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**PRESS RELEASE FROM THE YFZ RANCH
December 26, 2008**

YFZ Raid Was Never Justified

When Texas law-enforcement officials and CPS invaded the YFZ Ranch on April 3, 2008, their actions were totally unjustified. They had no credible evidence of abuse, only a hoax telephone call from a woman currently undergoing psychiatric treatment. They never entered the Ranch to find the supposed “victim” but rather to go on a fishing expedition for evidence of abuse, neglect, or supposed criminal activity. For Texas CPS and law-enforcement officials to continue to make disturbing and unfounded allegations of abuse and neglect is nothing more than an attempt to justify their own barbaric actions and to divert attention from the real issues, such as the irreparable damage inflicted on innocent children and the expenditure of millions of taxpayer dollars on this unjustifiable raid. The Eldorado Investigation Report released by CPS on December 22, is as false and fraudulent as the original hoax telephone call that triggered the raid.

The Texas Court of Appeals ordered the return of the children, and the Texas Supreme Court sustained this decision by ruling, “On the record before us, removal of the children was not warranted.”

Texas CPS has never given reliable information. Shortly after the raid, they leaked news reports of an excessive number of broken bones among YFZ children. This

figure was later shown to be considerably lower than the national average. They classified 26 adult women as underage mothers when their true age was backed up by government-issued ID's and then kept two of these women in state custody long enough to kidnap their newborn babies.

At the 14-day hearing, they claimed that 5 minor girls were pregnant or had given birth. On April 28, CPS spokesman Darrell Azar increased the count to 31. The Eldorado Investigation report of December 22 now places the number at 7. When has CPS ever told the truth? They have never acknowledged their former inaccurate statements. They have no credibility.

The new CPS report has manufactured 262 cases of child abuse where none existed by claiming that parents who did not remove their children from a home where they were exposed to the example of an alleged underage marriage were guilty of neglect. What hypocrisy in a state that leads the nation in teen pregnancies! The report then proceeds to imply that their so-called "neglect" is also abuse by the cleverly worded statement, "Of the 146 families investigated, 62 percent had a confirmed finding of abuse or neglect involving one or more children in the family." Later in the report CPS admits that 96 percent of the YFZ children have now been "determined to be safe in their households to the point that there is not a need for court oversight." There never was a need for court oversight in the first place! Instructors of the state-required parenting classes noted on many occasions that the FLDS parents should have been teaching the classes.

Now that most of the children have been nonsuited, it might be assumed that the families have returned to the security of their homes and community. But what are they to return to? Their temple has been desecrated. Irreplaceable documents and

artifacts of earlier Church prophets have been confiscated, when they contained nothing even implying criminal conduct. Their homes have been broken into, and even unlocked doors have been kicked in. They lost an entire growing season for their gardens and orchards, a very critical situation for a people who, contrary to the common misperception, had not a single person on Welfare. Their priceless baby pictures, wedding pictures, genealogy books, diaries, and other personal records have been seized with no prospect of their ever being returned.

A formerly self-sustaining community has been reduced to poverty. They now must pay \$544,100.77 in property taxes, but their resources have been wasted and their source of livelihood cut off. Texas brags that it has spent over 12.4 million dollars to date on the YFZ raid, including more than a million dollars for bussing the children from their homes to shelters and foster-care facilities, and yet not one penny has ever been given to parents to reimburse them for the millions of dollars they have expended to pay the staggering legal expenses, to visit children scattered all across the state of Texas, or to rent houses and live in cities away from the Ranch.

Constitutional rights were trampled upon as though they didn't apply to the FLDS. Instead of being presented with search warrants, the people were presented with deadly weapons. When one young mother answered the door, she faced two loaded guns only 12 inches from her head. Her four-year-old son, his face white with terror, asked, "Mother, are they coming to shoot us?" The Court of Appeals ruled that officials were not justified in treating the entire ranch community as one household, supposedly covered by a single search warrant, and even the general warrant for the expanded search was not signed until after the searches and seizures already had taken place.

When the FLDS men surrounding the Temple failed to be intimidated by tanks, helicopters, and armed men, and with no resistance knelt in prayer, an officer fired several rounds from his gun in an apparent attempt to provoke a confrontation. With snipers positioned on the limestone rocks above the sacred site, this action easily could have triggered a bloody assassination.

The only real abuse that either women or children suffered was at the hands of Texas law enforcement and CPS. They were treated as prisoners of war at the San Angelo Coliseum and the other shelters. Children, and even pregnant mothers, shivered on hard army cots with only a plastic pillow and two thin blankets that were more like sheets, while a large overhead door was left open most of the night. Children used to unprocessed foods and natural sweeteners were fed a diet loaded with canned foods, preservatives, and sugar. Many suffered from stomach cramps and diarrhea. Through a combination of unfamiliar diet, exposure, and stress, almost every child became sick, and some coughed so hard that they vomited. In an effort to make the public aware of the dreadful conditions in the shelters, several mothers talked to reporters from the *Deseret News* and shared pictures taken with their cell phones. Just 20 minutes after a special media presentation aired on April 13, featuring conversations with three mothers, an order was given to confiscate the cell phones, isolating the captives from their attorneys and from any outside communication. A member of another government agency reported that after screaming children were ripped from their mothers in the Coliseum, one baby was left in a stroller for 24 hours without food or water and had to be hospitalized. Firsthand witnesses testify that many babies were drugged to sedate them after the separation, and one 18-month-old boy went into shock as a result.

Innocent girls were brutally interrogated for hours as investigators demanded, “How many husbands do you have?” or “How many men have you spiritually been with?” When they answered quite honestly “None” or that they didn’t know what they were talking about, they were shouted at and told, “You are a liar, and you know where liars go.” Investigators insisted that they did have babies but just wouldn’t admit it. At Fort Concho, a young lady was locked in a room for hours and told that she never would see her family and friends again unless she admitted to things that she knew nothing of. This is the treatment CPS meted out to the alleged “victims,” and yet they still dare to assert that the secure and loving homes to which the children were returned were abusive.

These people are not just “those FLDS.” They are American citizens, and they have been treated in a most unconstitutional and un-American way.

CPS has been a convenient tool for government officials seeking to implement their own vindictive agenda of driving the FLDS out of the state by holding as hostages the most prized possession of any family, their children. Texas state representative Harvey Hilderbran introduced House Bill 3006 in 2005 specifically targeting the FLDS. The House Research Organization bill analysis quotes supporters as saying: **“A group of Fundamentalist Church of Latter-Day Saints is building a compound south of San Angelo... Local residents... are concerned that members of the group will run for public office and will have moved a large enough group of voters into the area to take over local government.”**

On June 2, 2008, the *Deseret News* quotes Hilderbran’s gloating comment on his efforts to drive the FLDS: **“I wanted to make it unappealing to them. I hoped**

they wouldn't stay." Eldorado sheriff David Doran is quoted in the Fort Worth Star Telegram of June 3, 2008, as saying, **"I believe when all of the criminal charges come forward it is going to be very hard to practice their beliefs within the state of Texas."** Even Texas governor Rick Perry, while addressing a business conference in LaBaule, France, on June 5, 2008, said in reference to the FLDS, **"Maybe Texas is not the place you need to consider calling home."** Governor Perry went on to accept full responsibility for the raid. And CPS has the audacity to say that "it has never been about religion."

Shortly after the raid, when things looked darkest, the FLDS people sent personal appeals to Governor Perry, state and national legislators, and even the President of the United States. Their desperate pleas for help were not even acknowledged.

Government officials misuse their power when they ignore the truth and believe only that which will further their own agendas. This nation has fought a divisive war on the basis of bad intelligence, and CPS has continued on a course of bad intelligence from the day they entered the YFZ Ranch. They have never proven ANY allegations, and we strongly urge the people of Texas, and of this nation as a whole, to hold these officials accountable for their gross misrepresentations and abuse.

In behalf of the many FLDS families traumatized by the YFZ Ranch raid, we first thank our Heavenly Father for His protecting hand. We are sincerely grateful to the Texas Court of Appeals, the Texas Supreme Court, and the dedicated lawyers who have worked tirelessly in the reunification of the FLDS children and their parents. We also thank the many friends who came to our aid from across the

from across the nation and around the world. Your expressions of kindness, your prayers, and your support mean more than you will ever know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Willie Jessop". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent 'W' and 'J'.

Willie Jessop

Mothers and Children of YFZ