

Texas out to Seize Warren Jeffs' Polygamist Ranch

Texas wants to take ownership of Warren Jeffs' polygamist ranch where the convicted sect leader and his followers sexually assaulted children, state prosecutors said Wednesday.

The Texas attorney general's office filed a seizure warrant in rural Schleicher County on Wednesday. A judge will determine whether the state can take control of the 1,600-acre property owned by the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

Jerry Strickland, a spokesman for the attorney general's office, said the court filings do not mean FLDS members still living at the Yearning for Zion Ranch must immediately leave.

He said the warrant instead begins the final chapter in the state's five-year prosecution against sect's indicted leaders and followers.

"This is simply the next step," Strickland said.

Strickland said it was too early to speculate what the state would do with the property if given ownership.

It's unknown how many families are still living at the ranch in Eldorado, located about 200 miles west of San Antonio.

Jeffs was convicted last year of sexually assaulting two of his underage brides. Prosecutors used DNA evidence to show he fathered a child with a 15-year-old girl prosecutors say he took as one of his spiritual wives. Jeffs is serving life in prison in Texas but has continued to try and continue to lead his church while serving his sentence.

Earlier this year, a new 100-foot concrete tower at a ranch was torn down by FLDS members.

In the four years since Texas authorities swarmed the ranch, state prosecutors have spent more than \$4.5 million racking up swift convictions against him and 10 loyal followers on child sex and bigamy charges, according to state records.

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