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**Recent Appeals Court Decision Puts Victims of Domestic Violence at Higher Risk**

*Allowing perpetrators to have access to guns while an injunction is in place increases danger of homicide.*

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GAINESVILLE - The recent ruling issued by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit in *United States v. Rahimi* struck down 30 years of federal law prohibiting those under a protective order for domestic violence from possessing firearms. In a unanimous decision, the three-judge panel ruled a domestic violence abuser subject to a protective order has a constitutional right to possess a firearm. Research and decades of advocate, judicial and law enforcement experience tell us the following things:

- Domestic violence and firearms are a lethal combination.
- When a male abuser has access to a firearm, the risk that he will shoot and kill a female partner **increases** by 1,000%.
- Prior to this decision, federal law prohibited convicted abusers and those who are under protective orders of domestic violence from possessing firearms.
- While the 5th Circuit left in place the federal ban on firearms for **convicted** abusers, it ultimately ruled the prohibition on possession of a firearm in civil restraining order cases was unconstitutional.
- In summary, the court struck the federal law that prohibits guns from abusers under domestic violence protective orders.
- Some survivors may not wish to or be able to seek a conviction, but an order of protection can be another tool for increasing survivor safety.
- This decision reveals an utter disregard for domestic violence survivors' safety.

Executive Director Dr. Theresa Beachy stated, "Peaceful Paths leads the Coordinated Community Response to Domestic Violence in our tri county region. Victim safety is the focus for all our collective efforts, and this ruling is truly a shock. Our High Risk Team and Lethality Assessment Protocol with local law enforcement are designed to predict and prevent domestic violence homicides. This ruling makes this work that much more difficult by allowing volatile individuals access to firearms despite the fact that they have demonstrated to a judge that their actions could lead to injury or death of the victim. Undermining the judicial authority to protect victims with an injunction by reintroducing weapons to the mix reduces the effectiveness of one of the few system safeguards victims can access."

For more information on the agency or how you can be an ally in our work, please contact Dr. Theresa Beachy at 352-377-5690 or visit us on the web at [www.peacefulpaths.org](http://www.peacefulpaths.org)

***We exist to save lives and create change.***