

OpEd: Family Courts Often Are Conduits for Child Sex Abusers

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By Amy Neustein, Ph.D.



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FORT LEE, New Jersey — The Thanksgiving holiday weekend ended with a jolt. Biden's unexpected pardon of his son Hunter, convicted of lying on a firearms application form about his drug addiction and his pleading guilty to tax evasion, adds ammo to Trump's long-standing rebuke of the Justice Department for its politically motivated cases against him and against his January 6th supporters. Truly, some will agree that Trump's analysis of the DOJ's single-mindedness in using its precious resources to wage vendettas against its political opponents is certainly not without merit. More important, the President-elect may have fortuitously opened up Pandora's Box – and that will certainly inure to the benefit of many hapless victims.

There is a horrid scandal in America's family courts – namely a fierce backlash against women who try to protect their children from abuse but instead lose all contact with their children – that Garland's DOJ has plainly ignored. I've [written about it](#) in SDJW I've also [given voice](#) to this scandal in feminist publications: I've shown in painstaking detail, with copious supporting documentation, how American children of divorce have been targeted by sex-traffickers who've penetrated the family court institutions and have manipulated judges and law guardians to place innocent children with sex offenders. [This pattern](#) is, not surprisingly, most pronounced in the regions of the country where there is a high amount of illegal drug-trade.

I suspect that Attorney General Merrick Garland, whose office is notorious for shielding him from communications outside the department, doesn't know about the protestations and requests that I, and other Jewish mothers, have made to him to seek his help in eliminating the child-sex traffickers that have penetrated the family courts, most prominently in areas where illegal drug-trade is most active. But as long as Garland serves in his position, I will not stop in my efforts to seek his attention even though he is now in the last seven weeks of his tenure as attorney general under the Biden administration. He can take the administrative lead in calling up local US Attorney offices and encourage an investigation of this family court debacle. By doing so, he'd be performing the *mitzvah* of *tikkun olam*. In fact, by coincidence these last weeks of his tenure at Justice overlap with Chanukah, a holiday that is known for miracles.

I cannot rest until this family court scandal is fully investigated. In fact, I am joined by other Jewish scholars and writers in my quest to see justice for children victimized by child-sex traffickers that canvas the family courts and child welfare agencies to find their unsuspecting victims. Pikesville, MD resident Michelle Etlin, co-author (with Leora Rosen, Ph.D.) of *The Hostage Child* (Indiana University Press, 1996), tried to seek Garland's attention on this matter. Midway through his term, *Washington Jewish Week* published Etlin's letter in fall 2022 under the heading "Call for a DOJ Investigation." She described how the nation's family courts – acting in concert with self-serving court-appointed visitation centers – have deliberately covered up the sexual exploitation of children. [Making a behest](#) to Garland's administration, she declared "this cries out for the full force of the Department of Justice."

Though Etlin's pleas were ignored, she appealed to her long-time friend and colleague, Dr. Mark Mills, to support her request for an investigation of family court. Mills, a well-known forensic psychiatrist and legal scholar who consulted for the Department of Justice over the past three decades, wrote a formal letter in April 2023 to Garland. Urging an investigation into child-sex trafficking of children of divorce, Mills pointed out there are "bad actors who appear to have penetrated various court institutions ... [and] pose a serious hazard to children throughout the country." However, Garland's office was swift to deny Mill's request for a Justice investigation. Nary a response at all, Mills received brief communication from Garland's criminal division but the signature line was noticeably absent a name. It coldly read: "Correspondence Management Staff" followed by "Reference Number: NM301947555."

Several months later, New York lawmakers, responding to my pleas to help the mothers in New York and throughout the country, sent an 18-page memorandum addressed to Garland. [The memo](#), titled "Family Courts as Conduits to Child-Sex Trafficking in the Active Drug Trade Hubs in the U.S.," cited relevant federal statutes for commencing an investigation.

In late summer 2024, New Jersey appellate specialist and author Michael Leshner (a very committed [ba'al teshuva](#) and author of *Turning Back: The Personal Journey of a "Born-Again" Jew*) wrote to Garland about the sex-trafficking of children through family courts. Receiving no response at all, Leshner resent his letter sometime later. He was stonewalled once again.

Unfortunately, family courts serving as a haven for child-sex traffickers working in concert with drug operatives is nothing new. Back in 2006, former University of Indiana criminal justice professor, Hal Pepinsky, in *National Women's Studies Association*, a Johns Hopkins University Press peer-reviewed journal, gave [this recap](#): "The problem is deeper in that I see evidence, time and again, indicating that many of the horrendous decisions [in family court] reflect pedophilic, sometimes even state-sponsored...rings of abuse and mutual cover-up."

Clearly, this scandal digs deep into the entrails of the American family court and legal system. An exposé of the family courts for serving as conduits to child-sex traffickers would risk toppling the very institutions so critical to our society. Yet, children who are caught in this quagmire of child-sex trafficking have suffered dearly. In fact, some have taken their own lives. Many are found to suffer from depression, eating disorders, self-mutilation, poor school performance, and so forth.

In the last analysis, while children suffer this incomprehensible torment, the cogs of bureaucracy serve their own self-interests – and that includes squandering resources on prosecuting cases against political opponents. Both Biden and Trump have now shined a spotlight on the DOJ in its pursuit of arguably ill-founded politically-motivated cases, while unconscionably ignoring those that sorely require the full force of the Justice Department. Pandora's Box has been opened.

Now it's time for family court judges engaged in child-sex trafficking to be prosecuted to the full extent of the laws. It is not a coincidence that a Jewish attorney general serves in the capacity to bring this horror to an end. We are God's chosen; that means we are tapped on the shoulder to do right – to step up to the plate with courage and conviction to fight immorality and corruption. As a member of the tribe, Garland is not exempt from taking responsibility to rectify this egregious wrongdoing. Let the Biden-Trump legal troubles portend the end of an era of political prosecutions so that sufficient resources can be appropriated to opening up the long-overdue family court scandal. I pray Merrick Garland reads these words and responds with a Jewish heart. The children's cries cannot be dismissed. Hashem is listening. And Garland must listen too.

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