

Democrats silent as House speaker shuts Congress to block Epstein resolution

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Amid a mounting crisis of the Trump administration over the cover-up of the Jeffrey Epstein affair, House Speaker Mike Johnson (Republican of Louisiana) announced Tuesday he was cutting short the current session of the House of Representatives in order to block a vote on compelling the Justice Department to release investigative files on the late financier and sexual trafficker in underage girls.

Johnson, who one week ago called on the Justice Department to release the files, said votes scheduled for Thursday would be cancelled, and lawmakers would return to their districts early Wednesday for the annual summer recess, set to last until September.

He and President Trump were scrambling to block consideration of a bipartisan resolution, signed onto by 12 House Republicans, that would compel the Attorney General to release the FBI files on Epstein. With much of the MAGA base up in arms over the administration's flip flop on previous pledges to release the Epstein files, Republican lawmakers are caught in a bind between triggering reprisals from the White House should they vote to release the files and losing support among their voters should they oppose it.

More fundamentally, the Epstein case, six years after the perpetrator was found dead in his Manhattan jail cell, officially ruled a "suicide," is a crisis of the entire political system. A multi-millionaire fixture in corporate and political circles, Epstein ran a vast network in which hundreds of teenage girls were procured for abuse by the rich and famous. His activities expose the criminality and depravity of the entire ruling elite. His associates included titans of finance, politicians of both parties, including Trump and Democratic ex-President Bill Clinton, and celebrities such as Britain's Prince Andrew. He carried

out his global operations via some of the biggest banks, including JPMorgan Chase, Deutsche Bank and Bank of America.

It is estimated that some 1,000 young girls were sexually exploited by Epstein and his wealthy clients, but not a single one of the hundreds who abused the victims has been named, let alone prosecuted.

The Epstein scandal has become the focal point of a profound political and social crisis rooted in the crisis of the capitalist system. Social anger is mounting as the fascistic Trump administration, with the compliance of the Democratic Party, guts all that remains of the social safety net, making living conditions intolerable for tens of millions of workers. At the same time there is surging opposition to Trump's pogrom against immigrants, his support for genocide in Gaza and war against Russia, and his erection of a presidential dictatorship. Even the poll numbers reflect the increasing isolation and unpopularity of the government.

The Democrats, despite their verbal efforts to profit from the disarray of the Trump administration and the GOP, are no less fearful of releasing the Epstein files than their Republican counterparts. They reacted with barely a whimper to the early shutdown of the House, even though, with 12 Republicans on board, they have the votes to pass the resolution co-sponsored by Thomas Massie, a Kentucky Republican, and Ro Khanna, a Democrat from California. House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries issued no public statement and had nothing on social media on Johnson's move, and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer posted on X a denunciation of Trump for showing "his weakness to the Chinese Communist Party" over trade in computer chips.

Meanwhile, the House Oversight Committee voted to

subpoena Ghislaine Maxwell, the socialite and longtime partner of Epstein, for a deposition. Maxwell is serving a 20-year sentence on a sex trafficking conviction.

And on Tuesday, Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche said he was reaching out to Maxwell's lawyers to see if Maxwell would meet with Justice Department officials to discuss the Epstein case. He said he anticipated meeting with Maxwell "in the coming days."

Trump is flailing about with increasing desperation in an attempt to suppress the furor within Republican ranks over his refusal to release the FBI's Epstein files. His administration announced this week that it was removing the *Wall Street Journal* from the press pool for his upcoming trip to Scotland. This followed last week's front-page article in the *Journal* citing a 2003 birthday card Trump send to Epstein in which Trump outlined the figure of a nude woman and alluded to "secrets" the two shared. Trump has sued the *Journal* and its owner Rupert Murdoch for \$10 billion, opening himself up to the possibility of having to testify under oath in a deposition about his relations with the sex trafficker in underage girls.

In a frenzied attempt to change the subject from Epstein and go on the offensive against the Democrats, Trump at a White House press conference Tuesday accused former President Barack Obama of "treason" for backing the probe beginning in 2016 of alleged Russian interference in that year's election, supposedly against Democrat Hillary Clinton and in favor of Trump.

Questioned by reporters while sitting side by side with Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr., Trump responded to a question on the Justice Department's announcement of a possible meeting with Ghislaine Maxwell. He said he knew little about that, called the Epstein controversy a witch-hunt, and then shifted to "the witch-hunt you should be talking about."

He accused former FBI Director James Comey, former CIA Director John Brennan, Obama (whom he referred to as "Barack Hussein Obama") and others of illegally conspiring against him. "After what they did to me—right or wrong—it's time to go after people," he said.

Calling Obama "the leader of the gang," he continued, "He's guilty. ... This was treason."

This followed a July 18 press release by Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, who wrote:

The information we are releasing today clearly shows there was a treasonous conspiracy in 2016 committed by officials at the highest level of our government. Their goal was to subvert the will of the American people and enact what was essentially a years-long coup with the objective of trying to usurp the President from fulfilling the mandate bestowed upon him by the American people.

Gabbard said she would refer the officials to the Justice Department for prosecution.



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