

BRESHA MEADOWS

Bresha Meadows was 14 years old when she was arrested for allegedly killing her abusive father in Warren, Ohio on July 28, 2016. Bresha grew up in a home where her father terrorized her and family throughout her life. Bresha, her siblings and her mother were all severely beaten by the father for over 17 years. Meadows tried to run away from home, and family members tried to take her out of the home. However, law enforcement refused to allow her to escape and threatened to charge family members with kidnapping if they took Bresha out of her home to safety.

When police investigated the abuse in the home, they refused to question Bresha outside the presence of her father. Neighbors reported that Bresha's father routinely brandished his gun to the family and to the neighbors. Prior to the shooting, Bresha's father had frequently threatened to shoot the family. To date, Bresha has not been granted pre-trial release and is currently being held in a juvenile jail. Prosecutors are contemplating trying her as an adult and if convicted she could be sentenced to life in prison. Law enforcement and the legal system failed to help Bresha when she and her family turned to them for help. She was left with only two options: defend herself and her family against horrific abuse or potentially die at the hands of her father. Bresha chose to survive so she defended herself by killing her father.

Bresha's arrest is part of a larger trend. An increasing number of girls are being arrested for violent behavior in their home. Researchers have attributed this increase to mandatory arrest or pro-arrest policies in cases of family-based assault. As a result of these policies, many girls are arrested for fights in their homes when defending themselves against victimization or as part of a pattern of violence among family members. Eighty-four percent of girls in juvenile detention have experienced family violence. Additionally, 31% experience sexual abuse, 41% experience physical abuse, and 39% experience emotional abuse. This has led many to describe an abuse to prison pipeline particularly for girls of color.