

## Judge orders 25 years for man who held family hostage in Spotsylvania

Keith Epps

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**A** man who was convicted of holding a woman and their two children hostage in their Spotsylvania County home for an extended period was ordered Thursday to serve 25 years in prison.

Kariem Moore, 45, spent well over an hour insisting he was innocent, but he was unable to sway Judge Ricardo Rigual from sentencing him to a total of 40 years in prison with 15 years suspended.

Rigual's sentence was way above the recommended state sentencing guidelines, which called for a maximum penalty of six months in prison. Rigual agreed with prosecutors Amanda Sweeney and Crystal Montague-Holland, who argued that the guidelines were "woefully" inadequate in Moore's case.

Moore entered Alford pleas in February to three counts of abduction and two counts of child cruelty. In exchange for the pleas, an object sexual penetration charge was dropped.

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Moore later tried to withdraw his plea, saying he didn't fully understand what he was doing at the time. Rigual, who had questioned Moore thoroughly before accepting the pleas, denied the request.

According to the prosecution evidence, deputies went to a home in the 3600 block of Mine Road on July 29, 2017, to conduct a welfare check. Relatives of the woman reported that they hadn't heard from her in a long time.

Deputy Kelly Mills testified Thursday that at first it looked like no one was living in the house. The grass was overgrown and cars in the yard looked abandoned.

Deputies initially got no answer when they knocked on the front door. They were walking around the property when Moore came out and approached them.

Eventually, the woman and the couple's two sons, then ages 10 and 8, came out of a side door and bolted to the nearest police cruiser. The children told police they hadn't left the house in years except to go to the mailbox or a shed behind the home. They claimed they were locked in their room for weeks or months at a time.

It was initially believed that the family had been held hostage for two years. Prosecutors on Thursday said it was closer to a year.

The woman described being hog-tied to a bed and repeatedly beaten when she didn't do things exactly as Moore wanted them done. She also had several medical issues that were not being treated.

The evidence showed that when on extended punishments, the children were allowed out of their room once a day for bowel movements. A jug was kept in the room for them to urinate in.

The children recalled seeing their mother tied up on the bed with extension cords and sexually assaulted in front of them. They told investigators they were forced to stand in a corner overnight for such offenses as eating too many nachos.

None of the victims were in court Thursday, but they provided victim impact statements outlining the horrors attributed to Moore. All three are still struggling to overcome the effects of the abuse, according to their statements, and at least one of the boys has been kicked out of school because of behavioral issues.

In a rambling statement that touched on issues ranging from his other "wives" to the price of Oodles of Noodles, Moore insisted that the allegations against him are false. He said the woman concocted the stories because he was about to leave her for another woman and to give her family an excuse for why she hadn't been in touch with them.

He said the woman controlled decisions in the house and that she had hundreds of opportunities to leave if she wanted to. He said allegations that he abused the victims and showed pornography to the children were "insane."

"I'm not who they say that I am. I didn't do these things," Moore said. "I just want part of my life back and to leave Virginia. I didn't want to come here in the first place."

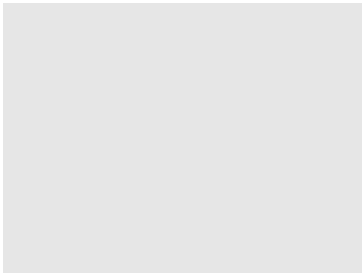
Moore said he came to Virginia from Pennsylvania in November 2012 with the victim and two other women he referred to as his other wives. The other two woman had left by 2017.

Defense attorney Ben Burchett argued for Moore's immediate release. He said that the two years Moore has already served were well beyond what the guidelines called for, and said Moore had no prior felony record.

"How could he have been so horrible for so long and nobody know about it?" Burchett said. "It's not as bad as the commonwealth makes it sound."

Prosecutors argued that Moore's abuses were horrible. Sweeney said that "if any actions deserve the maximum penalty, his do."

Rigual described Moore as "narcissistic" and said he clearly terrorized his family for more than a year.



**Moore**

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