

After Traumatic Police Raid, Home-Schooled Children Returned to Family

Dirk and Petra Wunderlich's children were returned to them after a court hearing Thursday, three weeks to the day after their four children were seized during a police raid. The Wunderlich children were returned after the parents promised they would send their children back to a state school.

"It's a small victory, but it's still a victory," says Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) chairman Michael Farris. "When the parents told the authorities that they would send their kids back to school during the raid, they were told it was too late. What we've seen today is a reversal in the German courts caused by the mounting international pressure from human rights advocates. This is a promising start to what will hopefully be a reversal on Germany's stance on home-schooling altogether."

The Wunderlich children were taken from their parents on Aug. 29 because the family continued to home-school their children despite the German government's open persecution of home-schoolers. In court documents received and translated by HSLDA, the seizure was ordered only because the children were home-schooled, despite no evidence of child abuse or neglect. The German high court is on record for ordering suppression of "parallel societies," mentioning home-schoolers specifically.

Farris notes that there is still a lot of work to be done for the German government to allow parents to home-school.

"The way the parents were forced into complying with the government's wishes is only part of how Germany mistreats its citizens," he says. "The German government loves compromises as long as they ultimately get their way. They were fine with

a Muslim teenager wearing a swimsuit with a head covering as long as she took part in co-ed pool activities despite her objections. And now they're fine that the Wunderlich family gets their children back as long as they attend a state school. The attitude of 'Our way or else' is still very much alive in a supposedly tolerant society."

Farris is also disturbed by the silence from the Obama administration over what he says is a clear violation of international human rights.

"The State Department says it seeks to promote a greater respect for human rights on its website," Farris says. "It lists specific examples including freedom of expression and the protection of minorities, but what it doesn't mention is religious freedom. It is clear that the administration doesn't mind that religious home-schoolers in Germany are having their rights trampled upon by the way the Justice Department is going after the Romeike family."

After the Wunderlich story broke, thousands of Americans took to the phones and Internet to contact the German Embassy and condemn the actions of the authorities. Farris believes the only way to change Germany's attitude is by embarrassing the authorities, and HSLDA is continually taking steps to increase pressure on the German government for violating human rights.