

The Duke of York is being urged to fight back with "every ounce of energy" against allegations made in US court documents by a woman who claimed she was forced to have sex with him while she was still a minor.

Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz - who is also named in the court papers - said the claims against him were part of a pattern of "made-up stories" by the woman and her lawyers against prominent people.

He said that he would not rest until he had shown that the claims regarding his conduct were false and he advised the Duke to do everything in his power to clear his name.

Buckingham Palace has denied the Duke of York has committed any impropriety after he was reportedly named in US court documents related to a convicted paedophile

"My only feeling is, if she's lied about me, which I know to an absolute certainty she has, she should not be believed about anyone else," he told the BBC Radio 4 Today programme.

"We know she's lied about other public figures including a former prime minister and others who she claims to have participated in sexual activities with, so I think it must be presumed all her allegations against Prince Andrew were false as well.

"You cannot allow these allegations to hang above you. The first question you have to ask yourself when you are charged with a crime like this is 'Is there any conceivable possibility you did it?' and if the answer to that is 'no', you have to fight back with every resource and ounce of energy available to you."

Buckingham Palace last night took the unusual step of releasing a strongly-worded statement categorically denying any impropriety by Andrew with under-age minors.

The claim by the woman is part of a lawsuit in connection with American billionaire and convicted paedophile Jeffrey Epstein - a former friend of the Duke .

Andrew was photographed with Epstein in New York two years after the American's release from prison in 2009, and their friendship was a source of controversy.

The woman claims that between 1999 and 2002 she "was forced to have sexual relations with this prince when she was a minor" in London, New York and on a private Caribbean island owned by Epstein.

The accusation is reportedly contained in a motion filed in a Florida court this week which is part of a lawsuit over how federal prosecutors handled the case of Epstein, who was sentenced to 18 months in prison in 2008 for soliciting a minor for prostitution. Prof Dershowitz, who represented Epstein in the 2008 case, accused the woman's lawyers of conniving with her to make up the allegations against him and said that he would now be seeking to have them disbarred.

"The story is totally made up. I don't know this woman, It is part of a pattern of made-up stories against prominent people and world leaders," he said.

"I want to see this played out not only in the court of public opinion but in the court of law. I will prove beyond any doubt not only that the story is totally false but it was knowingly false, that the lawyers and the client conspired together to create a false story. That is why I am moving for their disbarment.

"I will swear under oath - and I challenge them to swear under oath - that it did not happen.

"I will not rest or stop until the world understands not only that I had nothing to do with any of this but that she deliberately, with the connivance of her lawyers, made up this story wilfully and knowingly."

In a statement released through her lawyers to The Guardian, the woman hit back, saying: "These types of aggressive attacks on me are exactly the reason why sexual abuse victims typically remain silent and the reason why I did for a long time. That trend should change. I'm not going to be bullied back into silence."

Prof Dershowitz acknowledged that he had met Andrew on a number of occasions - including at a birthday party for Lord (Evelyn) Rothschild which was also attended by Epstein - but said they had never been alone together and that he was not a witness to any impropriety.

"I have never been alone with Prince Andrew, I have never been at a party with any women with Prince Andrew and I am certainly not a witness or participant in any sexual activities whatsoever," he said.

After details of the court papers appeared on an American news website, a Buckingham Palace spokeswoman said in a statement: "This relates to long-standing and ongoing civil proceedings in the United States, to which the Duke of York is not a party.

"As such we would not comment on the detail. However, for the avoidance of doubt, any suggestion of impropriety with under-age minors is categorically untrue".

Epstein is accused in the court papers of repeatedly abusing the woman - now said to be in her 30s - on his private jet and luxury homes in New York, New Mexico, Florida and the US Virgin Islands.

The court document alleges: "Epstein also sexually trafficked the then-minor Jane Doe (a name used in US legal proceedings for people with anonymity), making her available for sex to politically-connected and financially-powerful people.

"Epstein's purposes in 'lending' Jane Doe (along with other young girls) to such powerful people were to ingratiate himself with them for business, personal, political, and financial gain, as well as to obtain potential blackmail information."

It goes on: "For instance, one such powerful individual Epstein forced Jane Doe #3 to

have sexual relations with was a member of the British royal family, Prince Andrew (aka Duke of York)."

The Duke has been dogged by accusations of a lack of judgment about his links with Epstein since 2011.

In June 2011 it was announced that he was stepping down from his role as the UK's roving business ambassador.

Andrew gave up the post following the intense scrutiny he faced over his relationships with Epstein and other controversial figures.

Ghislaine Maxwell, an associate of Epstein, branded claims against her as "untrue" and "obvious lies" after she was reportedly named in the US court papers by the woman.

Miss Maxwell, the daughter of the late newspaper tycoon Robert Maxwell, has previously denied any wrongdoing and said in 2011 she would take legal action over some of the reporting of the story.

Her spokesman said: "The allegations made ... against Ghislaine Maxwell are untrue.

"The original allegations are not new and have been fully responded to and shown to be untrue.

"Each time the story is retold it changes, with new salacious details about public figures and world leaders.

"(The woman's) claims are obvious lies and should be treated as such and not publicised as news, as they are defamatory. Ghislaine Maxwell's original response to the lies and defamatory claims remains the same.

"Miss Maxwell strongly denies allegations of an unsavoury nature, which have appeared in the British press and elsewhere and reserves her right to seek redress at the repetition of such old defamatory claims."