MEDIA

Tea app hit with 2 class-action lawsuits after a data breach exposed private messages and 72K images

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Two class-action lawsuits were filed Monday against Tea, the app where women can leave anonymous reviews of men.

The suits both allege negligence on the part of Tea, which recently experienced a data breach.

One suit also targets X and 4chan, where it says sensitive information spread.

The Tea app saga continues to brew — and has taken a legal turn.

On Monday, the viral app, which lets women post anonymous reviews of men, was hit with two class-action lawsuits.

Both lawsuits were filed in response to the data breach Tea experienced last week, which exposed about 72,000 images — including selfies and IDs used for verification — and private messages.

A Tea spokesperson declined to comment.

The two lawsuits, filed in the Northern District of California, allege negligence, breach of implied contract, and other claims.

One lawsuit, filed on behalf of Griselda Reyes, says that she submitted a photo while signing up for Tea that was accessed in the breach.

"I don't think that this organization intended to violate people's rights," Scott Cole, the lead attorney on Reyes' case, told BI. "I think they were just sloppy."

"They went viral very, very recently, and their numbers just went through the roof as a result of that," Cole added.

Reyes' case seeks an injunction requiring Tea to encrypt all data and purge private information, as well as monetary damages as determined by the court.

A Tea spokesperson previously told BI in regards to the data breach, "We are working to identify any users whose personal information was involved and will be offering free identity protection services to those individuals."

The second lawsuit, brought on behalf of an anonymous Jane Doe, says she "joined Tea for one simple reason: she wanted to anonymously warn other women in her Northern California community about a man who sexually assaulted at least two other women."

"The app promised her that anonymity," the suit continues. "It promised her safety. It promised to delete her verification data. Tea broke every one of those promises."

The second lawsuit also names X and 4chan as defendants and says sensitive information was circulated on those platforms.

X and 4chan did not respond to requests for comment.

"In an age where data breaches have become commonplace, this case stands out for the particular cruelty of its impact: a safety app that made its users less safe, an anonymity platform that exposed identities, social media platforms that weaponized stolen data, and a tool meant to protect women that instead delivered their personal information to those who would do them harm," the second suit says.

Cole said that his firm was in conversation with other attorneys — including some who had not yet filed — and was working toward consolidating their cases.

Leading up to last week's data breach, the Tea app had gone viral and hit the No. 1 spot in Apple's App Store. As of Tuesday, it was No. 2 on the chart, behind OpenAI's ChatGPT.

Tea lets women anonymously review men with "red" or "green" flags, leave comments about their experiences with men they've dated or know, and seek broader dating advice in a forum. The app also offers paywalled features like background checks and the ability to reverse-image-search to find someone's social media profile.

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