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Judge rules for woman in international custody dispute

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A Loveland woman won full custody of her four children Friday after a judge ruled her husband broke the law when he emptied the family's bank accounts and fled to Saudi Arabia.

The decision means Rima Shaheen also gets the family home and cars, but her lawyer has said she will struggle to pay the bills without the money her husband took.

Her husband, Talal Bawazir, had argued as recently as last month that he had no money and needed to take the children, who are U.S. citizens, with him to Saudi Arabia so he could get a good job.

Domestic Relations Judge Susan Laker Tolbert said Friday that Bawazir lied about his finances and was guilty of contempt of court for "fraud and misrepresentation." She ordered him to immediately transfer more than \$500,000, which he received in a severance package when he lost his job last year, from Saudi Arabia to his wife's bank account in the United States.

"He caused these funds to be transferred without plaintiff's knowledge," Tolbert wrote in her decision. "Defendant emptied out the bank accounts taking nearly all the material funds, and fled the country."

She also ordered Bawazir to begin paying a total of \$3,211 a month in child support and to stop discussing the divorce via phone and e-mail with his two oldest children. The judge said those conversations had "resulted in anger with and alienation from their mother."

Bawazir did not show up for the custody trial Thursday and his lawyer, John D. Smith, could not be reached.

Bawazir had argued for many months that after losing his job with a Procter & Gamble subsidiary in 2009, he could not find a good job in the United States and would have to move to Saudi Arabia. He said he received no severance package, had no money and was supporting his family with loans from his father.

He also said his four children, ages 6 to 14, would be better off with him in Saudi Arabia.

The previous judge on the case, Elizabeth Mattingly, said she was concerned about the family's finances and urged Shaheen to consider moving to Saudi Arabia with the man she was divorcing.

But all that changed when documents from P&G revealed that Bawazir had received about \$526,000 after leaving the company. Tolbert said he stashed the money in Saudi Arabia and then accepted "loans" from his father from that account.

Shaheen's lawyer, Phyllis Bossin, could not be reached Friday. But she previously has said it would be difficult for Shaheen to get court-ordered child support payments and the severance money unless Bawazir agreed to comply.

Shaheen has a college degree, but she has not worked outside the home since marrying Bawazir 19 years ago.