

Christian Lawyer Says Teen Not in Danger of 'Honor Killing'

✖ The Christian attorney for the mother of an Ohio teen who ran away to Florida fearing her Muslim parents would kill her for converting to Christianity says believers should be cautious before passing judgment on the case.

"I hope that particularly people of faith take a step back and wait for more facts," said Craig McCarthy, who is representing Aysha Bary against claims that she and her husband, Mohamed, threatened to kill their 17-year-old daughter, Rifqa, after learning she had been baptized earlier this year.

The teen was placed in the custody of the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) on Monday and is living in an Orlando foster home while she awaits an Aug. 21 hearing to resolve jurisdictional issues.

Although McCarthy says "honor killings" do occur, he said after talking with the Barys he believes that is not a threat in this situation.

"I don't feel I need to be further educated that honor killings do happen," he told *Charisma*. "Not only in primarily Islamic countries, but they happen in Europe and other places, I'm aware of that. [But] there's not an epidemic of that in the United States, not a big problem with that in Ohio, and there's no chance of that in this family."

Parents in dependency cases typically have separate counsel in case their stories or interests conflict, but McCarthy said the Barys' are making the same claims.

He said the couple had known for roughly a year that their

daughter was interested in Christianity and possessed some Christian materials and never threatened her life.

He said the charismatic pastors who took in the teenager when she arrived in Orlando from suburban Columbus, Ohio, in late July might have planted the idea in her mind that her family would kill for converting during the time she was with them.

“[Blake and Beverly Lorenz of Global Revolution Ministries] are being very passionate about getting in front of TV cameras and telling the public that they know that she has to be killed for her faith,” McCarthy said. “That concerns me because before that two-and-a-half weeks with these people who ... seem so sure of her impending death, she, to my knowledge, never complained to anybody.”

The Lorenzes, who met the teen through a prayer group on Facebook, said she had hidden her faith from her parents for years because she feared they would harm her. They said the girl left Ohio on July 19 in a panic, claiming her father had twice threatened to kill her.

“She jumped on a bus and called us and said, ‘I’m running for my life,’” Blake Lorenz said. DCF granted him and his wife temporary custody of Rifqa Bary before Monday’s hearing.

During Monday’s hearing the teen was visibly shaken when she saw her father and clung to Blake Lorenz.

McCarthy said to his knowledge Rifqa Bary never told anyone in Ohio that she was afraid for her life. The teen’s attorney, Rosa Armesto of the Alliance Defense Fund, said she told a teacher in Ohio of the conflict she was having at home over her Christian faith.

The girl’s parents don’t know why their daughter left Ohio or why she is afraid of them, McCarthy said, acknowledging that the teen seemed very frightened in court on Monday.

"[The Barys'] suspicion is, I'm not the source of her fear; something else is," McCarthy said. "She presents as frightened. There's no doubt about it. It's very compelling."

Armesto wants to see the case remain in Florida, which she admits is a long shot since the Bary family lives in Ohio. McCarthy thinks the case should be transferred to the Barys' home state, but he hopes the judge will give him time to take depositions from the Lorenzes, the teen and others, which he said will help the Barys defend themselves in Ohio.

He said the case is not a custody battle but an investigation into whether or not the teen would be safe with her parents.

McCarthy admits that the case is an odd one for him. He's a Christian representing Muslims accused of religious persecution. What's more, he'll be opposing an attorney affiliated with a Christian legal firm that he once considered working with.

"I hold [the Alliance Defense Fund] in high regard and now suddenly I'm in opposition," McCarthy said.

But he said he worries that Christians are jumping to conclusions. "I'm just urging caution," he said. "There's actually been no evidence gathered—period—at all yet. There's just been arguments."