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District Court of Nördlingen
Family Court
attn. Judge ██████████
Tändelmarkt 5
86720 Nördlingen

Social-Pedagogical Report regarding the Published Accusations against the Twelve Tribes Community

Dear Judge ██████████,

Based on my many years of education as a social worker, I'm submitting to the court an expert opinion regarding the published accusations (especially the "video proofs" spread via RTL). This short expert opinion is free and independent, since I don't know anyone from the religious community personally.

The case has personally affected me very much through the undifferentiated publication especially by RTL and the massive interference of the authorities. Therefore, my sense is that it is my civic duty to send to the court a sober and independent evaluation, especially because of my professional competence.

I ask for your comment.

This socio-educational expert opinion refers to the "video proofs," which the reporter Wolfram Kuhnigk made (by the way, by intentionally lying with the intent to defame). These were broadcast by RTL rich with comments.

It was striking how the religious community was constantly labeled a "sect" in a defamatory way. The downright "cannibalization" of this "story" inevitably brings the audience into a negative attitude towards the "Twelve Tribes Community."

The evidence presented lacked any social-pedagogical expertise even in the way they were presented.

Now as far as the "video proofs," which were interpreted as child abuse:

- It was striking that the children didn't react in fear by any means.
- It all happened in a calm tone, without screaming around.
- The penalty was also explained with an imagery the child understood (e.g. that of a strong tree – a comparison which the child knew how to categorize).

Unfortunately, the essential parts before and after were cut out of the "video proofs," so that the

educational context is not visible and the picture was narrowed down solely to the strokes with the rod, which was then evaluated with bias as abuse.

"Taking things out of context" in this way prevents the needed picture of the family as a whole.

Abuse often occurs in an uncontrolled rage and anger - this was not seen here at all. Quite to the contrary, a peaceful atmosphere, which helps the child to understand the penalty. This penalty seems to be embedded in a framework where the child feels loved and accepted overall.

Obviously, the educators do not act randomly, but peacefully and in a positively targeted manner, so that the child can learn from it. This became clear in the video, e.g. it was explained to the child why he had to experience this penalty ("so that you will grow into a big strong tree"). The strokes were so weak that an injury is probably out of the question. This makes it clear that the educators did not want to hurt the children by any means. Physical abuse seems to be out of the question.

Telling from the reactions of the children, a positive trusting relationship with their educators becomes obvious, as the penalty as such is being accepted by the children.

These reactions by the children (among other things no resistance to the penalty) to me do not seem to be based on intimidation but on loving "embedding in a parent-child-relationship."

This makes it clear that the context and the overall atmosphere that the child grows up in are of crucial importance.

By no means was I able to recognize any physical or emotional abuse on the video footage commented with bias.

If indeed parents raise their children in love and strictness (both belong to one another), this is respectable. The right to educate your child and likewise the obligation to educate include both. There must be a differentiation: "having one's bottom smacked" or abusive beating of children. Lumping these two together is undifferentiated and hence injustice.

True education consists of love. Inevitably this also includes the consequence.

This lack of love becomes obvious when you take a closer look at the widespread practice of education in our country. Often children are handed over unprotected to the influence of the media or are simply "pacified," e.g. with the drug/"fashionable drug" Ritalin (which is sold on the free market as a drug called Speed).

In 1995, 5000 children were receiving psychostimulants, in 2009 it was 500.000 children and youth in Germany alone.

Unfortunately, children are often "sacrificed" for the professional success of their parents. In German society oftentimes a consistent "not educating" is predominant, trying to accommodate the children's wants and wishes. It is more than clear that this produces young people characterized by selfishness, to some extent dissatisfied, and not too oriented towards the common good.

Is not exactly this real child abuse?

Are the psychological effects not clear enough?

This is now contrasted with the practices of education of the "Twelve Tribes Community." You can tell from the effects of the education whether the practices of the education are appropriate or not. This requires the children and youth to give an account themselves for evidence. In order to obtain an overall picture older youth and young adults also should speak up. Isolated mistakes that any teacher makes are what matters, but the education and its effects overall.

From objective factors, e.g. frequency of addictions among youth, social behavior (orientation towards the common good or self-centeredness, warmth or hardness of heart, sensitivity or lack of sensitivity, how conflicts are resolved positively, etc.) you can tell objectively what the practices of education are like in comparison.

Children also suffer psychological abuse, e.g. by being yelled at unlovingly. In none of the cases on the "video proofs" did this happen in the Community of the "Twelve Tribes."

"Having one's bottom smacked" - as many still experienced - did not do any harm to people, if this was taking place in a loving family environment. Yelling, which is very commonplace, and loveless words leave a deep impression in the memory and on the psyche of the persons in need of protection, are a lot worse.

Withdrawal of love, which is very commonplace in our society, and emotional coldness, alienation, many times for days, are real cruelty for the soul of a child.

On the other hand a physical limit as immediate consequence which happens right away and is set in a loving family environment, is not bad. Rather, it helps the child – like a stop signal - to wind down. This opens the door to stop and consider, confront the situation, and lovingly work it out in the following conversation. The whole family environment is relieved when, for example, no single child can dominate the respective situation. The loving family framework is crucial. In this way child rearing will take place appropriately and in a multifaceted fashion.

This is definitely not to promote arbitrary beating, real abuse, or withdrawal of love!

Conclusion: From a socio-educational perspective I could not identify any physical or psychological in the so called proofs. So from a socio-educational perspective the accusations against the Twelve Tribes Community due to the submitted "video proofs" are unwarranted, hence the response of the authorities is completely exaggerated.

In a media-effective way RTL put the Jugendamt (Social Services) and the authorities under pressure urging them to intervene. Many citizens were shocked by the extreme intervention of the authorities, "family liability," the separation of parents and children and vice versa, etc.

Therefore, it is all the more necessary to hear the children, youth, and parents. Thus it becomes clear whether the children are growing up in a loving environment. The effect of child rearing is crucial. Good child rearing will largely produce people who are oriented towards the common good, social, happy, and loving.