

Americans Warned: Home-Schoolers Stripped of Rights

Recently, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder has said that homeschooling is not a parent's right. It is a statement some are saying should frighten American parents.

Nations like Germany and Sweden show that when governments take away homeschooling rights, it's a slippery slope to no parental rights.

America the Refuge or Not

The Romeike family came to the United States from Germany five years ago hoping to find refuge. They wanted to homeschool their children in freedom and a federal judge granted them asylum.

But now the Obama administration has been trying to deport them, arguing that homeschooling is not a right. The case is currently before a federal appeals court.

Uwe and Hannelore Romeike began homeschooling in Germany because they didn't want their children exposed to things like witchcraft and graphic sex education that are taught in German schools.

"There were stories where [school children] were encouraged to ask the devil for help instead of God and actually the devil would help (in the story)," Uwe said.

"When we found out what's in the textbooks, it's exactly the opposite from what the Bible tells us and teaches us, and we wanted to protect [our children]," his wife, Hannelore, added.

But homeschooling is illegal in Germany, except in rare cases. And many homeschooling parents are persecuted with fines, jail or the loss of their children.

Homeschoolers Going Into Exile?

Most homeschoolers in America are left alone. But what if state politicians and the federal government started to move against it?

Two of the worst nations for homeschoolers are Germany and Sweden. If you want to see what things might be like if homeschooling was banned in America, travel to Sweden, where the government controls education and the homeschooling movement has been crushed.

In fact, the head of the Swedish Homeschooling Association, Jonas Himmelstrand, had to take his family into exile. They fled to Finland.

"We're in exile. We were forced out of our country and that makes a stronger impact than I can imagine," he told CBN News. "This was our country. This was where we had our friends and business relationships and a whole lot of things and now we're pushed away from it."

Attorney Michael Donnelly, of the Homeschool Legal Defense Association, called the situation "incredible for a nation like Sweden that calls itself a free nation, a democracy, so to speak."

Ruby Harrold-Claesson, president of the Nordic Committee for Human Rights, went even further, branding Sweden a dictatorship where social workers tell parents what to do.

"Sweden claims to be a democracy but it's far from it. It's a dictatorship," he said. "You have the social workers dictating how people are to live. You're not supposed to be different. You're not supposed to be different from anyone else in Sweden. Everyone is supposed to be uniform. They want to have these cookie cutter children."

Claesson is also the lawyer representing Christer and Annie Johansson, who have lost custody of their son Domenic, because

of homeschooling. After Domenic was abducted by Swedish officials, Annie's health began to fail.

Christer said the stress of the ordeal is killing his wife.

"If we cannot solve this issue soon, Domenic won't have a mother anymore," he said.

Russia, A Homeschooling Haven

Nations like Germany and Sweden could learn a thing or two about parent's rights from, of all places, Russia, which is one of the freest nations in which to homeschool.

"We have complete freedom of home education in Russia, in terms of legality," Pavel Parfentiev, a family rights advocate in Russia, said.

"The Russian Federation is sort of a champion of human rights in this particular area, so of course I think it is a good example for both Germany and Sweden where home educators are persecuted," he said.

Among the persecuted, German homeschooler Juergen Dudek has been taken to court every year for the past 10 years by the German Jugendamt, or Youth Office.

"The Youth Office, I used to call it the 'Gestapo for the Young.' As soon as they step in, as soon as they get hold of you, you've really got problems," Dudek said.

German homeschooler Dirk Wunderlich and his wife have lost custody of their children, although they are still allowed to live with them. He also told CBN News he expects to be sent to jail, but said he will never stop homeschooling.

"But I'm not afraid of this. I'm only sad for my family. I will go (to jail) laughing. You can do what you want but my children will not go to school," he said.

America Safe for Homeschoolers?

In America, a red flag went up earlier this year when the Justice Department argued in the Romeike case that homeschooling is not a fundamental human right.

A source close to the case said the White House cares more about relations with Germany than about a family seeking political asylum.

Asylum for the Romeikes might open a floodgate of refugees from Germany, further embarrassing the German government.

Uwe Roemike, who makes his living as a piano teacher, knows what to expect if they're deported.

"First they would fine us with increasingly higher fines and they would threaten to take away custody," he explained.

"There might be jail time, too, but the main threat is the aspect of custody because then, of course, the children are taken away from you completely and that's what no family wants," he said.

Uwe said the fact the White House would be willing to deny homeschooling freedom to his family, should make all American homeschoolers concerned.