

## Red flag laws in jeopardy: faith voices speak up to save them

by Mercy Justice Team member Angie Howard-McParland

It is no secret that the United States has a gun violence problem as evidenced by the now-familiar headlines of mass shootings occurring one after the other. In 2023 so far there have been [618 incidents](#) where four or more people were shot, a number far greater than the handful that grab media attention.

Women are particularly vulnerable to gun violence, especially in the context of intimate partner violence. According to [Everytown USA](#), over 1 million women alive today have been shot or shot at by an intimate partner and the presence of a firearm makes it *five times more likely* that a woman will die in a domestic violence situation. And women of color, especially Black and American Indian / Alaskan Native women are disproportionately affected: they are [3-4 times more likely to be fatally shot](#) by an intimate partner.

Just a few weeks ago, the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in [United States vs. Rahimi](#), a case that centers around whether or not those subject to domestic violence restraining orders can legally own firearms. Also known as **Extreme Risk Protection orders** or **red flag laws**, these prohibitions allow law enforcement to temporarily remove guns from individuals who are at risk for harming themselves or others. Currently, 21 states and Washington, D.C. have enacted these laws with [studies showing significant decrease in domestic violence firearm homicides](#) as a result.

The current SCOTUS case involves Zackey Rahimi, a Texas man involved in a string of six [shooting incidents within two months](#), including a 2019 incident involving dragging his girlfriend out of a car and threatening her with a gun, threatening a separate woman with a gun, shooting an AR-15 into a home following an online altercation, and shooting in the air after a friend's credit card was declined at a Whataburger restaurant. A police search of his home yielded several guns along with a copy of the domestic violence protective order that prohibited owning those weapons. Rahimi was indicted by a grand jury and only after the seminal SCOTUS decision in the [NY State Rifle & Pistol Association vs. Bruen](#), his case was overturned by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals as violating the Second Amendment. It is this appeal now being heard by the justices: do laws that prevent domestic abusers from owning firearms pass the *Bruen* test? Or in other words, is there a historical precedent to limit an individual's right to bear arms in this way?

With our Mercy Critical Concerns of nonviolence, racism, and women in particular, we are committed to doing our part to end gun violence. We were participants in a unique [amicus brief](#) in the *Rahimi* case that amplified the voices of faith-based organizations advocating for the continued protection of women and others vulnerable to intimate partner violence through red flag laws. Our direct involvement with the founding of [Nuns Against Gun Violence](#) has also created a unified voice of over 50 congregations of women religious representing nearly 30,000 sisters, associates, staff, students, and allies. This coalition sponsors prayer opportunities,

educational offerings such as the recent [webinar with Shane Claiborne](#), and advocates at the state and federal level for evidence-based, common sense gun laws to protect human life.

For more on the *Rahimi* case, you can [listen to oral arguments here with commentary from gun violence prevention and legal experts from Brady, Texas Legal Services, and Community Justice Action Fund](#). **(use password FZBi^KP1 to view this recording).**