New forensic analysis challenges findings of medical examiner that Jeffrey Epstein committed suicide

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A new forensic assessment is challenging the official account of Jeffrey Epstein's death in federal custody on August 10, 2019. The British newspaper *The Times* first reported on Dr. Michael Freeman's analysis and presentation regarding Jeffrey Epstein's death on October 2, 2026.

Freeman, a forensic scientist, presented his analysis at London's Middle Temple on November 16, following approximately a year examining Epstein's autopsy file. He told the *New York Times* that his initial reaction to an autopsy photograph was: "Wait a minute, that doesn't look like a hanging mark."

Rather than a smooth mark rising toward a suspension point, he identified a deep, irregular impression branching into a Y-shape. "The pattern and distribution and multitude of injuries are not explained by a suicidal hanging," he said. Freeman's central contention is that the photographs contradict important elements of the medical examiner's interpretation.

In an interview with CBS News, Freeman focused on a second neck mark beneath and angled differently from the upper impression. "There is no mechanism to produce a second mark that would be lower," he argued, explaining that two loops under tension from the same suspension point should both rise toward it. He rejected a proposed explanation involving successive hanging attempts as inconsistent with the injuries and the medical literature.

"That's not what suicidal hangings do," he said. Freeman constructed three-dimensional models using Epstein's anatomy, photographs and the eventual account of the officer who reported discovering him suspended from a bedpost. His reconstruction challenges whether that position explains the entire injury pattern.

Freeman also identified what he considers evidence of an assault in the apparent facial trauma, possible fingernail marks above the neck ligature, an abrasion near the base of the neck and deep hemorrhaging in the left shoulder. "We have too many other injuries that are not explained by any suicidal hanging," he told CBS. He questioned why investigators had not tested Epstein's fingernails for DNA.

CNN reported the Freeman team's conclusion that the ligature marks were "most consistent with homicidal strangulation from behind, most likely using a narrow knotted fabric ligature." These observations directly challenge the original examiner's finding that there were no defensive injuries indicating a struggle.

Freeman's proposed sequence is an assault followed by strangulation, with suspension of the body afterward. He identified photographed knotted fabric in the cell as a possible explanation for the irregular neck abrasions, while acknowledging that the material was not supplied for the medical examiner's examination. "And if you put it all together, it is most consistent with a homicidal strangulation from behind using a narrow knotted fabric ligature," he told CBS.

He has not identified an assailant or established how one could have reached Epstein. Asked about responsibility, he distinguished those unanswered investigative questions from his own confidence in the medical interpretation: "Was this a suicide? Not a mystery."

Dr. Michael Freeman holds doctorates in epidemiology and forensic medicine and teaches at Oregon Health & Science University and Maastricht University Medical Center. He is editor-in-chief of the Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine and a fellow of the Faculty of Forensic & Legal Medicine at Britain's Royal College of Physicians.

He is not, however, a board-certified forensic pathologist, the specialist credential held by many US medical examiners. His work includes consultation in the prosecution over George Floyd's killing, research challenging "excited delirium" diagnoses, and participation in a Maryland review identifying misclassified deaths in police custody.

His collaborators were Anders Eriksson, a forensic pathologist and professor at Sweden's Umeå University, and Itiel Dror, a cognitive neuroscientist who researches bias in forensic decision-making. Jeffrey Epstein's brother, Mark Epstein, supplied the autopsy file in November 2025, exercising access available to him as next of kin. Freeman told the BBC that his analysis was independent and unpaid. Mark had previously retained forensic pathologist Dr. Michael Baden, who also challenged the suicide determination.

Michael Freeman's findings reinforce and extend the concerns raised by Dr. Baden, who observed Epstein's autopsy in August 2019. Baden argued that three fractures in Epstein's hyoid bone and thyroid cartilage, together with associated hemorrhaging, were more consistent with homicidal strangulation than suicidal hanging.

The agreement between Freeman and Baden concerns the interpretation of substantially the same evidence, not two separate physical examinations. Both assessments remain disputed with other specialists cautioning that the fractures can occur in hanging and Freeman's analysis has not passed peer review.

Mark Epstein maintains that his brother was not suicidal and was preparing to fight the charges while he was in pre-trial incarceration. That contention is consistent with statements from Epstein's attorneys that he was engaged in his defense and meeting them for lengthy sessions.

The US Department of Justice's Office of the Inspector General

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issued a report on June 27, 2023, on the death of the billionaire and convicted sex offender. The report documented serious staff misconduct and failures in Epstein's supervision but found no evidence contradicting the FBI's conclusion that his death did not result from a criminal act.

Dr. Kristin Roman, who performed the autopsy on August 11, 2019, reached the opposite conclusion from Freeman. She told federal investigators that the injuries indicated suicide by hanging not homicidal strangulation. Describing the body as "pristine," she cited the absence of bruising, defensive wounds and debris beneath the fingernails.

Roman said, "This doesn't look anything like a strangulation," and New York's Office of Chief Medical Examiner continues to stand by its determination. Other specialists consulted by the *Times* considered the neck mark atypical but warned that photographs and injuries alone could not conclusively resolve suicide versus homicide.

Roman nevertheless lacked evidence ordinarily important to such a determination. She was not permitted to inspect the cell; there were no photographs of Epstein suspended or with the ligature around his neck; and the cloth submitted was not the actual noose. The discovering officer's substantive account came two years later.

Freeman's alternative analysis has not passed peer review. A journal rejected his submission, and Freeman says he intends to resubmit. His account that reviewers objected to criticizing a medical examiner in a journal is his explanation, not an independently established account of their reasoning.

Epstein was arrested at Teterboro Airport in New Jersey on July 6, 2019, after returning from Paris. At his July 8 arraignment, he pleaded not guilty to sex trafficking of minors and conspiracy to commit sex trafficking. Prosecutors alleged that he exploited dozens of underage girls, including children as young as 14, in New York and Florida between 2002 and 2005.

Initially placed in the Metropolitan Correctional Center's general population, he was moved into its special housing unit under protective conditions. On July 18, a judge denied bail, finding him dangerous to the community and a flight risk.

On July 23, Epstein was found injured and semiconscious on his cell floor with marks around his neck. Authorities treated the incident as a suicide attempt. Epstein gave accounts suggesting an assault or an inability to remember what happened. His cellmate, Nicholas Tartaglione—a former police officer who was later convicted on murder, kidnapping and narcotics conspiracy charges for the brutal death of four men in April 2016—was cleared of wrongdoing by prison authorities.

Epstein was placed on suicide watch, removed on July 24 and kept under psychological observation until July 30 when he was returned to special housing with a recommendation that he have a cellmate. However, Epstein was alone when he died.

As the WSWS documented, along with instructions against leaving him without a cellmate being disregarded, required checks were not performed and guards falsified records. Surveillance failures left major gaps. His body was discovered around 6:30 a.m. on August 10 and removed before investigators photographed its original position. CBS has reported that the cell was not properly secured and evidence was inadequately preserved after his death.

Epstein's decades-long trafficking operation took place within the context of the emergence of unprecedented ruling class criminality, the growth of grotesque levels of social inequality and the emergence of the financial oligarchy. Epstein's abuse of teenage girls continued amid access to political leaders, financiers, entertainment figures, academics and international elites.

Epstein's 2007–08 non-prosecution agreement—when dozens of women were prepared to testify against him—exemplified his protection by the criminal justice system. The sex trafficker was allowed to plead guilty to a minor offense and any serious investigation into the criminal enterprise he had established was blocked.

After his death—and following the passage by Congress and signing by President Trump of the Epstein Files Transparency Act exactly one year ago—no one, other than Epstein's former girlfriend and collaborator Ghislaine Maxwell, has been charged much less prosecuted for participation in his crimes.

In a related development, the *Financial Times* reported on November 17 that Deutsche Bank processed $582 million in suspicious Epstein-linked payments, substantially more than previously known. According to Forbes and Quartz accounts of the FT investigation, the bank filed 21 suspicious activity reports in 2019 covering approximately 3,200 transactions connected with Epstein and his businesses.

The total was more than twice the approximately $250 million previously identified by Senate investigators. These were Epstein-linked transactions, not necessarily all outgoing payments from his personal accounts. These disclosures are part of an investigation involving more than 15 million leaked internal bank documents.

The FT report describes flagged activity including payments to women, suspected misuse of charitable donations and transfers involving wealthy individuals. Several questions that remain officially unanswered, is why a major bank accepted Epstein as a client in 2013, years after his sex-offense conviction, continued processing transactions subsequently flagged as suspicious and then covered up the extent of the collaboration.

The latest disclosures also raise more questions about whether the investigation into Epstein's death ignored or refused to investigate critical evidence. The WSWS has maintained Epstein is not an isolated individual but a representative of a degenerate social order in which wealth protects sexual predation, corruption and other depraved crimes with impunity.



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