabled Epstein's network of abuse, regardless of their positions of power or fame. For years, law enforcement agencies [investigated](#) Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell, his since-convicted accomplice, compiling evidence that would become the [Epstein files](#): flight logs, photos, physical evidence, emails, phone records and victim testimony. These millions of documents exposed [hundreds of people](#), from simple enablers to willful abusers.

The DOJ should have investigated and prosecuted those implicated in the files [decades ago](#). Congress must force the DOJ

to take action against everyone implicated, beyond Epstein and Maxwell. The DOJ only released the files once they were required to by Congress. Transparency was forced. Now justice must be.

3. Demand Public Perpetrators Take Accountability

Third, the United States must follow the example of other countries, where [prominent officials](#) have been fired, forced to resign or stripped of their titles after their ties to Epstein were revealed. Abroad, people exposed in the files have faced [criminal charges](#) and other [consequences](#). Power has not obstructed [accountability](#) elsewhere. It should not do so here.

4. Make Abuse Rare

Finally, we must demand structural change. Congress should launch probes into government agencies, including the [FBI](#) and the [DOJ](#), that failed to stop this abuse and force them to implement new procedures to prevent future harm.

We cannot repeat the failures of the Panama Papers or the Catholic Church, where a few individuals were removed while the architects of harm remained untouched.

Transparency without accountability is bragging. Transparency without change is dangerous. Our fight is not just to expose the truth but to act on it. Exposure without consequences is not transparency. It is permission.

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ABOUT OMNY MIRANDA MARTONE

Omny Miranda Martone is an anti-rape activist and the founder and CEO of the Sexual Violence Prevention Association (SVPA), a national nonprofit dedicated to preventing sexual violence systemically. Martone's work has been recognized by the United Nations, the Clinton Foundation and Echoing Green.

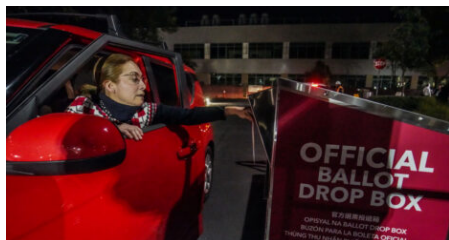
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