

Charges Dropped Against UK Woman Arrested for Praying Silently

A British woman who was arrested for praying silently outside an abortion clinic and charged with four counts of failing to comply with a Public Space Protection Order has been told her charges have been dropped, several media outlets have reported.

But, her legal team says the charges could be reinstated.

Isabel Vaughan-Spruce, the leader of the anti-abortion group 40 Days for Life in Birmingham, England, was arrested on Dec. 6 and formally charged on Dec. 15. The Epoch Times reported that volunteers are present near the abortion clinic in groups of two to four at a time. The group, it is reported, claims that volunteers hold no posters, banners or placards and never use megaphones.

The non-profit legal organization ADF UK released a statement Friday saying that prosecutors have informed Vaughan-Spruce that the charges against her were dismissed. But The Crown Prosecution Service in the United Kingdom said that they “may well start again” if they receive new evidence related to the case.

Vaughan-Spruce intends to pursue a clear verdict in court.

The City of Birmingham’s implementation of the Public Space Protection Order prohibits people from “protesting, namely engaging in any act of approval or disapproval or attempted act of approval or disapproval with respect to issues related to abortion services.”

The order identified prayer as one of the activities that it

bans.

Vaughan-Spruce indicated her intention was to seek a clear verdict in court that will set a precedent for pro-life activists banned by the order.

“It can’t be right that I was arrested and made a criminal, only for praying in my head on a public street,” she said in a statement.

She said it’s essential to have “clarity as to my legal status.”

 “Many of us need an answer as to whether it’s still lawful to pray silently in our own heads,” Vaughan-Spruce said. “That’s why I’ll be pursuing a verdict regarding my charges in court.”

ADF UK counsel Jeremiah Igunnubole said in a statement that his client was arrested “simply for [her] thoughts,” saying “no one should fear prosecution for silent prayer and thoughts in the privacy of their mind.” {eo}

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