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Woman Accused Of Abducting 5 Released

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HOUSTON -- A woman accused of kidnapping five children who had lived in her home since Hurricane Katrina was released on bond Friday after making her first court appearance, KPRC Local 2 reported.

Bond was set at \$50,000 for Rhonda Tavey, 44, with the conditions that she wear an electronic ankle monitor and that she have no contact with the children.

Tavey is accused of fleeing with the children, ages 3 to 8, on July 11. She claimed their mother was abusing them. An Amber Alert was issued for the children on Wednesday and Tavey was arrested on Thursday. The children were found unharmed.

Tavey befriended the family after they moved to Houston from New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

The children's mother, Erica Alphonse, denies that the children were mistreated. Child Protective Services returned the children to Alphonse following an investigation.

"We got up this morning, ate cereal, played little games together. It was a beautiful thing," Alphonse said.

"They interviewed everybody," Harris County Assistant District Attorney Jane Waters said. "They did a really good job and I feel very comfortable with the location of the children at this point."

Prosecutors said Tavey never reported abuse or mistreatment to the authorities.

"She's a little frustrated with the system right now," said Todd Ward, Tavey's attorney. "Little bit in disbelief, doing everything she thought was in the children's best interest and yet she's in jail for doing that."

"Rhonda was threatened by the birth mother and also threatened by the birth father. She was protecting herself and the children's lives," Ward said.

"If they was the truth, I wouldn't have my kids right now," Alphonse said.

"She's in pretty much of a pickle, so she's got a lot of motivation to make up what is self-serving to her," said Shelley B. Ross III, Alphonse's attorney.

Prosecutors said that no matter how well intentioned Tavey may have been, she is not allowed to take the law into her own hands.

"Call the police. Call CPS. Do the right thing. You can't just flee in the middle of the night and then say, 'I was concerned for their safety.' You just can't do that," Waters said.

Tavey has been charged with five counts of kidnapping. If convicted, she could face up to 50 years in prison.

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