

Rifqa Bary Back in Ohio, Restricted From Cell Phone, Facebook

✖ Rifqa Bary was transferred to Ohio on Tuesday in a move that officially ended Florida's jurisdiction in the teen convert's dependency case.

Bary, 17, is in the custody of Franklin County Children Services and has been placed in a foster home.

At a hearing Tuesday, a Columbus judge ordered that the teen's Internet and phone use be monitored by Franklin County Children Services, the Associated Press reported.

"Bary's use of Facebook was one issue that led to the situation," said Jim Zorn, a children's services attorney who asked Goodrich to restrict Bary from using the Internet and her cell phone. "What we want to restrict is the other people, the other organizations, the other forces, that have interjected themselves into this case inappropriately, and has caused the additional problems that we've seen."

Bary fled her Columbus-area home in July claiming her Muslim parents threatened to kill her for converting to Christianity. Her parents, Mohamad and Aysha Bary, have denied those allegations, and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement said its investigation found no evidence to back up Bary's claims.

Bary's parents claim their daughter was brainwashed into believing she would be the victim of an honor killing. The teen spent nearly three weeks living with charismatic pastors Blake and Beverly Lorenz, who she met through a prayer group on Facebook. Another Christian couple Bary met on Facebook purchased a bus ticket for the teen to travel to Florida.

Ohio attorney Kort Gatterdam, who is representing the teen, said his client did not flee Ohio because of Facebook but “because of the conflict between Miss Bary and her parents,” the *Columbus Dispatch* reported.

Bary’s former attorney, John Stemberger, called the Ohio court’s decision “ridiculous and outrageous.”

“They’re treating her like she’s an inmate,” he told *Charisma*. “She’s a 17-year-old girl.”

Stemberger said he hopes to see Bary declared dependent on the state of Ohio until she turns 18.

An agreement to that effect had been negotiated last week. Stemberger said Bary’s parents, who emigrated from Sri Lanka, agreed to leave their daughter in Ohio state custody for the next nine months to avoid being held in contempt of court for failing to provide requested immigration documents.

But after the teen was transferred into Ohio custody, her parents fired the attorney who brokered the deal, nullifying the agreement, Stemberger said.

Tennessee minister Jamal Jivanjee, who also converted to Christianity from Islam, believes Bary is in “grave” danger in Ohio.

“[Bary’s parents] completely went back on the agreement that they made to leave Rifqa alone, and I believe they now are planning to continue to pursue to get her back against Rifqa’s will,” Jivanjee wrote in an email sent Wednesday.

He called on Bary’s supporters to contact Franklin County Children Services and the Ohio governor’s office and urge them to allow Bary the use of her cell phone and Facebook, and to view the teen’s parents and local Islamic groups as a serious threat.

Stemberger, however, disputes Jivanjee’s claim that Bary is in

grave danger, though he says she is not as safe in Ohio as she was in Florida. He points to a comment this week from Franklin County Children Services executive director Eric Fenner, who told the *Columbus Dispatch* he has no reason to believe the teen would be unsafe with her parents.

“The [children’s services] department over there is ... on record that they believe there’s no threat,” Stemberger said. “It’s a very biased situation. They’re just predisposed toward not believing Rifqa. In Florida, at least people have seen and heard her. She is very credible.”

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