

German Homeschooling Family Granted Political Asylum in U.S.

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 A U.S. immigration judge on Tuesday granted political asylum to a German couple who fled to Tennessee so they could homeschool their children.

The decision by Memphis Judge Lawrence O. Burman clears the way for Uwe and Hannelore Romeike and their five children to remain in Morristown, Tenn., where they have been living since August 2008.

Romeike family photo courtesy of Alliance Defense Fund

The couple fled to the U.S. after being fined several times for refusing to comply with German law, which requires children to attend public or private schools. The Romeikes, who believed the curriculum was at odds with Christian values, feared they could lose custody of their children or be jailed because of their stance.

The family was represented by the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), and the case was funded in part by the Alliance Defense Fund.

In a statement issued by the HSLDA, Uwe Romeike said his family was grateful for the ruling. "We know many people, especially other German homeschoolers, have been praying for us," he stated. "Their prayers and ours have been answered. We greatly appreciate the freedom to homeschool we now have in America and will be building our new life here."

HSLDA staff attorney Mike Donnelly said he hopes the decision will influence public opinion in Germany, where officials view homeschoolers as “parallel societies.”

“There is no safety for homeschoolers in Germany,” Donnelly said. “The two highest courts in Germany have ruled that it is acceptable for the German government to ‘stamp out’ homeschoolers as some kind of ‘parallel society.’ The reasoning is flawed. Valid research shows that homeschoolers excel academically and socially. German courts are simply ignoring the truth that exists all over the world where homeschooling is practiced.”

Donnelly told the Associated Press the government may appeal the decision, but that is unlikely. “They do sometimes do that, so we won’t know for a little while-but I would tend to doubt that they will do that,” he said.