

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

STELLA CRISTINA GOMES DE SOUZA,

Plaintiff,

-against-

WATCHTOWER BIBLE AND TRACT
SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA, INC.;
WATCHTOWER BIBLE AND TRACT
SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC.; and
THE GOVERNING BODY OF JEHOVAH’S
WITNESSES,

Defendants.

Case No.: 7:25-cv-09458-NSR

DECLARATION OF STEPHANY CRISTINI GOMES DE SOUZA

I, Stephany Cristini Gomes de Souza, being over eighteen (18) years of age, of sound mind, and competent to make this declaration, hereby declare under the penalty of perjury as follows:

1. I am the older sister of Stella Cristina Gomes de Souza (“Stella”).

2. I was born in Brazil and grew up in Pernambuco until I was about nine years old, when I moved to São Paulo with Stella, and my youngest sister Stelma Cristiane Gomes De Souza (“Stelma”). I am fluent in Portuguese.

3. My grandmother, my sisters and I were members of the Jehovah’s Witnesses (the “Congregation”). I was harassed several times by a member of the Congregation, yet I never had the courage to tell anyone. Stella undoubtedly suffered far more as she was abused and raped by Angelo Roviezzo, an elder of the Congregation.

4. In 2017, Stella filed a rape complaint in Brazil against Roviezzo.

5. After Stella’s filing in 2017, we were bombarded with questions and threats; some claimed she just wanted attention, that she was making it all up, questioning why she would do this after five years, and arguing why we would tarnish the name of Jehovah and the Congregation. I especially remember Carlos Roberto—an elder from the Estrada da Fonte chapter of the Congregation—asking how much I knew and stating that it didn't matter, because nothing had been established and there was no proof.

6. In retaliation for going to the police, Stella and my family were ostracized and stripped of our privileges within the Congregation.

7. As a result of the significant trauma she suffered, both as a result of the rapes and the treatment by our Congregation, Stella tried to kill herself and ran away from home many times.

8. Stelma was also so severely affected. I remember one day my grandmother was scolding her while she was lying in bed; my grandmother asked me to lift Stelma out of the bed, and as soon as I did, she was so limp that she slumped to the floor without even waking up. My uncle Douglas came and took Stelma to the hospital, where they discovered she had overdosed on sedatives. The hospital notified Child Protective Services but it was dismissed as nothing more than 'making a fuss.'

9. In an effort to escape the abuse being perpetrated against her, Stella moved to the UK where she now resides. Nevertheless, the trauma continues to this day.

10. On November 3, 2025, Stella attempted to commit suicide in the UK.

11. On November 12, 2025, Stella filed the above-captioned lawsuit in the U.S. against the Congregation. Since then, me and my family have been subject to numerous threats against our safety and livelihood in an effort to convince Stella to drop the lawsuit.

12. In November 2025, my husband was approached inside a train in Brazil by someone who asked about our son and about the legal case involving Stella. Since my husband is not a member of the Congregation and did not know much about the case, he became deeply concerned; the person suggested to him—as a "tip"—that my sister should drop the lawsuit and simply wait for "Jehovah's justice," which, they claimed, never fails. They added that if Stella persisted, my son might not live long enough to grow up and witness the changes coming to the world. That is when a brief argument ensued; my husband interpreted this incident as a direct threat and asked me not to go out alone with our baby.

13. On November 18, 2025, Stelma and I traveled to Stafford, United Kingdom with the intention of helping my sister Stella following her suicide attempt.

14. On December 10, 2025, my husband found a note containing threats inside our backyard in Brazil:

“Stay alert, we know where you are. Your sister is greedy and opportunistic. You are becoming like her, but Jehovah can still forgive you if you stop all this deception. Where are those witch girls who were always in the field and were excellent in the Kingdom Hall? All because of money? Dishonoring Jehovah’s name for money? Justice comes from Jehovah, not from men, remembering that in the waters your sister wants to swim in, it is full of sharks and also innocent fish. Choose life; the wages paid by sin is death.”

15. On January 2, 2026, my husband found a second letter attached to the front gate of our home:

“Matthew 18:15

Leviticus 19:17

Luke 17:3

Jehovah God has nothing to do with the sins of each member within His organization, because His laws and principles teach us that God is good and just. You are trying to blame Jehovah’s organization for something you yourselves did wrong, and now you are tarnishing Jehovah’s name? This is not right. Your sister ran away because she did not have the courage to face the consequences of her own lie. Satan is manipulating people like you to bring reproach on Jehovah’s name. But thanks to His mercy, there is still time for repentance, or He will destroy wicked people like you.

WHICH PATH WILL YOU CHOOSE?

(Jehovah is watching)

Romans 6:23”

16. On March 5, 2026, a third letter arrived at our home, which contained threats directed at my son. That was the moment our fear truly took hold, for I do not fear for myself, but rather for my son and my nephews:

“Children are an inheritance from Jehovah. Do you think it is right to put his life at risk? This situation is only putting your lives in danger with powerful people you shouldn’t mess with. You are nothing and will never be anything. I hope my father’s name is not mentioned by your sister’s filthy mouth. If you have ever suffered in life, you will suffer much more now.”

17. My husband handed the letters over to my brother-in-law, Stelma’s husband, and they are currently being kept in his safekeeping.

18. Given that in Brazil, I live in a narrow alleyway situated directly across from a drug den—an area completely devoid of security or protection—I do not feel safe at all in Brazil; both my son and I are at risk. Furthermore, hiring a security guard to stand at my door would actually expose me to even greater danger, as it could draw unwanted attention and ultimately jeopardize both my life and my son's.

19. This legal case is not about me—and yet, at the same time, it is. What am I supposed to do if this is precisely what Stella needs in order to find peace? I am here for her; I am here for my sisters, so that they may receive the justice we never had. Knowing that Stella tried to take her own life shook me in a way I cannot describe. I dropped everything for her—and I would do it again in the blink of an eye—because I know it wasn't her fault. I was there; I saw it! Why, even so, do they hate us so much? I just want to find peace; I want them to find peace. I know there isn't much I can do other than be

here for Stella and offer my support. I hope that is enough. But I also have a son—a child I waited so long to have—and the only thing I want is for no harm to come to him.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America that the foregoing is true and correct, and I understand that this document may be filed in an action or proceeding in a court of law.

Executed on April 21, 2026, in the United Kingdom.

Assinado por:

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STEPHANY CRISTINI GOMES DE SOUZA