



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on December 3, 2013

## Uproar Grows Over Forced C-section to Seize Child in U.K.

After a pregnant Italian woman allegedly suffered from a “panic attack” during a two-week trip to the United Kingdom, government officials detained her in a psychiatric hospital, forcibly sedated her, cut the unborn child out of her womb via C-section, and then seized the newborn baby girl. More than a year later, U.K. authorities are still refusing to return the child to her mother. Now, however, the story is making headlines around the world, with critics and commentators up in arms, and British officials under global scrutiny for what is being called an “outrageous” abuse of power.



Some lawmakers are also seizing on the escalating outrage in a bid to rein in what they view as an out-of-control and dangerous system ripe for abuse. The issue is reportedly even set to be brought up in Parliament this week. After news of the forced C-section and child seizure sparked a global outcry, one Member of Parliament, or MP, was even quoted in the U.K. *Daily Mail* [describing](#) social workers as “dictators” who are “unaccountable and out of control.” More than a few critics of the latest alleged abuse to hit the headlines have blasted it as “totalitarian,” too — with many analysts saying it is just one extreme example in a troubling pattern that is becoming increasingly serious.

Lawmakers from multiple parties across the political spectrum have already expressed outrage and serious concerns about the most recent case to come to light — as well as the social-services bureaucracy more broadly. “As an Essex MP, I have serious concerns about Essex children’s services,” Conservative “Tory” Parliamentarian Douglas Carswell was [quoted as saying](#) in British news reports. “They are unaccountable and out of control. These people are dictators who abuse their powers. They are arrogant bullies and people are frightened of them. They operate in secret, they have great powers, and they are unaccountable.”

MP John Hemming, meanwhile, a Liberal Democrat who chairs the Public Family Law Reform Coordinating Campaign, has also seized on the latest horror story to emerge from Britain’s secret family courts. “I have seen a number of cases of abuses of people’s rights in the family courts, but this has to be one of the more extreme,” [said](#) the longtime campaigner for openness and reform in family court proceedings. Hemming is reportedly expected to raise the issue in Parliament this week as the public furor in Britain and around the world continues to grow louder.

Speaking to reporters from various media outlets, MP Hemming also suggested something even more sinister might be afoot — that officials are setting quotas for the number of children who must be seized from their parents in order to keep the lucrative “child-protection” machine running. “It is hard to avoid the suspicion that adoption targets set for Essex may have come into play,” he said, echoing widespread concerns expressed by analysts and commentators. “We do not know whether she was held in the U.K. as a favor for Essex social workers. We cannot know because of the disgraceful secrecy of the courts.”



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The “Court of Protection,” a deeply controversial entity established in 2007 that decides individuals’ fates in secret, purportedly “authorized” the C-section to be performed without the victim even being made aware of what was being proposed, MP Hemming continued. “I worry about the way these decisions about a person’s mental capacity are being taken without any apparent concern as to the effect on the individual being affected,” he added. Now, calls for wide-ranging reforms are growing.

According to media accounts, the 35-year-old woman in the case — whose name has not been released due to secrecy laws surrounding such actions — traveled to Essex, England, while pregnant last summer for a work-related training course. During what was supposed to be a two-week stay, the mother reportedly could not find the passports of her two older daughters, which led to what is being described as a “panic attack.” Next, she called the police amid the incident before calling her mother in Italy. Officers arrived at her hotel shortly afterward and spoke with the woman’s mother in Italy over the phone, who suggested that her daughter was under stress from a “bipolar” condition and needed her medication.

The police at the scene then said they were taking the woman to the hospital simply “to make sure the baby was OK,” according to news reports. Instead of the hospital, however, the officers took the pregnant mother to a psychiatric facility, where she was detained against her will under the British so-called Mental Health Act. About five weeks later, local officials with the Essex social services sought, and obtained, a “High Court” order demanding that the woman be forcibly sedated and forced to deliver the child via surgical caesarean section. As soon as the baby girl was born, she was seized by authorities and taken into government care.

The child is 15 months old now, still trapped in the U.K. and separated from her mother. Despite the Italian mom’s desperate efforts to be reunited with her young daughter, officials in the shadowy and secret proceedings refuse to budge. In February, according to news reports, the mother had a court hearing at Chelmsford Crown Court, where her lawyers explained that she had resumed her medication. While the judge apparently “formed a favorable opinion of her,” he still ruled that the young girl should be placed for adoption, citing a “risk” that the mother could “relapse.”

“It is not a case where I can accede to the mother’s wishes even though I understand, not just the strength of feeling that she has, but it is rare to have it articulated in such a forceful and coherent form,” [noted](#) Judge Roderick Newton with Chelmsford County Court, the official who ruled that the child should be put up for adoption. “She begged the court not to agree to the care and placement orders being made so that she lost her daughter forever.” However, despite the mother’s desperate pleas, the judge agreed with social workers that the mother might possibly stop taking her medication again.

An Italian court, meanwhile, reportedly raised serious questions about the case and the draconian measures, expressing concerns about U.K. authorities taking such drastic actions without even working with the woman’s family or authorities in Italy. The mother’s relatives have even agreed to do everything they can, including care for the young girl, if officials insist on keeping the family torn apart. So far, however, Italian authorities have reportedly been powerless to help in the ongoing case.

Local Essex Council officials have refused to comment on the “ongoing” case. In a statement released this week, though, the council suggested it was all for the “best interest” of the child. “The long-term safety and well-being of children is always Essex County Council’s priority,” [claimed](#) the statement, quoted in news reports around the world. “Adoption is never considered until we have exhausted all other options and is never pursued lightly.”



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However, the extraordinary case, which legal experts are calling “unprecedented,” is not over yet. The Italian woman’s British lawyer, Brendan Fleming, has vowed to keep fighting. “I have never heard of anything like this in all my 40 years in the job,” the attorney told *The Sunday Telegraph*. “I can understand if someone is very ill that they may not be able to consent to a medical procedure, but a forced caesarean is unprecedented. If there were concerns about the care of this child by an Italian mother, then the better plan would have been for the authorities here to have notified social services in Italy and for the child to have been taken back there.”

The deeply controversial case is now set to be transferred to a higher court, according to news reports. “The proceedings are not yet concluded,” a spokesman for the judiciary was [quoted as saying](#). “The president [Sir James Munby] has ordered that the matter be transferred to the high court and any further applications in respect of the child are to be heard by him.” This will likely be the mother’s final chance to be reunited with her young daughter, according to her supporters.

As the case moves forward and public outrage grows, numerous high-profile charities, individuals, and organizations are joining the battle on behalf of the embattled mother — human-rights groups, patient advocates, [prominent newspaper columnists](#), experts, lawmakers, and more. This particular tragedy might yet have a semi-happy ending, analysts have suggested. Still, critics of the broader system and its unbridled powers to rip families apart on a whim say it illustrates the urgent need for serious reform and accountability.

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