

# Roman Polanski releases statement denouncing legal witch-hunt

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Roman Polanski issued a statement on Tuesday forcefully denouncing the vindictive legal pursuit against him. This marks the first time the filmmaker has spoken out against the ordeal in his own words since his arrest in September 2009.

In the statement, Polanski says the US authorities' request that he be extradited from Switzerland, where he is currently under house arrest, is "founded on a lie." "[T]he United States continues to demand my extradition," writes Polanski, "more to serve me on a platter to the media of the world than to pronounce a judgment concerning which an agreement was reached 33 years ago."

In the original court proceedings of 1977, Polanski pled guilty to unlawful sexual intercourse with a teenage girl. The presiding judge in the case, Laurence J. Rittenband, ordered Polanski to undergo a 90-day diagnostic at Chino State Prison, which was in reality a form of punishment.

New testimony from Roger Gunson, the prosecuting attorney in the initial proceedings, confirms that, as Polanski says in his statement, "on September 16, 1977, Judge Rittenband stated to all the parties concerned that my term of imprisonment in Chino constituted the *totality* of the sentence I would have to serve."

When the Chino diagnostic resulted in an early release and a recommendation for probation, Rittenband became furious and expressed his intention to reject the plea agreements put in place and sentence Polanski to a substantial amount of time in prison. Believing he could no longer receive a fair trial in the US, Polanski fled the country.

As Polanski declares in his statement, "The said [extradition] request asserts that I fled in order to escape sentencing by the US judicial authorities, but

under the plea-bargaining process I had acknowledged the facts and returned to the United States in order to serve my sentence. All that remained was for the court to confirm this agreement, but the judge decided to repudiate it in order to gain himself some publicity at my expense."

Polanski accuses the authorities currently seeking his extradition of similar misconduct, writing "The new District Attorney, who is handling this case and has requested my extradition, is himself campaigning for election and needs media publicity!"

"[F]or over 30 years," writes Polanski, "my lawyers have never ceased to insist that I was betrayed by the judge, that the judge perjured himself, and that I served my sentence. Today it is the deputy district attorney [Gunson] who handled the case in the 1970s, a man of irreproachable reputation, who has confirmed all my statements under oath, and this has shed a whole new light on the matter."

The filmmaker says he felt compelled to speak out now, in his own words, following the April ruling of the Second District Court of Appeals in California which the director says ruled "in defiance of all the arguments and depositions submitted by third parties, not to agree to sentence me in absentia even though the same Court of Appeal recommended the contrary." That court did, in fact, suggest in a December ruling that a sentencing in absentia would be an appropriate means to bring Polanski's case to an end. That court refused, however, to dismiss Polanski's case outright.

Rejecting the argument that his 2009 arrest was an instance of a criminal fugitive being brought to justice, Polanski also denounces the decision of the courts to ignore the wishes of Samantha Geimer, the victim at the center of the 1977 court case. He writes, "[T]he California court has dismissed the victim's numerous

requests that proceedings against me be dropped, once and for all, to spare her from further harassment every time this affair is raised once more.”

Polanski ends his statement by discussing the loss he himself has suffered under the weight of this legal witch-hunt: “I have been placed under house arrest in Gstaad [Switzerland] and bailed in very large sum of money which I have managed to raise only by mortgaging the apartment that has been my home for over 30 years, and because I am far from my family and unable to work.

“Such are the facts I wished to put before you in the hope that Switzerland will recognize that there are no grounds for extradition, and that I shall be able to find peace, be reunited with my family, and live in freedom in my native land.”



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