



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on January 28, 2010

U.S. Judge Grants Asylum for Homeschooling Family

A German homeschooling family is safe on United States soil now that a federal judge has granted them political asylum.

Immigration judge Lawrence O. Burman announced his decision on Tuesday in Memphis, Tennessee, according to a press release issued by the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA). The family applied for political asylum because the government of Germany would not let them homeschool their children.



“We can’t expect every country to follow our constitution,” said Judge Burman. “The world might be a better place if it did. However, the rights being violated here are basic human rights that no country has a right to violate.” Burman continued, “Homeschoolers are a particular social group that the German government is trying to suppress. This family has a well-founded fear of persecution.” He called such persecution “repellent to everything we believe as Americans.”

In 2008, Uwe Romeike and his wife, Hannelore, fled with their five children from Bissingen, Germany, where public school attendance is mandatory. Two years before the couple had decided to educate their children at home for religious and conscientious reasons. They received repeated threats from school and government officials until armed police officers, without written orders, forcibly removed the children from their home and escorted them to the government school. Soon afterward, Mr. and Mrs. Romeike managed to have their children excused from attending school based on a doctor’s finding that the situation caused “undue stress with psychosomatic consequences.” It was then the government began leveling fines on the family which in the span of 16 months totaled more than € 12,200 (about \$17,850) with threats the authorities would confiscate their property if they did not pay. The Romeikes appealed to German courts, but their appeals were denied. The government began proceedings take their home, so the family fled to Morristown, Tennessee, where they have lived since August of 2008.

“We are so grateful to the judge for his ruling,” said Mr. Romeike, who added, “We know many people, especially other German homeschoolers, have been praying for us. Their prayers and ours have been answered. We greatly appreciate the freedom to homeschool we now have in America and will be building our new life here.” According to [The Guardian](#), some of the Romeikes’ objections to the German public school curriculum were sex education and exposure to anti-Christian religions and symbols.

The Romeike case has international ramifications since, according to HSLDA, this is the first time



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homeschooling has been at the center of a political asylum case in the U.S. HSLDA attorney Mike Donnelly said the judge's ruling "is embarrassing for Germany, since a Western nation should uphold basic human rights, which include allowing parents to raise and educate their own children." He added, "We hope this decision will cause Germany to stop persecuting homeschoolers."

Unfortunately, the Romeikes' experience is not unusual. The HSLDA [legal brief](#) tells the sad story of persecution of German home schooling families. "The German Federal Constitutional Court has explicitly held that Germany is entitled to forbid homeschooling precisely because 'homeschoolers' represent a particular social group it may legitimately suppress." The government says suppression of homeschooling is necessary to counteract "the development of religiously or philosophically motivated 'parallel societies.'"

The brief goes on to explain authorities regularly fine German homeschoolers by garnishing wages and seizing property, including their homes. Some parents spend time in jail and lose custody of their children, while other couples separate "for years — the fathers remaining in Germany to provide for their families and mothers and children living in another country where they are able to safely homeschool." Dozens of families flee Germany every year.



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