



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on August 24, 2009

Rifqa Bary Safe for Now

A circuit judge in Florida said last Friday that Rifqa Bary, the Christian teenager who fled her Muslim family because she feared an honor killing, will stay there until September 3. Until then, Florida law enforcement will try to determine whether it is safe for the girl to return home.

Young Rifqa, 17, says she fled Columbus, Ohio, where she lived with her family, because of her father's threat to murder her for apostasy. Rifqa converted to Christianity four years ago, and as she told the court last week, she is no longer a Muslim but instead "loves Jesus." Her Muslim father did not approve. [The penalty for apostasy in Islam is death](#), and many Muslims would consider Rifqa's murder justifiable. That is, it would be an "honor killing." As [The New American reported](#) last week in its story on Rifqa, honor killing is a growing problem in Europe, and now North America.



Rifqa [tells her story](#) on video, and explains that her father threatened to beat her with a laptop computer. At least one friend reports that Rifqa, like many Muslim girls who run afoul of paternal religious edicts, showed up to school with clear signs of abuse. When she refused to wear the Islamic hijab, one reports says, her father beat her. Even more frightening is what her father told her about her new-found faith in Christ. "If you have this Jesus in your heart, you're dead to me," Rifqa says her father warned. "You're not my daughter.... I will kill you." Thus did Rifqa flee to Florida.

Rifqa's parents deny the abuse and say the girl is in no danger. They allege that Rifqa fled to Florida because she had a fight with her mother. As well, the father's [Islamic allies claim](#) she was brainwashed by a cult, although she had never met the two people in Florida who offered refuge when she landed on their doorstep. She became acquainted with them by visiting an online prayer group at Facebook.com.

A report from the state's Department of Children and Families, [disclosed in The Orlando Sentinel](#), says Rifqa wants to stay with couple that took her in: "Child observed to be happy and comfortable with caregivers. Child requested placement with caregivers.... Child desires to be placed with pastor as she will feel safer with them."

Last week, the case landed in circuit court in Orange County, where Rifqa told the judge [she wishes to stay](#) with her foster family, who are Christian home-schoolers, until she is 18. He ordered Rifqa to stay in Florida at least until Sept. 3.

Whatever happens in Rifqa Bary's case, it's time for the authorities investigate "honor killing" among Muslims in this country and determine how widespread the crime is.



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Photo of Aysha and Mohamed Bary, parents of Rifqa Bary: AP Images



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