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### Courtroom battle over Britney Spears and her one-time confidant

April 2, 2009 | 7:03 am



Does Britney Spears live in fear of her former confidant, Osama "Sam" Lutfi? Or does she consider him her only hope for breaking out of a court-ordered conservatorship? Does the pop star see him as a predator, a Svengali or a savior?

There were plenty of opinions this week during a hearing on whether to impose a long-term restraining order against Lutfi and another man, but none offered by Spears herself. As has been the norm in the 15 months since her father assumed control of her affairs, the 27-year-old singer did not attend the Superior Court proceeding.

Witnesses summoned to the stand by attorneys for Spears' father, Jamie, suggested that his daughter is rightly frightened of Lutfi, a 34-year-old who lived with her and presented himself as her manager in the period leading up to her hospitalizations for psychological issues.

Blair Berk, who formerly represented Spears and said she now acts as a personal attorney for her father, said Lutfi made threats "of an extortative nature" during a January phone call, prompting her to contact law enforcement.

She said that on many previous occasions, Spears had asked her to have Lutfi arrested "for what he had done to her."

Another witness, a Long Beach probate attorney, said men identifying themselves as Lutfi and attorney Jon Eardley tried to get him to enter the case on Spears' behalf in January and even provided him with a retainer agreement purportedly signed by Spears.

The lawyer, John Anderson, said that after learning Spears was barred from hiring her own counsel and speaking with lawyers for her father, he decided not to get involved.

Lutfi did not attend the hearing. His lawyer, Bryan Freedman, called his younger sister as the only defense witness.

Christina Lutfi portrayed Spears as desperate to be in touch with her brother. She said that the singer called his cellphone repeatedly in January seeking help in hiring a lawyer. She said that Spears told her she was scared of her father and wanted access to a cellphone.

Christina Lutfi said her brother got a prepaid cellphone and she agreed to pass it to Spears during a secret meeting in the sauna room of Beverly Hills' Peninsula Hotel.

"She thanked me," Christina Lutfi recalled.

At a February hearing, Jamie Spears testified that a security guard found the phone in Spears' purse and turned it over to him.

Judge Aviva Bobb said she will hear closing arguments April 21 before deciding whether to make the temporary restraining orders against Eardley and Lutfi permanent.

-- Harriet Ryan