POLICE STATE, GERMANY
Homeschooler flees state custody
Melissa Busekros surprises parents at 3 a.m.

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By Bob Unruh
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Melissa Busekros, after her return to her home. (Photo courtesy Klaus Guenther)

Melissa Busekros, the schoolgirl taken by police and placed in a psychiatric hospital because she was diagnosed with a "school phobia" and was being homeschooled, has fled state custody to make a midnight trip back to her own family, according to Joel Thornton, president of The International Human Rights Group.

"At 3 a.m., in Erlangen, Germany, Melissa reached her home to the surprise of her entire family," Thornton told WND. "Earlier in the morning Melissa left a note with the foster family where she was being held and began the journey to her family. She left of her own volition."

(Story continues below)

Thornton said April 23 is Melissa's birthday, and on turning 16, "this gives her broader rights than it does in America. It gives her more of a voice in her own custody. So, she decided to return home."

"In fact, if the state police come for her again she is prepared to refuse to go on the advice of her attorney," Thornton said.

He reported Melissa was in contact with her legal adviser, Johannes Hildebrandt, to let him know she had returned home, and he is preparing to be at the family home in Erlangen if needed.
"Our director of European Operations, Richard Guenther, spoke with the family this morning and told them that it was imperative that they contact Dr. Hildebrandt to let him know that she has returned home," Thornton said.

"I spoke with Gudrun, Melissa's mother, just after midnight [EDT], I conveyed our congratulations on having their daughter home. Gudrun was relieved to have her entire family back together," Thornton said.

He said the work continues in the legal forum, too.

"A week or so ago, Melissa was evaluated by a professor of psychology who is the director of the institution that oversaw Melissa's care while she was being held in state custody," Thornton said. "This new evaluation revealed that Melissa does not suffer from 'school phobia.' She is healthy and has made it through this traumatic ordeal remarkably well."

Thornton said the family's lawyer already has asked a higher German court to recognize the findings of the new evaluation.

A separate website, FreeMelissaB.com, launched by American homeschool leaders also had been lobbying on behalf of Melissa.

Melissa, last February when she still was 15 and subject to different German laws, was taken by police from her parents to a psychiatric ward after a social worker and judge determined she had a "school phobia" and was being homeschooled, which is illegal in Germany.

Melissa had fallen behind in math and Latin and was being tutored at home. When school officials in Germany, where homeschooling was banned during Adolf Hitler's reign of power, found out, she was expelled. School officials then took her to court, obtaining a court order requiring she be committed to a psychiatric ward.

Wolfgang Drautz, consul general for the Federal Republic of Germany, has commented on the issue on a blog, noting the government "has a legitimate interest in countering the rise of parallel societies that are based on religion or motivated by different world views and in integrating minorities into the population as a whole.'
Drautz said homeschool students' test results may be as good as for those in school, but "school teaches not only knowledge but also social conduct, encourages dialogue among people of different beliefs and cultures, and helps students to become responsible citizens."

The German government's defense of its "social" teachings and mandatory public school attendance was clarified during an earlier dispute on which WND reported, when a German family wrote to officials objecting to police officers picking their child up at home and delivering him to a public school.

"The minister of education does not share your attitudes toward so-called homeschooling," said a government letter in response. "... You complain about the forced school escort of primary school children by the responsible local police officers. ... In order to avoid this in future, the education authority is in conversation with the affected family in order to look for possibilities to bring the religious convictions of the family into line if necessary by force."

Thornton has told WND many Christian families who object to the German government's sexualized education system are facing persecution, too.

Three other families recently released a letter pleading with Christians worldwide for prayer because of their "difficulties" — fines equal to thousands of dollars, frozen bank accounts and —

and Katharina Harder and Heiko and Anna Krautter and was released through the IHRG.

Thornton told WND the situations are becoming dire and parents more fearful about losing custody of their children because of what happened with Melissa.

"We are turning to all believing gospel Christians and Baptists in the CIS, Europe and America," the three sets of parents wrote. "We are three families of the church in Bischofswerda, and we homeschool our children. For that reason, we had to deal with numerous difficulties with the authorities."

The families cited fines of about $4,000 for the Harder and Krautter families and about $2,500 for the Schneider family — so far.

"Measures such as freezing our bank accounts, compulsory mortgages, insolvency of our self-employment are making our lives difficult," the letter said. "Even the custody of our children was to be taken from us, but GOD prevented it."

Now more fines are being imposed, and "even our homes are to be sold for that," the letter said.

"We ask that you pray for us and that you make your voice heard before the secular powers," said the letter.

"The German government is taking these actions simply because these parents homeschool their children," Thornton said. "With a very strong Christian faith and a conviction that they should be
allowed to raise their children in a Christian educational environment, these families are taking a stand, particularly regarding their right to oversee the sex education of their children as well as protect them from occult influences.”

He also said he was able to meet with members of the Brause family, about whom WND has reported. The German courts already have granted custody of the family's five children to social workers, although they had not yet moved them out of the family home.

Michael Farris, founder of the Home School Legal Defense Association, said the German government actually was creating for Melissa the "parallel society" which it claims to despise.

"When she was homeschooled [at home] Melissa got to see her friends, got to go to church, be out and about," he said. "Now she's being taught the same curriculum but she's entirely isolated.

"It's the German government that has robbed her of her normal life, including life with a family, which is supposed to be a child's right under the international law that Germany supposedly adheres to," he said.

Farris said he believes the German treatment of Christian homeschoolers is the "edge of the night that's coming" for believers.

"Germany is the only Western democracy taking this incredibly hard-line approach, but there are growing clouds on a number of national horizons," Farris told WND.

"The philosophy that the government knows best how to raise children is really becoming a worldwide phenomenon," Farris said. "I think Germany represents the edge of the night that's coming."

For the U.S., Farris has called for an amendment to the U.S. Constitution to protect the right of parents to educate their children at home.

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