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**WorldNetDaily Exclusive**

## Homeschoolers seek asylum from Nazi-era law

'We left family, our home ... but the freedom is worth it'

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Posted: November 17, 2008  
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By Drew Zahn

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WorldNetDaily

The [Homeschool Legal Defense Association](#) is helping a family with an unusual, first-of-its-kind application: political asylum in the United States from Germany's oppressive homeschooling laws.

The Uwe and Hannelore Romeike family fled their native Bissingen, Germany, to escape persecution under a Nazi-era law requiring all children to attend public school to avoid "the emergence of parallel societies based on separate philosophical convictions" that could be taught by parents at home.

[WND reported two years ago](#) on the day police knocked on the Romeike's door and forcibly escorted their children to public school.

The family fled Germany and this summer arrived in Tennessee, where they hope they will be permitted to make a permanent home.

Speaking of their new life in Tennessee, Mrs. Romeike told HSLDA, "The freedom we have to homeschool our children is wonderful. ... We don't have to worry about looking over our shoulder anymore, wondering when the youth welfare officials will come or how much money we have to pay in fines."

Mr. Romeike added, "We left family, our home and a wonderful community in Germany. But the freedom is worth it. We hope that our example may pave the way for other families. It is wrong for Germany to persecute homeschoolers. But if they do not want the best and brightest and those who seek freedom, then perhaps the United States will benefit."

*(Story continues below)*

Michael P. Farris, cofounder of HSLDA, told WND in an interview last year Germany is the only Western democracy "taking this incredibly hard-line approach."

"Germany's behavior in this area is the edge of the coming night," Farris said. "You don't expect to apply for political asylum from a Western country."



Michael Farris, founder of Home School Legal Defense Association

Political asylum, HSLDA explains, is available to people already in the U.S. who fear persecution in their home country because of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion. HSLDA contends homeschoolers in Germany certainly fit that description.

"German homeschoolers, of which there are few because of the persecution, are fined thousands of dollars, sent to prison or have the custody of their children taken away," says Michael P. Donnelly, HSLDA's contact attorney for Germany, on the organization's website.

"Many of these families have fled Germany when threatened with the custody of their children," he says. "Some have told me that they are willing to go to jail for their beliefs if they have to, but they will not allow the state to take their children. This year alone, nearly a dozen families have fled this in the face of this harsh persecution."

WND has reported on German homeschoolers who have been fined the equivalent of thousands of dollars, have been threatened with jail and have even watched their children be confined to a psychiatric hospital, diagnosed with "school phobia."

"While there are slight glimmers of hope, the reality for homeschoolers in Germany today is grim," says Donnelly. "Scores of other families have been fined tens of thousands of dollars with their bank accounts confiscated and other property seized – just because they homeschool. If that isn't a well-founded fear of persecution, I don't know what is. Many of these families have fled the country in the face of this oppression."

According to the U.S. Justice Department's Executive Office for Immigration Review, nearly 55,000 applications for political asylum were received in 2007, with nearly 13,000 granted. Last year, according to the report, there were 20 applications from Germany, with four granted.

The HSLDA website states that the organization hopes sponsoring an asylum application will bring the persecution to the attention of American and German officials. A successful asylum application, the website states, "would also provide a path to safety for German families to escape persecution by immigrating to the United States."

"By standing with our persecuted brothers and sisters in Germany," says HSLDA President J. Michael Smith, "we hope to inspire American homeschoolers not to take their freedom lightly, but to remember that freedom requires sacrifice. We also hope that with our encouragement and support, change for the better can happen. Our freedoms have long been an inspiration to others all over the world."

The HSLDA is a nonprofit advocacy group defending and advancing the constitutional rights of parents to direct the education of their children. With more than 80,000 families who are members, it is the largest homeschool association in the world.

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