



PRESS RELEASE

Three Defendants Plead Guilty to a Civil Rights Conspiracy Targeting Pregnancy Resource Centers



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For Immediate Release

Office of Public Affairs

Three Florida residents pleaded guilty today to conspiring to injure, oppress, threaten or intimidate employees of pregnancy resource centers in the free exercise of the right to provide and seek to provide reproductive health services. The defendants selected reproductive health facilities that provided and counseled abortion alternatives and vandalized those facilities with threatening messages.

According to court documents, between May and July 2022, Caleb Freestone, Amber Smith-Stewart and Annarella Rivera engaged in a series of targeted attacks on pro-life pregnancy help centers in Florida. The defendants admitted they participated in the attack in the dark of night and, while wearing masks and dark clothing to obscure their identities, spray painted the facilities with threatening messages, including “If abortions aren’t safe than niether [sic] are you,” “YOUR TIME IS UP!!,” “WE’RE COMING for U” and “We are everywhere.”

“These defendants vandalized pregnancy resource centers with threatening messages meant to terrify the employees of those centers,” said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division. “Violence and threats have no place in the national discourse about reproductive rights. The Justice Department is committed to holding accountable those who seek to interfere with access to reproductive health services in our country, without regard to the point of view of the defendants or their victims.”

“Federal law protects providers who render reproductive health care and those who seek their services,” said U.S. Attorney Roger Handberg for the Middle District of Florida. “Neither should be subject to unlawful intimidation or threats of harm. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners in protecting access to reproductive health care and federally prosecuting those interfering with that right.”

“The FBI works diligently to safeguard the civil rights of our citizens,” said Acting Special Agent in Charge Rodney Crawford of the FBI Tampa Field Office. “We and our law enforcement partners will not tolerate those who conspire to attack facilities providing these lawful reproductive health services.”

A sentencing hearing will be scheduled at a later date. The defendants each face a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors. Charges remain pending against a fourth defendant.

The FBI Tampa Field Office investigated the case, with assistance from the Miami Police Department.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Stacie Harris for the Middle District of Florida and Trial Attorney Laura-Kate Bernstein of the Civil Rights Division’s Criminal Section are prosecuting the case.

Anyone who has information about incidents of violence, threats and obstruction that target a patient or provider of reproductive health services, or damage and destruction of reproductive health care facilities, should report that information to the FBI at www.tips.fbi.gov. For more information about clinic violence, and the Justice Department’s efforts to enforce FACE Act violations, please visit www.justice.gov/crt/national-task-force-violence-against-reproductive-health-care-providers.

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Topic

CIVIL RIGHTS

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