



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on June 2, 2012

Zimmerman Ordered Back to Jail for Alleged Falsehoods

The Florida judge overseeing the case of George Zimmerman, charged with second-degree murder in the February shooting death of Trayvon Martin, revoked bail and ordered the defendant to surrender himself to authorities within 48 hours. Prosecutors alleged that Zimmerman — who says he shot Martin in self-defense — had not revealed money raised from supporters through online donations, or the existence of a second passport. His defense team, however, said there was no intention to mislead the court.



According to a [motion](#) filed by the prosecution on June 1, Zimmerman and his wife had about \$135,000 available through a PayPal account opened to collect funds for his defense — probably even more now, as donations continued to flow in before the site was shut down. At a bond hearing in April, however, Zimmerman’s wife Shellie said she did not know how much money had been raised. Seminole County Circuit Judge Kenneth Lester decided to set bail at \$150,000, and Zimmerman was [released after posting 10 percent](#) of that amount and surrendering his passport.

Just a few days later, Zimmerman’s attorney [freely admitted](#) to the court that his client had actually raised close to \$200,000 through the website he set up. But for prosecutors, it was too little, too late — Zimmerman and his family had not been upfront about it during the hearing, they alleged, so the court needed to take action.

“This court was led to believe they didn’t have a single penny,” state prosecutor Bernie De la Rionda told Judge Lester, asking for the bond to be revoked or at least increased, and for Zimmerman to be taken into custody again. “It was misleading, and I don’t know what words to use other than it was a blatant lie.”

Zimmerman also allegedly had a second valid passport that he failed to surrender to authorities, prosecutors said, noting that his attorney was likely unaware but that the defendant and his wife both knew. According to the motion, Zimmerman and his wife also “spoke in code to hide what they were doing” while discussing money issues over the phone.

Zimmerman’s attorney Mark O’Mara told the court that the passport and financial issues were innocent misunderstandings, not an attempt to mislead authorities. “There was no deceit,” he said, noting that none of the money had been used and that it would not be a problem for Zimmerman to surrender himself by the 48-hour deadline.

Judge Lester, however, agreed with prosecutors. “Does your client get to sit there like a potted plant and lead the court down the primrose path? That’s the issue,” he [asked](#) Zimmerman’s attorney, less concerned about the passport issue than about the donated funds that were not initially disclosed during the bond hearing. “He can’t sit back and obtain the benefit of a lower bond based upon those material falsehoods.”



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Zimmerman was ordered back into custody, and the judge said he would schedule a hearing so the defendant could explain the circumstances to the court in person. Analysts said that depending on the outcome, Zimmerman might have his bond raised substantially. And if prosecutors get their way, he could even be held in custody until the trial, which is not expected to take place for many months. The judge has already [placed](#) Zimmerman under “no bond” status.

A lawyer for Trayvon Martin’s parents seized on the latest developments to question the truthfulness of Zimmerman’s other statements, too. “We fully expect that the special prosecutor will make George Zimmerman’s credibility be front and center in this entire case,” attorney Benjamin Crump was [quoted as saying](#). “And whatever dishonesty that comes forth by George Zimmerman that they can prove, you can best believe it will become the issue of this case.”

Orlando-area attorney and former prosecutor Randy McClean also commented on the issue, saying it was important for Zimmerman to maintain his credibility. “The other key witness, unfortunately, is deceased,” he told the Associated Press. “Basically, Zimmerman is going to be asking the jury to believe his version of the facts.... As the case stands now, his credibility is absolutely critical to the case.”

So far, independent legal analysts have largely argued that available evidence tended to support Zimmerman’s claim of self-defense. [Photos](#) and [medical records](#), for example, revealed that Zimmerman had suffered several injuries consistent with a severe beating including bloody gashes on the back of his head and a broken nose.

Witness statements and other testimony have also tended to support his version of events, according to experts. Though at least four witnesses so far [changed their original stories](#) — three of them in ways that analysts said could potentially harm Zimmerman’s case.

After an investigation of the shooting, law enforcement originally decided not to charge Zimmerman. But following a nationwide outcry fomented by [oftentimes-deceptive media reports](#) and a [coalition of race agitators](#) such as Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson, a special prosecutor appointed in the case eventually charged Zimmerman with second-degree murder.

Still, numerous experts — perhaps most prominently, Harvard law Professor Alan Dershowitz — blasted the whole prosecution and even called for the charges to be dropped immediately. “There is, of course, no assurance that the special prosecutor handling the case, State Attorney Angela Corey, will do the right thing,” Dershowitz [noted](#), saying the evidence demanded that the prosecution drop the charges. “Because until now, her actions have been anything but ethical, lawful and professional.”

The latest development in the case came as both sides asked the court to keep certain records sealed, fearing that witnesses may be harassed or threatened if their names were to be made public. Meanwhile, a coalition of more than a dozen media outlets is arguing that the information, which would normally be considered public records, be kept open.

Zimmerman’s attorney hopes to get his client released on bail again as soon as possible, according to reports. However, more than a few analysts have suggested that he might very well end up sitting in jail until the trial. No date has been set yet, but news reports and statements by attorneys connected to the case indicate that it could be more than six months until it all goes before a jury — assuming the case makes it that far.

Photo of George Zimmerman: AP Images

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