

Raid on FLDS should raise alarms

Armored vehicles recently roared onto the private property of a seemingly peaceful religious community. Hundreds of children were torn from their families.

They have since been forced to live in a stadium in the "protective" custody of the state. Now they are scattered across the state of Texas in unidentified foster homes.

The madness created by this well-armed but poorly planned and executed crusade continued to play out in a courtroom circus recently when a single judge tried to hear cases involving 437 children simultaneously.

Surprisingly, the armored invasion of families took place not in North Korea or Iran but the United States. Democratic ideals, such as due process, religious freedom and the privacy rights of the family, were barely given pause after anonymous calls to a hotline

by someone who claimed to be a Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teenage girl being abused.

Authorities recently learned that the call probably came not from an abuse victim, but from a 33-year-old Colorado woman with no ties to FLDS. This is not her first false report to officials, nor is it her first claim to be an abused child.



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Guest Opinion

Despite these revelations, the Texas court ruled that the 437 children would all remain separated from their parents. She did not even have sympathy for breastfeeding children.

What protections do we have when the state can enter our homes en masse and break up our families based upon false allegations of abuse by an imposter?

Before issuing the ruling, the judge heard testimony from a child psychiatrist. He expressed concern that the FLDS children were "too

innocent." They had no exposure to television or radio.

Individuals caring for the FLDS children report their delight in introducing the children to foods like "Froot Loops"—a new experience since FLDS parents value healthful eating and exercise for their children.

Since when do other people get to decide that our children need more television and junk food? Since when is keeping our children "innocent" a form of abuse?

The only allegation that merits concern is the prevalence of teenage pregnancies. Even so, teenage pregnancy occurs in every community, yet we do not raid every home on the block.

If these teenage girls are being sexually abused, they should be in protective custody—absolutely. However, most of the children in custody are boys and young children, and thus, not at imminent risk of the abuse alleged.

All children have the right to remain with their families

unless and until there is substantial proof of imminent risk of serious harm to that specific child. Due process rights entitle each and every child to individualized findings of harm or serious risk of harm.

These legal standards seem to have been virtually ignored in the Texas roundup at the Yearning for Zion Ranch. Our opinions on FLDS or polygamy or the sect's leadership do not matter. All Americans enjoy constitutional rights to privacy, due process and religious freedom. When these rights are suspended for an entire community, we should all be alarmed.

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