



German Statesman Backs Homeschooling, Slams State for “Usurping” Kids

Home education advocates around the world are celebrating after a senior German political leader in Chancellor Angela Merkel’s Christian Democratic Union (CDU) became the highest ranking official in the nation to publicly express support for persecuted homeschooling families there. [Norbert Blüm](#), a federal lawmaker and former labor minister who served for over 15 years, said the modern educational system in Germany was “usurping” children while ignoring the important role of parents.



Under the National Socialist (Nazi) regime of mass-murderer Adolf Hitler, homeschooling became illegal throughout Germany in 1938. Like collectivists of all varieties, the Nazi tyrant viewed children as property of the state who needed to be properly indoctrinated with its philosophy. Even Boy Scouts were banned while children and adolescents were prodded into joining the [Hitler Youth](#).

Now, Scouting is legal and the Hitler Youth is nothing but a bitter memory for most Germans — a dark chapter in world history. Despite Hitler’s defeat in World War II, however, home education remains illegal throughout Germany even today. Brave families that attempt to educate their children at home in defiance of the ban have become the victims of ruthless persecution campaigns that continue to shock the world.

Some parents, [even recently](#), have actually [lost custody of their children](#) over home education, with the government claiming that it has a “legitimate” interest in quashing “parallel societies.” Other persecuted German families fled the country as political refugees, [seeking asylum in countries like the United States](#), Canada, New Zealand, and other European nations. Around the world, Germany’s Nazi-era home-education ban has become an international scandal in recent years.

For former Labor Minister Blüm, an award-winning human rights campaigner as well as a politician, the alarming trend has gone way too far. “Today I observe a total usurpation of children by school,” the respected political figure explained in a recent statement sent out to journalists all over the globe, drawing praise from human rights activists and home education leaders. “Children are exhausted by leaving home early in the morning and returning late in the evening.”

The controversial German ban on home education — unique in the Western world with the exception of Sweden, which [implemented its own draconian prohibition last year](#) — should be discontinued, according to Blüm. “I am against the state’s education monopoly and see parents responsibly homeschooling as a healthy response to an imperious school system,” the high-ranking lawmaker added.

Advocates for home education and human rights quickly celebrated Blüm’s statements, noting that the courageous statesman had become a source of hope to the hundreds of persecuted homeschooling families in Germany, as well as to those who have already fled abroad and others who would



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homeschool without the ban in place. The question now, as home education leaders from around the world prepare to [converge on Berlin](#) this week, is whether the German government is paying attention.

“Norbert Blüm has said what no one else in Germany has been willing to — that Germany’s iron-fisted monopoly on education is unhealthy for children and families,” explained attorney Michael Donnelly, director of international affairs for the powerful U.S.-based [Home School Legal Defense Association](#) (HSLDA). “I hope Angela Merkel and others in her party will listen to the wisdom and advice of this German statesman and take action soon so that parents in Germany can homeschool like millions around the world.”

HSLDA, the world’s largest home-education organization, has been working with persecuted Germans and Swedes for years as they battle authorities to secure the right to homeschool. The pressure has produced results, but there is a lot of work to be done, experts say. This week, though, the campaign for educational liberty is about to take a giant leap forward.

Blüm’s widely praised remarks came right before the start of the first [Global Home Education Conference](#) (GHEC), set to take place in Berlin from late October to early November. Policy makers and homeschooling leaders from around the world will be meeting to join forces in the battle to preserve and expand educational freedom, and particularly the human right to homeschool. *The New American* magazine and other journalists will be there to cover the event as well.

Aside from the German government’s hostility to the internationally recognized right to homeschool, the recent wave of persecution unleashed against embattled homeschoolers in Sweden is also expected to be at the top of the GHEC agenda. While a Jewish homeschooling family in the Swedish city of Gothenburg [recently secured the right to homeschool during an appeal](#), other families have not fared as well. Indeed, in many cases, the persecution is growing.

With the recently adopted ban on home education, many homeschooling families have been forced to flee from Sweden to live as exiles in foreign countries. Others continue to defy the widely criticized new education law, but authorities have been cracking down hard as part of a bizarre and ruthless campaign to ensure that all children in Sweden are educated in accordance with the deeply controversial government curriculum.

[Swedish Home Education Association](#) (ROHUS) chief Jonas Himmelstrand, who [escaped from Sweden earlier this year](#) amid threats from local officials, is confident that the homeschooling movement in his native land will outlast the current government. Preparing for the upcoming conference, Himmelstrand, also serving as the chairman of the GHEC board, praised Blüm’s remarks as highly significant.

“Blüm is the highest ranking political figure in Germany to recognize the need for reform in Germany’s view on parental freedoms in education,” said Himmelstrand, an internationally acclaimed expert on Swedish family policies. “As a former minister of labor under Helmut Kohl, Blüm’s remarks can hardly be ignored by his party. We are very excited how the goals of the conference to engage policymakers to have a positive impact on home education are being met even now.”

There will be other heavyweights from Sweden and Germany at the GHEC as well. Among the speakers scheduled to attend are attorney Ruby Harrold-Claesson, chairman of the pro-family Nordic Committee for Human Rights, and German Parliamentarian Patrick Meinhardt, education spokesman for the liberty-minded Free Democratic Party parliamentary group and a leader in the European movement for freedom.

Both Sweden and Germany have come under heavy criticism for the heavy-handed homeschooling



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persecution that opponents equate with totalitarianism, and the outcry is expected to keep growing. In 2010, a U.S. immigration judge even [granted a persecuted German home-educating family asylum in America](#) to escape from the ruthless campaign being waged in their native land. The ruling was celebrated worldwide.

“We can’t expect every country to follow our Constitution. 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,” explained federal U.S. Judge Lawrence Burman in his decision, adding that the appalling violations were “repellent to everything we believe as Americans” while echoing the pleas of human rights campaigners. “Homeschoolers are a particular social group that the German government is trying to suppress. This family has a well-founded fear of persecution.”

Activists hope that with the increasing international and domestic pressure, Germany, Sweden, and other governments even considering an assault on educational freedom will re-think their positions. Even if change does not come immediately, though, the quickly growing international homeschooling movement has shown that it will stand firm in the face of persecution, no matter what the cost.

Photo of Robert Blüm in 1988

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