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Today Alison Fournier has filed a lawsuit in United States District Court for the Southern District of New York against Starwood Hotels and Resorts Worldwide, because she was sexually assaulted inside of her locked Starwood Hotel room.

On January 15, 2011, Ms. Fournier, then age 30, was an extremely successful investment banker, who had graduated from Princeton University and who had earned her MBA from Harvard Business School.

She was living in New York and was employed as a Vice President at a prestigious New York investment banking firm.

In January 2011, Alison learned that she would have to travel to Helsinki, Finland in connection with her work. Prior to traveling there Ms. Fournier checked on-line to confirm that she would be staying at a Starwood Hotel because she believed that the Starwood name would insure that the hotel was both safe and top tier.

Ms. Fournier was a member of Starwood's guest rewards program and she was happy that she would be able to stay at the Hotel Kamp in Helsinki, which emphasized on its web site that it "Operates under the International Starwood Chain - the Luxury Collection".

Assured that she would be staying at a Starwood Hotel and as a result believing that she would be safe she checked into the hotel on or about January 10, 2011. She registered under her name and only her name, with no other guests registered to her room.

Notwithstanding this fact, in the early morning hours of January 15, 2011, Ms. Fournier awoke to discover what appeared to be an intoxicated man entering her room. The assailant was an American who was staying at the same hotel.

Earlier that evening he had approached Alison and had expressed sexual interest in her. She had made it very clear that she was not interested in him.

In fact, she went to her hotel room in order to get away from him. Once she was inside her locked room she felt safe.

However, now it was that same man whom she had rebuffed who was climbing into her bed and groping her naked body. She was certain she was about to be raped.

Although she was in fear, Alison was able to jump out of bed, grab a bathrobe and escape. She ran down the hall distraught and ran to the front desk screaming that a man was in her room trying to assault her and that she needed security.

She soon learned through communication with the hotel and a later review of security footage how the intruder had been able to gain access to her room.

At approximately 4:00 a.m. that morning a man wearing casual pants and a white tee shirt had approached the hotel's front desk, explained that he was Ms. Fournier's husband and stated that he had locked himself out of the room. He requested a key.

Apparently forgoing any basic security protocols, such as asking for identification, searching hotel records to see whether Ms. Fournier was registered alone or with a traveling companion, or calling her room to check the man's story,

the desk clerk simply handed the man Ms. Fournier's room key allowing him to gain access to her room.

In addition, hotel staff made no effort after the assault to immediately call the police or report these events to law enforcement. Alison, in shock, left the country within hours of the assault as did the perpetrator. Alison was later told that she and the perpetrator would need to return to Finland in order for an arrest to be made.

The attack on Ms. Fournier would never have taken place had the Starwood Hotel - Hotel Kamp simply fulfilled the duty of reasonable care for Ms. Fournier's safety and security that it owes all of its guests.

However, it breached its duty to her when it handed a man a key to Ms. Fournier's room despite his apparent drunkenness, and despite the fact that Ms. Fournier did not have a second person registered to her room. The attack on Alison could have been avoided if the Hotel Kamp had taken even the most basic security precautions such as asking the man for identification, checking the hotel registration, or calling Alison's room to ask whether this man was authorized to

receive a key.

Alison had believed that the Hotel Kamp was a safe place to stay because it was marketed and branded as a Starwood Hotel and she had had good experiences staying at Starwood Hotels in the past. She had never been to Finland before and believed that she could rely on the Starwood name to provide her with safety and security in a hotel abroad and that it would be up to American standards. Unfortunately, she learned to her detriment that she had been misled in her expectations that she would be safe in that Starwood Hotel.

Alison has therefore sued Starwood Hotels for negligence and negligent infliction of emotional distress.

She is seeking compensatory and punitive damages according to proof at trial.

Many American women travel alone internationally today on business. They and their families often seek out and make reservations at Starwood Hotels in other countries exactly because they feel that a connection with American hotels

will provide them with a high standard of care and protection that they may feel that they cannot be assured of receiving with a hotel lacking that American connection.

Starwood needs to be held accountable for its serious breach of its duty to its guest, Ms. Fournier, because that breach has had a devastating and life changing impact on her. Alison has chosen to speak out today because she hopes that by doing so she will be able to warn other women who may be traveling alone of the danger that they may face.

The one place that they may feel safe (their hotel room) may in fact be the most dangerous place of all if their hotel fails to act responsibly to protect their guests.

Starwood Hotel and Hotel Kamp have failed Alison and her life has been turned upside down as a result. To make matters worse, despite the fact that Starwood has known about this incident and despite the fact that the hotel has admitted that its security protocols were breached Starwood has never even had the decency to apologize to Alison for this shocking incident suffered by her. This

corporate irresponsibility and callous disregard for Alison is completely unacceptable. By filing this lawsuit Alison hopes to make Starwood accountable and restore the level of trust and safety that every business woman who travels should have a right to expect.

Gloria Allred
Attorney at Law
Representing Alison Fournier
January 9, 2012

NOTE: This lawsuit is being filed by New York attorneys Mariann Meier Wang and Julie B. Ehrlich. Ms. Allred will be filing a Motion Pro Hac Vice to be admitted as co-counsel in this case.