

Swedish Court Vindicates Homeschooling Parents

A Swedish district court has ruled that the parental rights of a 10-year-old boy abducted by the government three years ago for being home-schooled will not be terminated.

The court stated it could not ignore the unanimous and extensive testimony of firsthand accounts of friends, family and others that Domenic Johansson's parents, Christer and Annie, were properly caring for him prior to Swedish authorities seizing him in 2009.

"It was pretty important that we won this, because if we didn't, we would have permanently lost our only child," Christer Johansson. "There is something very wrong with people who would keep a family separated this long for no legitimate reason."

Swedish authorities forcibly removed Domenic from his parents in June 2009 from a plane they had boarded to move to Annie's home country of India. The officials did not have a warrant nor did they charge the Johanssons with any crime. The officials seized the child because he was home-schooled, even though home schooling was legal in Sweden at the time he was taken into custody.

"The government shouldn't abduct and imprison children simply because it doesn't like home schooling," said Alliance Defense Fund legal counsel Roger Kiska. "We encourage Swedish authorities to release Domenic to his parents in light of the court's ruling, and we hope the European Court of Human Rights will reconsider its recent rejection of Domenic's case in light of the Swedish court's determination. This family's human rights have been unimaginably violated."

In December 2009, a Swedish court ruled in *Johansson v.*

Gotland Social Services that the government was within its rights to seize the child. ADF and HSLDA attorneys filed a lawsuit, *Johansson v. Sweden*, with the European Court of Human Rights in June 2010 over the matter.

That court recently declined to hear the case even after additional submissions from ADF and HSLDA attorneys, but the new ruling from the Swedish court determined that Domenic's mother and father are suitable to exercise parental rights over their son, bringing new hope that the child will be returned home.

"This is a tremendous day for the Johansson family," said Home School Legal Defense Association Director of International Relations Mike Donnelly, one of more than 2,100 attorneys in the ADF alliance. "HSLDA and ADF have been supporting them since Swedish officials took their child—a grotesque abuse of their human rights. Dominic has not been returned home yet, but we have every hope that he will be soon."