

G-20 Set To Meet After Referendum Announcement

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NPR's Eric Westervelt is in Cannes, France, where the leaders of the G-20 industrialized nations are due to meet on Thursday. He's watching developments in the eurozone after Monday's surprise announcement of a referendum on the bailout deal in Greece. Robert Siegel talks to Eric for more.

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ROBERT SIEGEL, host: From NPR News, this is ALL THINGS CONSIDERED. I'm Robert Siegel.

GUY RAZ: And I'm Guy Raz.

Republican presidential candidate Herman Cain is facing graphic new accusations of sexual misconduct. And for the first time, a woman has come out publicly to say what happened. NPR's Tamara Keith reports on what this means for the man who now leads the Republican field in some polls. First, though, a warning. This story contains some explicit language.

TAMARA KEITH: Up until now, this was a story that involved anonymous accusers against a presidential candidate who said he had never sexually harassed anyone. That changed this afternoon, when celebrity lawyer Gloria Allred held a press conference.

GLORIA ALLRED: And now, it is my honor to present Sharon Bialek.

KEITH: Bialek is 50 years old, blond and pretty. She lives in Chicago. And according to Allred, she's a stay-at-home mom with a 13-year-old child. But in 1997, Bialek worked for the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation. That's when she met Herman Cain, who was then the head of the National Restaurant Association.

SHARON BIALEK: I interacted with him on several occasions during the five days of the NRA convention in Chicago.

KEITH: Soon after that, she was let go from her job.

BIALEK: My boyfriend suggested that I should reach out to Mr. Cain to see if he might be able to help me find another job with the foundation or in some other capacity. He said, Herman seems to think highly of you. Why don't you contact him and see if you can ask him for some help?

KEITH: Bialek was planning to be on the East Coast and suggested to Cain that she could come down to Washington to meet with him. Bialek says she met Cain for a drink in the bar at her hotel's lobby then went out to dinner with him at an Italian restaurant. When he asked her why she was there, she says she talked to him about her job situation and asked if he could help. Then on the way back to the hotel, she says, he took a detour, and this is where it gets explicit.

BIALEK: He suddenly reached over and he put his hand on my legs, under my skirt and reached for my genitals. He also grabbed my head and brought it towards his crotch.

KEITH: Bialek says she was surprised and shocked.

BIALEK: I said, what are you doing? You know I have a boyfriend. This isn't what I came here for. Mr. Cain said you want a job, right?

KEITH: The Cain campaign released a statement, saying in part that all allegations of harassment against Mr. Cain are completely false and that Mr. Cain has never harassed anyone. But to employment lawyer Lynne Bernabei this most recent revelation looks to be part of a pattern.

LYNNE BERNABEI: If the allegations are true and a lot of these are old, and we don't have the other women standing out, but it does show very upsetting view of women in the workplace.

KEITH: So far, at least, the allegations have not appeared to hurt Cain among Republican primary voters. A Gallup poll released today shows Cain still tied with Mitt Romney with 21 percent each. Essentially, the same as their standing a month ago, before the story broke. But Republican political consultant, Rob Stutzman, says today's developments could change that.

ROB STUTZMAN: I think there's a lot of Republican male voters out there that like the idea of a flat tax, but they think about that being their wife, girlfriend or daughter, and, you know, you break someone's nose if they do that to a loved one. So if it's true, it's a serious problem.

KEITH: Stutzman says the only thing that takes away from Bialek's claim is the attorney she chose to represent her.

STUTZMAN: I think it's unfortunate because I think it diminishes her credibility to have Gloria Allred at her side and, you know, if the allegations should be taken seriously.

KEITH: Gloria Allred has made numerous campaign contributions to Democrats over the years and is known for jumping into high-profile situations, representing women with stories to tell about Tiger Woods and Anthony Wiener among others. Still, Stutzman says as much as Cain wants to move on and stay on message, he can't until he addresses these and other charges directly. Tamara Keith, NPR News, Washington.

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