

Christos Vasiliades Charged with Offering Rape Victim Cash to Not Testify



Summary: Baltimore attorney Christos Vasiliades was arrested for witness intimidation after offering to pay the victim cash for not showing up to court under the threat of deportation.

Baltimore defense attorney Christos Vasiliades was recorded in a conversation telling the husband of a rape victim that it wouldn't be good for them if she testified and would give them money to not show up at court. Vasiliades, 38, was arraigned on charges of obstruction of justice and witness intimidation.

The attorney and another man, Edgar Ivan Rodriguez, were charged with telling the rape victim that if she testified against his client, she would be risking deportation by the Trump administration. In the conversation with her husband, they said the "current environment for immigrants in this country" was not friendly but they would give them \$3,000 cash for not showing up at court to testify. If the victim does not show up, prosecutors are forced to drop the case against their client.

According to the indictment by the Maryland attorney general's office, Rodriguez was recorded telling the victim, "You know how things are with Trump's laws now; someone goes to court, and boom, they get taken away."

Vasiliades also suggested just beating up his client. He said, "If we were back home where I'm from, from Greece...we would go (expletive) him up, that's it, if you want to do that, that's fine. He's an (expletive), I think you should find him and kick his (expletive), personally."

As Vasiliades prepared to enter the trial for his client Mario Aguilar-Delosantos at the Courthouse East building, he was arrested and charged. He was back at the courthouse the next day but this time he was handcuffed, wearing a yellow jumpsuit. Vasiliades and Rodriguez, who claims to be Vasiliades' interpreter with Spanish-speaking clients, were released under pre-trial supervision. Both have pleaded not guilty. Billy Murphy is representing Vasiliades while Rodriguez has retained Joseph Murtha.

The client, Aguilar-Delosantos, was charged with rape during a time when immigrants face heightened risk of deportation by the Department of Justice. Arrests by Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials are up by 40 percent. Attorney General Brian Frosh explained, "If you're an immigrant, you live in a climate of fear at this point, and these folks were trying to capitalize on that."

The Baltimore state's attorney's office recently sent out a memo to prosecutors, directing them to weigh the "potential consequences to the victim, witnesses, and the defendant" for minor, nonviolent crimes. In this case, city prosecutors turned to the attorney general's office, asking for them to take over due to a possible conflict.

Aguilar-Delosantos has been charged with second-degree rape, third- and fourth-degree sex offenses, and second-degree assault. The alleged incident occurred on March, 25, 2016 but he has been free on \$250,000 bond. With his attorney arrested, his trial has been pushed back even farther to August.

The indictment alleges that Vasiliades requested a meeting in April with the victim and her husband because the case "had become 'more complicated.'" It was then that he explained to the couple "that the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement would likely be present in the courtroom for their client...and cited new federal laws and policies and maintained there is a high risk that" they would be deported if they drew attention to themselves by testifying. Vasiliades said he was "very sorry and could offer compensation if they did not come to court and testify against him" The indictment says, "Vasiliades and Rodriguez indicated that the monetary compensation would help ensure that [they] would not be deported."

The couple contacted the authorities, who directed them to meet with Vasiliades again to discuss the offer. The husband wore a recording device to record everything Vasiliades said during the meeting. Vasiliades claimed that ICE was looking at their case and would ask for their documents.

Vasiliades has worked for Murtha's firm since 2011. He is described in a biography as an "aggressive trial attorney dedicated to client service." He is part of the Vasiliades family that owns Sip & Bite diner in Canton. The owner of the diner in 2015, Anthony Vasiliades, was arrested after paying \$50,000 cash to a government cooperator for two kilograms of cocaine. Vasiliades is listed as the resident

agent for the diner. He formed his own firm in 2015 and is a founding partner of Olympus Title, a title company.

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