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Case No: KB-2025-000463

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE**  
**KING'S BENCH DIVISION**  
**MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS LIST**

Royal Courts of Justice  
Strand, London, WC2A 2LL

Date: 11/02/2026

**Before :**

**THE HONOURABLE MRS JUSTICE COLLINS RICE DBE CB**

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**Between :**

**Mr STEPHEN BELAFONTE**

**Claimant**

**- and -**

**NEWS GROUP NEWSPAPERS LIMITED**

**Defendant**

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**Mr Gervase de Wilde & Ms Lily Walker-Parr** (instructed by Cohen Davis Solicitors) for the  
**Claimant**

**Mr Ben Silverstone** (instructed by Wiggin LLP) for the **Defendant**

Hearing date: 27<sup>th</sup> January 2026  
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**Approved Judgment**

This judgment was handed down remotely at 10.30am on 11/02/2026 by circulation to the parties or their representatives by e-mail and by release to the National Archives.

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Mrs Justice Collins Rice :

### Introduction

1. The Claimant, Mr Stephen Belafonte, is a film and TV producer, director and talent manager, who lives in the USA and regularly visits England and Wales for professional and personal reasons. He was formerly married to singer Ms Melanie Brown (well known also by her stage name ‘Mel B’ when she sang with the Spice Girls). They have a young daughter who lives mainly with her father in the US.
2. The Defendant is the publisher of *The Sun* newspaper.
3. Mr Belafonte brings a libel action complaining of an article (“the Article”) published in *The Sun* online on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2024 and in print the following day. (The versions are not identical, but the parties agree there is no material difference between them for present purposes.)
4. This judgment determines the ‘*single natural and ordinary meaning*’ of the Article in relation to Mr Belafonte, following trial of that preliminary defamation issue. The parties agree that on any basis the Article (a) makes factual allegations about Mr Belafonte, and (b) is ‘*of defamatory tendency at common law*’.

### The Article

5. The two versions of the illustrated Article, as they appeared at the time, are annexed to this judgment. I reproduce the text below. The material in **bold** is complained of as being defamatory.

#### **MEL’S PAIN**

[Online version:] **Mel B’s ex-husband Stephen Belafonte faces being questioned by UK police over harassment claims made by her.** Sources say Mel is still ‘living in fear’ of him after claiming he beat and abused her during their ten-year marriage.

[Print version:] **Spice Girl’s ex-hubby faces cop quiz on claims**

**Mel B’s ex-husband Stephen Belafonte faces being questioned by UK police over harassment claims made by her.**

**They are investigating after the Spice Girl, 49, complained that the US film producer hounded her while visiting Britain last week.**

**Sources say Mel is still “living in fear” of him after claiming he beat and abused her during their ten-year marriage. She has a restraining order against him in the US.**

Belafonte, 49 – who has filed a £4million lawsuit alleging her account of bullying was false and destroyed his reputation – brought their daughter Maddison, 12, to visit Mel. He has custody as she is a US citizen.

**But Mel contacted her local police in North Yorkshire, alleging he had intimidated her.**

**A source said a drone was flown over her home and a messenger was sent to serve her the lawsuit writ, despite it already being with her solicitor.**

**They added: “Mel believes that it amounted to harassment by Belafonte.”**

[Online version:] It is understood Belafonte returned to the US last Friday. A spokesman for the force said: “North Yorkshire Police will not be commenting.” Mel B also declined to comment.

[Print version:] Mel and the police declined to comment.

### Legal Principles

6. The legal framework within which defamation preliminary issues are decided is well established, and there is no dispute about it in the present case.
7. A court must approach the determination of ‘*the single natural and ordinary meaning*’ of a publication by considering the meaning a hypothetical ordinary reasonable reader would understand it to bear. Clear and comprehensive guidance is given as to how to do that in the judgment of Nicklin J in *Koutsogiannis v Random House* [2019] EWHC 48 (QB). It sets out at [11] the following key principles distilled from the earlier authorities:
  - i. The governing principle is reasonableness.
  - ii. The intention of the publisher is irrelevant.
  - iii. The hypothetical reasonable reader is not naïve but he is not unduly suspicious. He can read between the lines. He can read in an implication more readily than a lawyer and may indulge in a certain amount of loose thinking but he must be treated as a man who is not avid for scandal and someone who does not, and should not, select one bad meaning where other non-defamatory meanings are available. A reader who always adopts a bad meaning where a less serious or non-defamatory meaning is available is not reasonable: s/he is avid for scandal. But always to adopt a less derogatory meaning would also be unreasonable: it would be naïve.

- iv. Over-elaborate analysis should be avoided and the court should certainly not take a too literal approach to the task.
- v. Consequently, a judge providing written reasons for conclusions on meaning should not fall into the trap of conducting too detailed an analysis of the various passages relied on by the respective parties.
- vi. Any meaning that emerges as the produce of some strained, forced, or utterly unreasonable interpretation should be rejected.
- vii. It follows that it is not enough to say that by some person or another the words might be understood in a defamatory sense.
- viii. The publication must be read as a whole, and any ‘bane and antidote’ taken together. Sometimes, the context will clothe the words in a more serious defamatory meaning (for example the classic ‘rogues’ gallery’ case). In other cases, the context will weaken (even extinguish altogether) the defamatory meaning that the words would bear if they were read in isolation (eg bane and antidote cases).
- ix. In order to determine the natural and ordinary meaning of the statement of which the claimant complains, it is necessary to take into account the context in which it appeared and the mode of publication.
- x. No evidence, beyond publication complained of, is admissible in determining the natural and ordinary meaning.
- xi. The hypothetical reader is taken to be representative of those who would read the publication in question. The court can take judicial notice of facts which are common knowledge, but should beware of reliance on impressionistic assessments of the characteristics of a publication’s readership.
- xii. Judges should have regard to the impression the article has made upon them themselves in considering what impact it would have made on the hypothetical reasonable reader.
- xiii. In determining the single meaning, the court is free to choose the correct meaning; it is not bound by the meanings advanced by the parties (save that it cannot find a meaning that is more injurious than the claimant’s pleaded meaning).

8. The present case is agreed by the parties to concern factual allegations. Factual allegations can be published with varying degrees of certainty as to what is being imputed. These degrees of certainty have been classically analysed at three distinct levels: level 1: a claimant is ‘guilty’ of the conduct alleged; level 2: there is ‘reason to suspect’ a claimant is guilty of the conduct alleged; and level 3: there are ‘grounds for investigating whether’ a claimant is guilty of the conduct alleged (*Chase v. News Group Newspapers* [2002] EWCA Civ 172). But these are perhaps best understood as points on a spectrum rather than rigid and mutually exclusive categories (see Nicklin J in *Brown v Bower* [2017] 4 WLR 197 at [17]).
9. The decided authorities require me to apply the ‘repetition rule’. Where a publication, rather than itself making direct factual allegations, attributes those allegations to a third party (here, for example, Ms Brown or anonymous ‘sources’), then *‘for the purposes of the law of libel a hearsay statement is the same as a direct statement’* (*Lewis v Daily Telegraph* [1964] AC 234 at 260). So the words complained of *‘must be interpreted ... by reference to the underlying allegations of fact and not merely by reliance upon some second-hand report or assertion of them’*. Nicklin J put it this way in *Brown v Bower* at [32]:

When the authorities speak of rejecting submissions that words repeating the allegations of others bear a lower meaning than the original publication, that is a rejection of the premise that the statement is less defamatory (or not defamatory at all) *simply* because it is a report of what someone else has said. That kind of reasoning is what the repetition rule prohibits when applied to meaning.

10. However, Nicklin J also emphasised that *‘as is nearly always the case in determining meaning, context is everything; and that ‘the repetition rule cannot be applied mechanistically to the determination of meaning’*. He continued (at [30]-[32]):

In my judgment, to produce a *Chase* level 1 meaning, the *effect* of the publication (taken as a whole) has to be the adoption or endorsing of the allegation. That adoption or endorsement may come from ‘bald’ repetition ... or it may come from other context which signals to the reader that the allegation is being adopted when it is repeated. The converse is also true. The context may signal to the reader that the allegation is not being adopted or endorsed. ... Taking responsibility for its further dissemination means, in this context, liability for republication of the allegation, but it does not mean that the court is bound to find that the defamatory meaning that attaches to the repetition is, in all cases, the same level as the original allegation. ...

11. The Court of Appeal recently endorsed that analysis in *Hemming v Poulton* [2025] EWCA Civ 1494. Warby LJ observed at [45] that the repetition rule, so applied ‘reflects the reality of how people respond to such communications’.
12. I adopted the established standard preparatory approach to the determination of defamation preliminary issues (approved by the Court of Appeal in *Tinkler v Ferguson* [2019] EWCA Civ 819 at [9]). I read the whole Article quickly through once, without reading any of the case papers. I made some notes recording my first impressions. I then read the parties’ pleadings and skeleton arguments, heard their oral submissions at trial, and reserved judgment to consider how far my initial impressions properly fell to be adjusted to reflect what an ordinary, reasonable reader of *The Sun* would have understood the Article to say about Mr. Belafonte.

### **The Parties’ Proposed Meanings**

13. Mr Belafonte fears that what the Article says about him is that:
  - a. he is guilty of having harassed Ms Brown in the United States; and
  - b. he cynically exploited a visit to England with his and Ms Brown’s child to further harass Ms Brown in this country, by flying a drone over her home, and by gratuitously causing her to be visited in person by a process server despite Ms Brown being represented by lawyers, conduct which intimidated her, and means that he is guilty of the criminal offence of harassment.

These are *Chase* level 1 meanings: imputations of guilt in each case.

14. In support of these contended meanings, Mr de Wilde, counsel for Mr Belafonte, proposed that an ordinary reasonable *Sun* reader would immediately identify, and identify with, ‘Mel’, and empathise with her ‘pain’. They would understand Mr Belafonte was straightforwardly being presented as the source of that pain. They would note the couple were divorced, the marriage had been unhappy or worse, Ms Brown was ‘still’ living in fear of Mr Belafonte, and she had needed protection from him in the US by way of a restraining order. The reader would straightforwardly infer a history of harassing and intimidatory behaviour by Mr Belafonte in the US, including by way of hostile litigation there.
15. Mr de Wilde proposed that the *Sun* reader would also easily recognise a connection being made between events in the US and more recent events in the UK: a continuing pattern of hostility, harassment and intimidation directed by Mr Belafonte at Ms Brown.
16. Mr de Wilde further proposed that, in terms of the repetition rule, Ms Brown’s claims, and those of the anonymous sources, are baldly repeated; there is no modifying context in the Article read as a whole, no distancing from or counterbalancing to the claims, and no attempt at even-handedness. Mr Belafonte is straightforwardly portrayed as a perpetrator and Ms Brown as a victim: what is presented as his recent harassment, including by way of the drone and the process-server, is of sufficient seriousness to

interest the police, and made worse by the fact it was opportunistic and exploitative for him to have used the occasion of his daughter's contact visit. In all these circumstances, says Mr de Wilde, a *Chase* level 1 meaning is the appropriate finding.

17. Mr Silverstone, counsel for *The Sun*, says this is not a case of bald repetition. The Article does distance itself from Ms Brown's claims. It makes plain that Mr Belafonte is in fact challenging her historic claims with the utmost vigour, including by way of the US litigation – indeed it devotes more column millimetres to the rebuttal than the claim. A reader would have to be '*avid for scandal*' indeed to think the US lawsuit anything other than a straightforward pursuit of reputational vindication, and such a reader is not a reasonable one.
18. Mr Silverstone proposed there is no implication of (past) *guilt* in the reference to a restraining order; a reader would understand that such an order could be imposed on grounds of risk or fear for the future.
19. In relation to Ms Brown's more recent allegations, Mr Silverstone proposed that a reader, informed by the understanding that there were two sides to the history of what had happened in the US, would not be overly credulous about them. They would note that no evidence beyond her own claims was offered. There is nothing advanced objectively (apart from his presence in the country) to link Mr Belafonte to the drone at all. Ms Brown's reaction to the process server was wholly subjective. Whether or not the police were taking her complaints seriously is left in the realms of speculation.
20. Mr Silverstone also says the contended meaning of '*cynical exploitation*' of a contact visit is an unwarranted embellishment. Again, a reader would have to be highly scandal-hungry to extrapolate that sort of degree of collateral scheming from the simple fact that Mr Belafonte had a particular, and good, reason to be present in the UK.
21. In context, Mr Silverstone submits, none of this could or would be understood by an ordinary reasonable reader as factual allegations of harassment at anything approaching *Chase* level 1. *The Sun*'s own pleaded case on meaning is accordingly that:
  - a. there are grounds to investigate whether the Claimant beat and abused his ex-wife, Mel B, during their marriage [*Chase* level 3]; and
  - b. there are grounds to suspect that, during a visit to the UK, the Claimant caused a drone to be flown over Mel B's home and sent a messenger to serve a legal writ on her, even though her solicitor already had a copy [*Chase* level 2], and there are grounds to investigate whether such acts amounted to harassment of Mel B. [*Chase* level 3]
22. There is a specific dispute between the parties over the fact that *The Sun*'s pleaded meaning of the Article includes an imputation referring to the historical events during the couple's marriage, and Mr Belafonte's does not.
23. Ms Walker-Parr put Mr Belafonte's position on this in two (alternative) ways as follows.

24. First, she says it is common ground between the parties that the Article does convey two imputations, one going to events in the US and the other going to more recent events in the UK. In relation to the former, Mr Belafonte does not choose to complain of what the Article conveys about what allegedly happened during his marriage, but only what it says (or implies in context) about the restraining order. These are separate and distinct things. Domestic violence in the past is a different topic from harassment by infringement of privacy more recently. No ‘common defamatory sting’ is advanced and no imputation about marital abuse arises *from the words complained of*. So it is not permissible to plead this meaning and not open to me to find it.
25. Alternatively, she says, *The Sun*’s contended meaning is not open to me in any event because it is a *worse* (‘*more injurious*’) meaning than that advanced by the Claimant.
26. To this, Mr Silverstone says first, that the words complained of – including that Ms Brown is ‘*still living in fear*’ of Mr Belafonte – are impossible to understand otherwise than by reference to what is said in the very same sentence to be the explanation for that; while a claimant may choose what to complain of he cannot artificially exclude relevant context at a phrase-by-phrase level from the determination of meaning. And second, he says it is not a worse meaning, because although the subject-matter of the factual allegation pleaded is more grave, the *Chase* level is lower.

### Consideration

27. My task is to find the single natural and ordinary meaning of the defamatory material complained of. To do that, I have to consider the meaning *in the context of the Article read as a whole* (sometimes referred to as the ‘rule in *Charleston*’ – *Charleston v News Group Newspapers* [1995] 2 AC 65, and see *Monks v Warwick DC* [2009] EWHC 959 (QB) at [12]-[14]). Mr Belafonte does not wish to complain (on this occasion) of what the Article says about the past history of the time he and Ms Brown were married. He complains of what it says about subsequent and more recent matters only. Nevertheless, what it says about those matters would necessarily be understood by readers in the context of the whole Article.
28. When I first looked at the Article, I registered immediately that, although it dealt with personal matters keenly felt by the individuals involved, it was offered (and would be consumed) as a brief item of celebrity gossip. An ordinary reasonable *Sun* reader would absorb it as such in a matter of seconds before moving swiftly on.
29. As such, the authorities’ warnings against the error of over-analysis sound loud and clear from the outset of this exercise. I have been considerably assisted by the advocacy in this case; it has helped me in my task of questioning and re-evaluating my initial impressions of the Article. But I remind myself I am not selecting between the parties’ submissions; I am making a finding which cannot be decided by a lawyerly evaluation of which set of exegetical points advanced is the more elegant. And the ordinary, reasonable reader of a snippet of celebrity gossip must be allowed ‘*a certain amount of loose thinking*’; they are being entertained rather than challenged to a fine analysis of the factual evidence or a balanced assessment of the probabilities. I have to approach my task accordingly.



30. The reader would of course be struck immediately by the headline, and conditioned by it in reading the Article. That is how news headlines work. They would also be struck immediately by the picture – a head and shoulders photo of Ms Brown in a simple brown sleeveless vest-top looking directly to camera. Ms Brown is shown with an open expression and a slight smile; a reader is likely to find her presented as relatable and perhaps a little vulnerable. The headline tells the reader the Article is going to be about Ms Brown and her experience of trouble and distress (*'pain'*) on account of her former husband.
31. A reader would also be quick to pick up that Ms Brown is *'still living in fear'* of him. That is a strong message (repeated in the sub-heading of the online Article) and relayed from 'sources' without qualification. A reader would register there was marital history to that continuing fear, and that Ms Brown had a court order to protect herself from Mr Belafonte in the US. But a *newspaper* reader would absorb all that information particularly quickly and impressionistically, understanding it to be background context for the main *news* of the Article that Ms Brown's fears had been reignited by Mr Belafonte's behaviour towards her on his recent visit to the UK (*'last week'*). The reader's attention would be caught by the detail of the drone and process-server accounts, and by Ms Brown's distress at these experiences arising from her associating them with Mr Belafonte.
32. That Ms Brown *'lives in fear'* of Mr Belafonte, and has cause to do so (past and present), is, in my judgment, the overarching message an ordinary reasonable reader would take from this Article. That she lives in fear is an unqualified assertion of fact about Ms Brown. That she has cause to do so is advanced by way of two salient pieces of information about Mr Belafonte.
33. The first relates to the restraining order she is said to have obtained against him in the US, against a background of historical allegations of marital violence – and in particular the fact that the order is *current*. A reader would be quick to grasp the relevant distinction: Ms Brown is protected from Mr Belafonte by a restraining order *in the US*, but not in the UK which is the setting for her recent troubles. The reader is given no reason to doubt the fact of the restraining order. But a reader would not, in my judgment, absorb much detail about the restraining order beyond its power to set the scene for the latest events. It certainly is a powerful scene-setter; it conveys in context to an ordinary reader – who *'can read in an implication more readily than a lawyer'* – that Ms Brown had *needed* court protection from Mr Belafonte because he had been causing her trouble. It is too lawyerly and over-analytical to suggest a reader would have in mind fine distinctions about the different potential bases on which such a restraining order might have been obtained. This is in my judgment properly rendered as a *Chase* level 1 allegation of fact that Mr Belafonte gave cause for that restraining order by way of previous persistent misconduct towards her.
34. That misconduct would also, in my judgment, itself be understood at a generic and scene-setting level. The Article's headline term is 'harassment'. Although that is a term with a technical meaning in law, the ordinary reasonable reader would understand it in a non-technical way as a compendious reference to any sort of unwanted, persistent, intimidating, intrusive or otherwise harmful and/or distressing course of conduct in the context, here, of a former intimate relationship. Unlike a lawyer, the reader would not for this purpose need to be concerned with shades of meaning between individual terms such as harassment, bullying, abuse or beating in this context; they would simply

receive a global impression of targeted and unjustifiable behaviour of a degree of seriousness taken as a whole. The reader would understand in a high-level, impressionistic way that they were being given background context of a troubled marriage, and a post-breakdown acrimonious relationship in which both parties had in the past, or were now, engaged with each other in litigation. They would infer, in other words, that Mr Belafonte's conduct fell within a loose and generic definition of harassing behaviour at an appreciable level of seriousness. That is all the detail they needed to, and would, take on board.

35. In my judgment, then, the first defamatory meaning conveyed by this Article about Mr Belafonte is that he had harassed Ms Brown in the US. That is the inference an ordinary reader of this Article would make, with the impressionistic assistance of the historical colour provided, and a certain amount of non-lawyerly loose thinking well within the reasonable norm, on understanding Ms Brown had been given cause by Mr Belafonte to live in fear to the extent of needing court protection from him.
36. The second explanation the Article conveys by way of Mr Belafonte giving grounds for 'Mel's pain' and her living in fear of him relates to the recent UK visit he made with their daughter. The repetition rule applies in relation to the inclusion of 'hearsay' material here, but what the Article says about the underlying factual allegations comes across as a little different in genre from the historical material: that was the background and this is the latest story, the main point of the Article. It is also presented as having the quality of a developing situation; Ms Brown is fearful and distressed, and the police have been approached, but it is not clear what the next steps or the outcome will be. It is all rather more provisional.
37. And this time, the detail is sharp and striking: the drone and the process-server. These incidents in themselves are reported baldly from the source: the reader is given no reason to doubt they happened. The latter has a clear connection with Mr Belafonte – it is *his* lawsuit against her to which the documents refer. Of course no-one wants to be the object of legal proceedings, and a reader could easily identify with Ms Brown's finding such a visit distressing. However ordinary readers are not familiar with the rules of service, and would not necessarily or instantly recognise a choice made by Mr Belafonte (or possibly his lawyers) as to *mode* of service as inevitably gratuitous or *unnecessary* in and of itself. And there is no connection made between the drone and Mr Belafonte at all in the Article other than Ms Brown's generic fears about him.
38. Against that background, and that of the historical matters already absorbed from the Article, a reader would readily understand Ms Brown's anxiety and 'pain' in association with Mr Belafonte's visit to the UK. The reader would understand the connections she was making herself. But I am not persuaded the reader would understand the Article itself to be making them by *baldly* repeating (or adopting) Ms Brown's allegations at *Chase* level 1. It is more contextually circumspect and provisional than that, including by reflecting that the police's *possible* active interest in Ms Brown's complaint is unconfirmed. Certainly, the reader would have to be naïve to come away with an impression that this might all be unrelated coincidence. The reader would have no difficulty in understanding that the process server, the drone and Mr Belafonte's contemporaneous presence in the UK were, taken all together, being advanced as grounds to suspect Ms Brown was right in thinking she was 'still' the object of harassment by Mr Belafonte. But it would be '*strained, forced*' in my judgment to read the Article as straightforwardly attributing *guilt* to Mr Belafonte here.

39. Simply analysed, therefore, in my judgment the Article would be read as saying (a) there were (reported) grounds to suspect Mr Belafonte of being *responsible* for the drone; (b) there were (reported) grounds to suspect him of causing personal service of legal papers on Ms Brown as an act of *unnecessary* or gratuitous intrusion, and (c) these, taken together with Mr Belafonte's physical presence in the country and the absence of an effective restraining order here, provided grounds for suspecting him of continuing to harass her. Again, harassment here would be understood in a compendious and indiscriminating manner, unspecific to '*intimidation*' or invasion of privacy, as an unwanted, unwarranted, and targeted course of conduct.
40. I cannot see that the Article supports a natural and ordinary meaning of cynical exploitation by Mr Belafonte of their daughter's visit. That is an extrapolation of scandal beyond the reaction of an ordinary reasonable reader. A reader would understand that plainly Mr Belafonte did not *need* to be present in the UK to deploy a process-server or a drone at all. A reader would understand that the *fact* of Mr Belafonte's presence in the UK was a part of the matrix being said to give grounds for an inference of harassment on this occasion, without understanding any necessary nexus with the *reason* for his presence. The reader would have moved on to the next item long before taking an opportunity to speculate further about Mr Belafonte's mindset or motivations in this respect.

### Decision

41. The principal focus of this Article is on Ms Brown. It would be understood by an ordinary reasonable reader as saying she lives in fear of Mr Belafonte, and has cause to do so. In its single natural and ordinary meaning, it conveys the following allegations of fact, being of defamatory tendency at common law, in relation to Mr Belafonte, in the words complained of:

**The Claimant is guilty of having harassed Ms Brown in the USA.** [*Chase* level 1]


**There are grounds to suspect that, during a subsequent visit to the UK, the Claimant:**

**(a) caused a drone to be flown over Ms Brown's home; and**

**(b) caused a process-server to visit her unnecessarily;**

**and there are accordingly grounds to suspect the Claimant of harassing Ms Brown in the UK in these circumstances.**  
[*Chase* level 2]

Annex

18  Friday, June 28, 2024

# MEL'S PAIN

## Spice Girl's ex-hubby faces cop quiz on claims

**MEL B's ex-husband Stephen Belafonte faces being questioned by UK police over harassment claims made by her.**

They are investigating after the Spice Girl, 49, complained that the US film producer hounded her while visiting Britain last week.

Sources say Mel is still "living in fear" of him after claiming he beat and abused her during their ten-year marriage. She has a restraining order against him in the US.

Belafonte, 49 - who has filed a £4million lawsuit alleging her account of bullying was false and destroyed his reputation - brought their daughter Maddison, 12, to visit Mel. He has custody as she is a US citizen.

But Mel contacted her local police in North Yorkshire, alleging he had intimidated her.

'Fear' ... Mel B



**EXCLUSIVE** by MIKE SULLIVAN, Crime Editor

A source said a drone was flown over her home and a messenger was sent to serve her the lawsuit writ, despite it already being with her solicitor.

They added: "Mel believes that it amounted to harassment by Belafonte."

Mel and the police declined to comment.

*mike.sullivan@the-sun.co.uk*



# News,UK News,Courts,Crime,Dear Deidre on Marriage,Exclusives,Police,Spice Girls,The Sun Newspaper **MEL'S PAIN Mel B's ex-husband Stephen Belafonte faces being questioned by UK police over harassment claims made by her**

Sources say Mel is still 'living in fear' of him after claiming he beat and abused her during their ten-year marriage

Mike Sullivan  
27 Jun 2024 22:16:26

- [1] MEL B's ex-husband Stephen Belafonte faces being questioned by UK police over harassment claims made by her.
- [2] They are investigating after the [Spice Girl](#), 49, complained that the US film producer hounded her while visiting Britain last week.
- [3] Sources say Mel is still "living in fear" of him after [claiming he beat and abused her during their ten-year marriage](#).
- [4] She has a restraining order against him in the US.
- [5] Belafonte, 49 — who has filed a £4million lawsuit alleging her account of [bullying](#) was false and destroyed his reputation — brought their daughter Maddison, 12, to visit Mel.
- [6] He has custody as she is a US citizen.
- [7] But Mel contacted her local [police](#) in North Yorkshire, alleging he had intimidated her.
- [8] A source said a drone was flown over her home and a messenger was sent to serve her the lawsuit writ, despite it already being with her solicitor.
- [9] They added: "Mel believes that it amounted to harassment by Belafonte."
- [10] It is understood Belafonte returned to the US last Friday.  
North Yorkshire Police refused to discuss the case.
- [11] A spokesman for the force said: "North Yorkshire Police will not be commenting."
- [12] Mel B also declined to comment.





Belafonte, 49, had brought their daughter Maddison, 12, to visit Mel in the UK  
Getty-Contributor



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