'Youth worker' lies about homeschool student

A youth services social worker apparently has lied to a German television station about a 15-year-old homeschool student ordered into a psychiatric ward because of her “school phobia,” and another employee of the same state division shut down a scheduled 1-hour weekly visit with her family when her father showed her the statement.

According to the International Human Rights Group, who has a representative working with the family of Melissa Busekros in Germany, the incident yesterday was reported by Melissa's parents to Richard Guenther, director of European operations for IHRG, and his wife Ingrid.

Nearly two months ago the 15-year-old was taken by police away from her parents to a psychiatric ward after a social worker and his wife Ingrid, and another employee of the same state division shut down a scheduled 1-hour weekly visit with her family when her father showed her the statement.

Yesterday, the Busekros family arrived to see Melissa, thinking they were going to have a “normal” visit, “normal within the confines of the nightmare they find themselves facing,” according
to the IHRG. "Unfortunately, the social worker who is charged by the youth welfare office with facilitating these visits refused to leave the room during the family's time together."

So, working within the confines of a now-supervised visit, the family continued its meeting. And since Melissa is cut off from the outside world much of the time, her family tries to keep her updated.

"Hubert [Melissa's father] was using his laptop computer to show Melissa a video report on her situation aired by a German television station. On this video tape, a representative of the youth welfare office told the reporter that Melissa has never asked to be allowed to go home!" Joel Thornton, the IHRG president, told WND. "That's right, the youth welfare office is claiming that Melissa wants to stay in state custody rather than be with her family."

"They say this in spite of [as WND has reported] Melissa having told everyone she ever talked to that she wants to go home," Thornton said. "This includes the youth welfare workers, the judge, the psychiatrist at the mental ward where she was taken, her parents, attorneys, government officials who have visited her, and her foster family. She even sent a letter to the IHRG pleading for us to help bring her home; you can see the letter for yourself by going to this web link."

As the video report was playing, the government worker "forcefully closed Hubert's laptop," Thornton said. "She then called the police and ended the visit, even though their time was not up. She had Hubert removed from the property, declaring that he would no longer be permitted to come into the facility -- even to visit Melissa."

Thornton said the social worker indicated that any visits with Melissa now will be under supervision at all times and they will take place at another location.

"We also learned that the Busekros are now exercising their legal rights by bringing a civil action against the government officials who illegally removed Melissa from their home. This action will not be to seek money, but to have the government declare that he would no longer be permitted to come into the facility -- even to visit Melissa."

Thornton said the social worker indicated that any visits with Melissa now will be under supervision at all times and they will take place at another location.

"There is an increased fear among homeschoolers
about whether their children are next."

The court decision in the Saxony case, involving the Brause family, according to the IHRG, said the well-being of the children "can only be achieved by their attendance in the public schools."

The judge had concluded that the children were well-educated, but accused the parents of failing to provide their children with an education in a public school. The court noted that one of the daughters expressed the same opinions as her father, showing the siblings have not had the chance to develop "independent" personalities.

But the IHRG vowed a battle. "No parent should have to watch their children being forcibly removed from their home because of their religious beliefs," the organization's statement said.

The newest developments came even as the United Nations issued a critique of the Germany education system.

"...it should be noted that education may not be reduced to mere school attendance and that educational processes should be strengthened to ensure that they always and primarily serve the best interests of the child," the UN report said.

"Distance learning methods and homeschooling represent valid options which could be developed in certain circumstances, bearing in mind that parents have the right to choose the appropriate type of education for their children, as stipulated in article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights," it continued.

The letter Melissa wrote, to which IHRG was given access made it clear she wanted to be free from government oppression.

"I want to ask you for help, to get my right to go back to my family, as I wish," Melissa Busekros wrote in an English letter hand-delivered to the IHRG.

"I am not sick as the doctor said and my family is the best place for me to live," she said in her letter.

The IHRG said it continues working on several fronts to try to help Melissa and her family, with several German lawyers evaluating their options for an appeal, all the way to the European Court of Human Rights if needed.

The German community has started paying attention because of the international furor over Germany’s treatment of Melissa and her family.

"Christian activists say the case is an assault on religious liberties and the right of a Christian family to homeschool their daughter," said Speigel Online International's English-language edition.

"The case has been widely reported in Christian and conservative media in the United States, with some commentators comparing the authorities to Nazis. Activists are being encouraged to pray for the girl and petition German Chancellor Angela Merkel, while one Web site is even calling for a boycott on German goods," the report continued.

Wolfgang Drautz, consul general for the Federal Republican 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."
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 because of her “school phobia.”

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.”

Just last year the Human Rights Court for the European Union ruled in another similar case that any parental “wish” to have children grow up without the public school’s anti-Christian influences “could not take priority over compulsory school attendance.”

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 the religious convictions of the family into line”

homeschool organization in the U.S. with more than 80,000 member families, said the case is an “outrage.”

In 1937, the dictator said, “This Reich stands, and it is building itself up for the future, upon its youth. And this new Reich will give its youth to no one, but will itself take youth and give to youth its own education and its own upbringing.”

The IHRG said Americans also could contact:

Youth Welfare Office
Director: Edeltraud Höllerer
Rathaus
Rathausplatz 1
91052 Erlangen
Tel. +49 9131 86-2844
Fax +49 9131 86-2438
Mail:
edeltraud.hoellerer@stadt.erlangen.de
Or stadttjugendamt@stadt.erlangen.de
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