



## INTERNATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY FORUM

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One facet of religious freedoms people do not often see so readily because it is categorized more frequently with family rights, is the attack on parental rights. However, when analyzed closely, this attack is amongst the most dangerous because it strikes at the rights of parents to raise their own children according to their own religious and moral convictions. What is really at stake in this fight are the hearts and minds of our youngest and most vulnerable. Ideologues from the left who wage this war see that if they can convert the next generation without interference from parents, then they will have won the battle over social policy. As John Dewey wrote in 1930 regarding implementing a mandatory radical secular curriculum into schools: „Education is thus our most powerful ally of humanism, and every public school is a school of humanism. What can the theistic Sunday school, meeting for an hour once a week, and teaching only a fraction of the children, do to stem the tide of a five-day program of humanistic teachings?“

In the past five years alone, in my practice with the Alliance Defense Fund [an alliance of more than 2000 allied Christian lawyers dedicated to the protection of religious liberty, family and the right to life], I have been involved in cases evidencing to what extent the state will go to exercise dominion over our children. Some examples of my cases include a 15 year old girl who was put in a mental institution in Nuremburg for what German social services diagnosed as „schoolphobia“. In reality her so-called „illness“ was only that her parents wanted to home educate her. Also in Germany, I represent 12 parents who actually were all sentenced to jail for refusing to allow their 8-9 year old children to attend mandatory „sexual education“ classes which they deemed to sexualize their very young children at far too young of an age. The classes missed were over the course of only two days during which time no core curriculum was taught. In all cases the mothers and fathers were sentenced to prison, with some serving more than 40 days



each and others serving multiple sentences. In Sweden we represent a family who had their seven year old child taken away from them for home educating. The shocking aspect of this case was that the young child, Domenic Johansson, fulfilled all of the legal requirements of being home educated under Swedish law at the time. Despite this, the police and social services took Domenic from his parents when they were onboard a plane heading to India where the family was to begin missionary work with orphanages. Also in Sweden, another family was fined over 20, 000 € simply for wanting to home educate their daughter who suffers from Orchid's Syndrome; a condition treatable in a home school environment and also a condition of hyper-shyness where forced school attendance could cause unspeakable trauma. In the end, the family was forced to flee Sweden in order to prevent their daughter being taken from them and forced into a state school.

The law is very clear on the issue of what rights parents have in raising their children. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly states that among the most important rights of the child, besides the right to life, are precisely the right to parental love and the right to education. The Convention also explicitly states that parents, being the ones who love their children most, are those most called upon to decide on the education of their children. This guarantee requires that the State respect the right of parents to educate their children according to their own religious or philosophical beliefs (beliefs which would include pedagogical beliefs). This right has also been codified by Article 18(4) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 5(1)(b) of the Convention Against Discrimination in Education, Protocol 1, Article 2 of the European Convention of Human Rights, Article 26(3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Let me make clear, governments cannot discriminate against people, including parents, simply because of their Christian convictions. The work of Spanish NGO's like Professionals for Ethics in gathering complaints and bringing them to the attention of the government and empowering parents to bring court cases to ensure their legal parental rights in the area of education is a wonderful example of best practices with hugely successful results. These efforts must be replicated in other countries with oppressive education systems such as Germany, Sweden and Bulgaria. Thank you.

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