

Teen Convert to Remain in Florida for Now

- ✖ Teen convert Rifqa Bary will remain in Florida for at least three more weeks.

On Monday, Florida Judge Daniel P. Dawson set another hearing for Oct. 13, which takes place after Bary and her family are scheduled to meet for mediation. The decision came just a week after a Florida Department of Law Enforcement report stated that officials found no evidence to support Bary's claims that her Muslim parents threatened to kill her for converting to Christianity.

Bary, 17, ran away from Columbus, Ohio, to Orlando, Fla., in late July and is seeking emancipation from her parents. Dependency proceedings are under way in both Florida and Ohio, where Bary's parents filed a truancy petition earlier this month, claiming Bary was incorrigible and disobedient.

The attorney for the girl's father, Mohamad Bary, said the truancy complaint had been abandoned and replaced with a dependency petition. But attorney Kort Gotterdam, who is representing Rifqa Bary in Ohio, said Oct. 27 hearings have been scheduled in both the truancy and dependency cases.

Attorneys for Bary's parents also filed a motion Monday seeking to have the dependency case moved to Ohio. But Dawson retained emergency jurisdiction and said he plans to talk with an Ohio judge to determine if it should be transferred.

Krista Bartholomew, Bary's guardian ad litem, told the judge she had "grave concerns" that Mohamad and Aysha Bary's

dependency petition was a “ploy” to transfer the case to Ohio. She said she feared the Barys would drop the case when their daughter was returned to the state.

Bary’s parents also have filed a criminal complaint against Blake and Beverly Lorenz, the charismatic pastors who took the girl into their home when she arrived in Orlando. Attorneys for the Barys claim the couple brainwashed the teen into believing her parents would harm her for converting. Because the police investigation is still under way, Dawson decided Monday that the Lorenzes’ adult children could no longer visit the teen, who is living in an Orlando foster home.

Bary has been the focus of national prayer efforts since her legal battle became public in early August. But prayer leaders urged intercessors to pray particularly on Monday, expecting Dawson to decide whether the girl should be returned to Ohio.

In an urgent prayer call issued Friday, TheCall founder Lou Engle asked Christians to pray “that the best situation for Rifqa and her family would take place.”

“We must pray for Rifqa to be bold in proclaiming Jesus that even thousands of Muslims would hear and be awakened to the love of Christ,” he wrote. “She has already said that this is not about her, but about many Muslims coming to Jesus.”

(Read Engle’s full prayer call.)

He encouraged Christians to continue praying throughout the week, which ends with a large-scale Muslim prayer rally on Capitol Hill Friday. (Read about Islam on Capitol Hill.)

On Monday, Cindy Jacobs, co-founder of Generals International, also sent a prayer call to ministry supporters, urging them to intercede for Bary. “This young woman’s life is in grave danger,” Jacobs wrote. “Please pray for Rifqa’s protection, pray for Rifqa to continue testifying boldly of Jesus Christ, pray for Godly wisdom for the judge hearing this case, and

pray that God would be glorified through this.”

On Monday morning, Bary made a surprise visit to the Orlando House of Prayer (OHOP), where Christians—including a group of youth who had traveled from Kentucky—gathered to pray for the outcome of her case.

OHOP director Carlos Sarmiento said the teen’s faith was strong and that she prayed for God to bring an awakening in the body of Christ.