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A white man wearing a ball cap holds an AR-15 against his chest. On the wall behind him are

A salesman is pictured in a file photo clearing the chamber of an AR-15 at a gun store in Provo, Utah. The U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments Nov. 7, 2023, in the case United States v. Rahimi, concerning whether people who are subject to a domestic violence protective order can be legally prohibited from possessing a gun. (OSV News photo/George Frey, Reuters)

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The Supreme Court appeared poised to uphold a federal law prohibiting those under domestic violence restraining orders from owning firearms during Nov. 7 oral arguments in United States v. Rahimi, a case challenging the constitutionality of a federal ban on firearms possession by those under domestic violence restraining orders.

A federal law enacted in 1994 prohibits those subject to domestic violence restraining orders from possessing firearms. The case concerns Zackey Rahimi, a Texas man who was placed under a restraining order after assaulting his girlfriend in 2019 and threatening to shoot her. Rahimi later took part in other crimes, including

his involvement in five shootings, after which authorities searched his home and charged him with violating that federal ban.

But after the Supreme Court's June 2022 decision in New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen, striking down part of New York's handgun-licensing law, an appeals court threw out Rahimi's conviction, arguing Rahimi still had the right to bear arms under the Second Amendment per that case. It remains to be seen whether any action by the court in the Rahimi case will impact the scope of the Bruen ruling.

Solicitor General Elizabeth Prelogar, who represented the government, argued that "history and tradition confirm common sense. Congress can disarm armed domestic abusers."

Most justices, including some on the court's perceived conservative wing, appeared to agree, and pointedly questioned Matthew Wright, a federal public defender representing Rahimi, about his arguments. The justices implied he made contradictory arguments about the government's ability to restrict firearms and his client's ability to own them.

"You don't have any doubt that your client's a dangerous person, do you?" Chief Justice John Roberts asked Wright, who answered the term didn't have a clear definition.

"I'd want to know what 'dangerous person' means," Wright said.

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"Well, it means someone who is shooting at people, that's a good start," Roberts replied.

Justice Elena Kagan, on the court's perceived liberal wing, told Wright, "I feel like you're running away from your argument," while Justice Amy Coney Barrett at one point told Wright she found herself "so confused" by his statements.

For his part, The New York Times reported, Rahimi wrote a handwritten letter from jail apologizing for going down "a wrong path" and vowing he would no longer carry a gun.

"I will make sure for sure this time that when I finish my time being incarcerated to stay the faithful, righteous person I am this day," Rahimi, wrote, adding he will seek "to stay away from all firearms and weapons, and to never be away from my family again."

A decision by the high court in the case is expected by the end of its term, which typically concludes in June.

The U.S. bishops have called on lawmakers to address gun violence, stating their support for a federal assault weapons ban similar to one Congress allowed to expire in 2004. They also support limitations on civilian access to high-capacity ammunition magazines. The same expired crime bill previously banned ownership of magazines with capacity for more than 10 rounds. Other gun regulation measures the bishops support include universal background checks for all gun purchases.