

After Norway Seizes Pentecostal Family's 5 Kids, Top European Court Will Hear Case

The European Court of Human Rights has agreed to hear the case of a Pentecostal family after Norway seized their children.

Barnevernet–Norway's child-welfare agency—took the children in 2015 under claims that the parents were using spanking as a form of discipline, which is illegal in that nation. The agency took action after a school principal expressed concern that parents Ruth and Marius Bodnariu were indoctrinating their children with their Christian beliefs.

One of the children was only 3 months old when the agency intervened. More than six months later, the children were finally returned to their parents.

The family then fled Norway after 10 years of calling that country their home.

In December 2016, the Bodnariu family appealed to the European Court of Human Rights, saying Barnevernet was violating Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights, which protects the right to private and family life.

Robert Clarke, director of European Advocacy for Alliance Defending Freedom, praised the Bodnarius' decision in a statement:

“Parents have the right to direct the upbringing of their children. Norway intervened in the family life of the Bodnariu family by taking the five children into state care without any compelling reason. Removing children from their families

should always be a last resort.”

The Bodnarius’ case soon created an international outcry, perhaps in part because the family is Romanian.

The court agreed to hear the Bodnarius’ case, but according to the ADF, many other families have also suffered from Barnevernet’s controversial decisions.

“Recent years have seen an increasing number of cases of overreach by the Norwegian state into family life, with numerous cases coming before the European Court of Human Rights,” Clarke says. “The Bodnariu case resulted in an international outcry and the Bodnariu family fleeing Norway. No family should be put through that ordeal, especially not at the hands of the state. We are encouraged by the decision of the European Court of Human Right to hear this case.”