



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on September 2, 2009

Rifqa Bary's Fate To Be Decided

Rifqa Bary is a healthy, beautiful 17-year-old girl. But she has one little problem: she believes her father wants to kill her. Thus did Rifqa flee to the arms of a Christian foster family for protection.

Now at the center of an interstate custody fight to separate herself from a father she calls an Islamic fanatic, Rifqa prepares for another hearing on September 3. More details about her plight have emerged.

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To reprise the facts, Rifqa escaped her home near Columbus, Ohio, on July 19 after her father, she alleges, threatened to kill her. He had discovered Rifqa's conversion to Christianity. "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." Rifqa also went to school with signs of obvious physical abuse. Once in Orlando, Florida, she landed in the home of a Christian couple she met through a prayer group on Facebook, but she now lives with a Christian home-schooling family.



[Rifqa summed up her case](#) in a heart-wrenching video on YouTube:

They've threatened to kill me. I don't know if you know about honor killing.... You guys don't understand. Islam is very different than you guys think. They have to kill me. My blood is now halal, which means that because I am now a Christian, I'm from a Muslim background, it's an honor. If they love God more than me, they have to do this. And I'm fighting for my life, you guys don't understand. You don't understand.

Unsurprisingly, Rifqa's family denies her allegations. The parents' Muslim allies claim that a "cult" kidnapped and brainwashed her, although Rifqa converted to Christianity on November 18, 2005, long before leaving home. Rifqa's parents went to Florida to get her back, telling the court Rifqa was not in danger and claiming she left home after a fight with her mother.

On August 21, a circuit court judge in Orange County [granted Rifqa's request](#) to stay in Florida pending an investigation of the matter by the state's child welfare authorities. [As reported](#) in this space on August 24, "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 place[d] with pastor as she will feel safer with them.'"

Now, [affidavits from Rifqa and her lawyer](#), John Stemberger, reveal more details.



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[Rifqa explains](#) the allegations against her father, noting that in 2007 he found *The Purpose Driven Life*, by famed liberal megachurch pastor Rick Warren, in her bedroom. Two years later, he “confronted” Rifqa again, asking “several questions about whether I had become a Christian, whether I was baptized, if I was going to church,” her affidavit says. “Out of fear I remained silent.” Rifqa also says her father complained about receiving “numerous emails and phone calls from the leaders of the Noor Center community who informed him that he needed to deal with this matter immediately.” The [Noor Islamic Cultural Center](#) is the Bary family’s mosque.

The affidavit also discloses that Rifqa did indeed fight with her mother just before she left. But they fought over another Christian book her mother found in Rifqa’s room: “She was very upset, in tears, and almost grieving, and told me I was going to have to be sent back to Sri Lanka to be dealt with.” That was July 17. Rifqa fled two days later.

The affidavit from attorney Stemberger, details his investigation into the mosque. It may explain why the father received outside pressure about Rifqa’s conversion. Stemberger cites four main concerns about the Noor Center mosque. Tops among them is the mosque’s leader, Dr. Hany Saqr, “previously an imam for another area mosque at the same time the largest known Al-Qaeda cell in the U.S. since 9/11 was operating out of the mosque. Additionally, Dr. Saqr was identified in exhibits submitted by the Department of Justice in a recent terrorism finance trial in Texas as being one of the leaders of the [Muslim Brotherhood](#) in North America — an international organization responsible for birthing virtually every Islamic terrorist organization in the world.”

As well, a “former Islamic scholar associated with The Noor Center is Dr. Salah Sultan, a cleric that has been photographed with terrorist leaders designated as such by the U.S. government. Dr. Sultan has recently appeared on television inciting violence against Jews, and he has previously appeared at events in support of designated terrorist organizations while an active part of the Noor Center community.”

Third, the center hosts “extremist speakers,” among them a fundraiser for the center “listed by federal prosecutors as an unindicted co-conspirator in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing trial.” Last, but certainly not least, the “Noor Center has also been directly tied to the ongoing nationwide investigation into Somali-American youths who have left the U.S. to train in terror camps operated by the Al-Qaeda-linked Al-Shabaab terror organization.”

This mosque, [as Rifqa details](#) in her affidavit, is the center of her family’s religious life. She says her father “was very intent on making sure that his children, and especially me, were raised deeply in the faith of ‘Original Islam,’ which was taught at the Noor Center,” and “my father required me to attend ... youth gatherings which lasted about five hours. My father and mother would often attend these meetings with me as all Noor Center parents were encouraged to attend youth meetings.” As well, “Noor Center youth gatherings were held in our home with other members of the Noor Center present,” and “in the summers, my Father required our whole family to also attend the Noor Center major gatherings held every Friday afternoon. This was the main meeting of the week which members were required to attend which lasted about three hours.”

Rifqa says she attended the Noor Center on the major Islamic holidays, that Noor Center members were her family’s friends and, most importantly, that “[m]y father was a committed member of the Noor Center and required our family to attend as much as possible.”

In short, the Noor Center was the center of the Bary’s religious, cultural, and social life.

Rifqa Bary [fears an honor killing](#) at the hands of her father. A judge decides her fate on September 3.



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