

Homeschooling is to be Criminalised in Sweden...

Will be permitted only under “extraordinary circumstances.”

By Hilary White

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The government of Sweden is taking a hard line against homeschoolers, proposing a bill that will only allow home education under “extraordinary circumstances,” reports the Home School Legal Defense Association. The bill is expected to pass in the Swedish parliament, following a review by the Supreme Administrative Court, and will allow for homeschooling families to face criminal charges. The court has asked only for the government to specify the definition of “extraordinary circumstances.”

Jonas Himmelstrand, president of the Swedish Association for Home Education (ROHUS), said the situation is changing rapidly for the worse for homeschoolers in the country.

“Just two years ago my family and many others received the permission of local municipal school boards to homeschool.”

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Himmelstrand continued, “Last year we won our court case at trial, but the appeals court sided with the government against our homeschooling. The school year was over before the school officials could bring another case. This year the authorities are being much more aggressive. Families are being fined and the new law would allow for the imposition of criminal sanctions.”

The news of the socialist government’s hardening attitude toward homeschoolers comes following the state seizure eight months ago of seven year-old Dominic Johansson, whose parents were educating him at home. Since the removal of Dominic by police from a plane the family had boarded with the intention of moving to India, Christer and Annie Johansson have been allowed to see their son for one hour every five weeks.

Despite the seizure of Johansson, homeschooling is not officially illegal in Sweden. But the statist views of the current government are deeply antagonistic towards any movement of citizens away from the state control of education.

“The government's quest for conformity produces troubling side effects: the criminalization of actions – such as a parent's decision regarding the best form of education for his child – that ought to be the hallmarks of a free, democratic society,” said the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) in a statement. The U.S.-based HSLDA and Alliance Defense Fund are assisting the family.

HSLDA said that while Sweden is often portrayed as a “social utopia,” what is not widely known is its antagonism toward homeschoolers, “and, in reality, anyone who deviates from what the Swedish government defines as ‘normal’.”

One American homeschooling mother, Lisa Angerstig, who is married to a Swede, said that the government is becoming “increasingly aggressive,” having already fined the family the equivalent of U.S. \$1400.

“Sweden is a beautiful country,” she said, “and the people are very nice. But the government has become increasingly aggressive about education, trying to require that all children go to the state schools. For a country that prides itself on human rights, this type of aggressive behavior is quite shocking.”

Himmelstrand said there are only about a hundred homeschooling families in the whole country, but these are “one hundred too many for Swedish authorities.”

“They are preparing to pass this new law to make it harder, and it appears that local school boards are already enforcing the new law even though it hasn't been passed through Parliament.”

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