

Rifqa Bary Attorney Cleared of Unethical Behavior

Attorney John Stemberger is widely credited with helping to save the life of a young Muslim-turned-Christian woman whose parents allegedly threatened to kill her for following Christ.

So why should that lead to disbarment? The Florida Bar has decided it shouldn't.

In a move to discredit the conservative Christian, Muslim attorney Omar Tarazi filed the grievance against Stemberger, who represented the young Muslim girl, Rifqa Bary, in her battle for independence from her parents before the jurisdiction moved to Ohio.

Call it sour grapes. Tarazi represented the parents of Bary, who made international news in 2009 after fleeing her Muslim home and the radical Islamic community in Columbus, Ohio. Bary says her parents threatened an honor killing after her conversion to Christianity.

"Integrated Bar Associations around the country are slowly losing their identities as merely professional associations created to educate and regulate lawyers. Instead, many are becoming increasingly ideological and political," Stemberger says. "Additionally, many institutions of society, including bar associations, are bending over backwards to accommodate members of Islam as a new protected class. Instead of championing constitutional free speech rights, bar organizations are opting for enforcing political correctness."

Bary's legal team won her case on August 10, 2010, securing her dependency status away from her parents and eventually obtaining her immigration standing as a permanent U.S. legal resident with a track to become a citizen in about four years.

The Florida Bar's dismissal of the case came exactly one week after the deposition of Bary was taken telephonically at an undisclosed location for security reasons. At the end of the deposition, Bary gave a passionate plea that the action being taken against Stemberger was a "grave injustice" and that he was responsible for helping to save her life.

"I believe the bringing of this case was a great injustice because I would not be here without the aid of this man's counsel in my court hearing," Bary says. "With a wife and four children, he still spent countless hours each day, without pay, fighting for my freedom and safety... even to the point of it costing his health. I believe Mr. Stemberger to be a man of absolute integrity and honesty."

Tarazi also filed a \$10 million lawsuit in Ohio federal court claiming he was defamed by part of a 30-second interview on Fox & Friends, though Tarazi's name was not mentioned. That defamation claim is still pending and being pursued by Tarazi in the Southern District of Ohio.