

CANADA: B.C. prosecutor urges 'strong message' in sentencing for child bride case

The Globe and Mail (30.06.2017) – <https://tgam.ca/2sBR233> – A special prosecutor has asked a judge to send a strong message of denunciation in sentencing a man and woman who took a 13-year-old girl over the U.S. border to marry the now-imprisoned leader of a polygamous sect.

Peter Wilson told a B.C. Supreme Court judge in Cranbrook on Friday that Brandon Blackmore should serve a jail sentence of 12 to 18 months, while Gail Blackmore deserves a six to 12 month sentence.

The former husband and wife were convicted earlier this year on a charge of taking a child under the age of 16 out of Canada for sexual purposes.

The trial heard that in 2004, the girl was secreted into the United States to marry Warren Jeffs, the prophet of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, who is serving a life sentence for assaulting two of his child brides.

Wilson acknowledged that it's an unusual case and there's no volume of Canadian law to assist Justice Paul Pearlman in reaching an appropriate sentence.

But he said the sentence must deter other members of the secluded community.

"Deterrence might have particular importance in this case because other persons who could potentially commit the offence

are, I would say, a very, narrow group," Wilson said. "The likely group of potential offenders is probably small and could very well be limited to other adherents of the FLDS as it's being espoused by Mr. Jeffs."

Wilson said Brandon Blackmore is more culpable than Gail Blackmore, but both were present at the wedding of the girl and knew what would happen. He said the teen and many women in that church live cloistered lives.

"The fact that the victim was 13 ... had spent her whole life in Bountiful, and was not what I would call a worldly person, which I submit would have rendered her more vulnerable."

Pearlman scheduled sentencing for Aug. 11.

The young woman, whose name is protected by a publication ban, was sitting in the front row of the courtroom.

Brandon Blackmore's lawyer said his client, who is 71, was excommunicated in 2012 and has no contact with any of the members of his former church.

John Gustafson said his client has begun to have some insight about his actions, but was "taught his whole life that Warren Jeffs was God's representative on earth."

He asked for a conditional sentence, a form of house arrest, for his client.

"He is not in a position, even if he wanted to, to commit these acts again," Gustafson said.

Gail Blackmore, 60, declined to say anything during sentencing but Joe Doyle, a lawyer appointed as a friend of the court, spoke on her behalf.

Doyle said the woman should not be painted with the "polygamist brush." He said she is less culpable because women in the church are taught to have "absolute obedience" to the

male head of the household.

“It is now 13 years later. Mr. Jeffs is in jail for the rest of his life,” said Doyle.

“She doesn’t have a husband who’s going to order her to do anything. There’s no need for individual deterrence for Mrs. Blackmore.”

James Oler, a former leader in the polygamous community of Bountiful, was acquitted of the same charge after the judge ruled there wasn’t proof he crossed the border with a 15-year-old girl.

Wilson is asking British Columbia’s Court of Appeal to overturn his acquittal or order a new trial.

.....

If you want to be regularly informed about different violations of human rights in the world, [click here](#) for a free subscription to our newsletters!

Also:

HRWF database of news and information on over 70 countries:
<http://hrwf.eu/newsletters/womens-rights-gender-equality/>

List of hundreds of documented cases of believers of various faiths in 20 countries: <http://hrwf.eu/forb/forb-and-blasphemy-prisoners-list/>