

Home-schooling Families May Lose Child Custody in Sweden

The government may soon be able to take children away from **home-schooling** families in Sweden if a leader of the nation's Liberal Party has his way.

Liberal Party politician Lotta Edholm called for the change to the country's social services law in a Jan. 10 column in *Aftonbladet*, a prominent Swedish newspaper.

"Today I write with Ann-Katrin Aslund on Aftonbladet's debate page that the social services law should be amended so that social services are able to intervene when children are kept away from school by their parents—often for religious or ideological reasons," Edholm wrote.

The call for the change comes amidst already stringent penalties in Sweden for **home schooling**. The Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) and Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLD) have applied to the European Court of Human Rights on behalf of one family whose child was abducted by the government in 2009 and have filed a brief in a Swedish appellate court on behalf of another family fined an amount equivalent to \$26,000.

"Parents have the right and authority to make decisions regarding their children's education without government interference," said ADF Legal Counsel Roger Kiska. "Swedish policy on home education is at odds with recognized international legal standards that uphold the right of parents to direct the education of their children. Those standards include the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights documents, all of which recognize that parents have a fundamental right to choose what kind of education their children will receive."

Edholm's statement is the most direct and serious threat to date for home-schooling families in the Nordic country, where the climate for **home schooling** has continued to deteriorate. The Swedish Court of Appeal has agreed to review three different cases in which government officials denied permission to home school.

"Sweden's educational policy is becoming increasingly totalitarian," says Mike Donnelly, HSLDA director of International Relations. "A country that does not permit home education is not really a free country."