

St. Louis Criminal Defense Firm Combs Waterkotte Secures Dismissal in Church Kidnapping Case

Missouri criminal defense law firm Combs Waterkotte achieved a significant legal victory, securing a dismissal for one of three men charged with kidnapping.

SAINT LOUIS, MO, UNITED STATES, November 5, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI, UNITED STATES. Case number 2422-CR00513-01 - ST V GRACE KIPENDO, St Louis City - Circuit Court. [Combs Waterkotte](#) successfully defended Grace Kipendo, one of three individuals charged with kidnapping and assault at the Mount of



St Louis Criminal Defense Lawyers - Combs Waterkotte

Olives Ministry church in St. Louis. The case began when a woman fled the church claiming she had been held captive and assaulted, leading to the arrests of Kipendo and two others. The incident gained significant media attention, with allegations from St. Louis prosecutors of cult-

like practices within the predominantly African immigrant congregation. [St. Louis criminal defense attorney](#) Chris Combs secured the dismissal of all charges.

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Chris Combs

In February 2024, Grace Kipendo, along with two other individuals, was arrested after a woman alleged that she had been held captive and assaulted at the church. The woman identified Kipendo and the others based on their

appearance during a religious service attended by dozens of people. The police, relying on these initial accusations, moved quickly to charge Kipendo with kidnapping and assault.

Kipendo's defense focused on two main points: a cultural misunderstanding and insufficient evidence.

The prosecutors quickly labeled the predominantly African immigrant church "cult-like." Combs

argued that police and prosecutors misinterpreted unfamiliar religious practices as sinister behavior. Reports of "good angels" and "bad angels" within the church fueled media speculation and public bias. "Calling them a cult is racist," Combs told the judge in St. Louis Circuit Court. "I have no problem saying that."

Referring to the lack of evidence, "The whole case is her identification," Combs said, pointing out that the victim had identified Kipendo solely based on a gray jacket he was wearing during a religious service. Combs emphasized that the victim had been living at the church for months in the same room she was allegedly tied up in, and that she was suffering from a mental health crisis, which contributed to the confusion. He also noted that police body cam footage supported Kipendo's innocence, as the victim herself stated that the man in the gray jacket, whom she identified as Kipendo, had not tied her up.

After months of legal proceedings, the prosecution dismissed all charges, citing insufficient evidence. "I always thought this case was going to fall apart. It was a major rush to judgment," Combs said after the dismissal. Kipendo, an Army lieutenant and father of a newborn baby, had spent two months in jail and six months on GPS monitoring, was relieved to be cleared of all charges. "I knew from the beginning that I didn't do anything wrong," Kipendo said. "It was tough."

About Combs Waterkotte

Combs Waterkotte is a leading [criminal defense law firm based in St. Louis](#), Missouri, specializing in a wide range of criminal cases, including sex crimes, drug offenses, violent crimes, DUI/DWI, and more. The firm's attorneys bring a wealth of experience and a deep commitment to defending their clients' rights, ensuring each case is handled with the utmost diligence and professionalism. With a proven track record of success in high-stakes trials, Combs Waterkotte is dedicated to delivering justice and protecting the future of their clients.



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St Louis Criminal Defense Attorney

Chris Combs
Combs Waterkotte
+1 3149004357

[email us here](#)

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