

Bundeskanzleramt
Frau Bundeskanzlerin Dr. Angela Merkel
Willy-Brandt-Strasse 1
D-10557 Berlin

OPEN LETTER

Dear Ms Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel

We miss our children very much. They were separated from us a long time ago by German Courts of Law and **the Jugendamt***. Here, on behalf of many other parents who are suffering under the same circumstances, we would like to explain our particular personal circumstances to you:

Rosano Gonçalves da Silva, Brasil

I am a Brazilian mother whose son, Léon, after eight years, was suddenly separated from me and my daughter Morena and taken away from our home. He was immediately given to his German father. We all live in the same city, Düsseldorf.

Our tragedy began just at that point in time, after every visit he made to us - twice a month - Léon cried bitterly when he had to go back to his father. Morena missed her brother so much that she suffered from attacks of unconsciousness. This situation and Léon's bad state of health has been completely ignored by the German Authorities now for years.

Our suffering has been going on for five years now. For two and a half years now, we have not been allowed to have any contact at all with Léon. There are no words which can express the pain we experience as a result of this separation, our desire to see him, our concern about Léon's physical and psychic condition; we miss the freedom to see Léon and, also, to phone him whenever we would like to. This brings us to tears every day.

This is why we want to ask the (United Nations) for its help: In the name of my children and all other Brazilian parents whose hearts have been broken.

We want our children back!

Please help us to get back together again!

* CEED: According to the recommendation made to the Europarliament the word "Jugendamt" should not be translated into "juvenile authorities". The German "Jugendamt" is a local political entity to supervise the judge of the family Court.

Marinella Columbo, Italy

I am a citizen of Italy, but, above all, a mother. Germany, the country which then fascinated me so much, whose language I liked, whose philosophers and culture I had studied, had suddenly turned into a prison for me. I came to Germany because I liked the country, I had the freedom to make this choice. But I don't have the freedom to leave Germany again any more.

The German Authorities have always considered me to be a good and faultless mother up to that point in time when my husband and I separated. Even worse, this was valid until the day when my employer sent me to foreign parts.

My children, the fruits of love who grew in my body, were taken away from me in a deceitful manner. They were separated from me in a really perverse way. They were deprived of the love, affection and security that they have always needed and which they have always needed and always received from me. Along with my children, my future was taken from me.

I cannot accept the pain that this has caused us. Even less can I accept that my children will have to grow up without the Italian part of their life. We have the need to kiss each other, take each other in our arms and to hug each other. I need to feel the warmth of our children, to see them and to accompany and support them as they grow up. Just as I need them, they need me.

If this cruelty that has been done to us is lawful or not is not important. It is in any case appallingly inhuman to the core. This is not only about our agony, it is also about the destruction of a whole family.

Oliver Karrer, France

"Daddy, can you ask the policeman if he could open the door, I want to go home!" My son, who was four years old at that time, posed me this question as the French Authorities held us in custody for 20 hours in 1999, on the request of German lawyers. He was extradited in good faith to the judicial authorities in Germany, in accordance with the law. This was the last time that I was able to have any direct contact with my only child, my beloved Julian, or even speak to him. In France, no-one wanted to believe me. I couldn't do anything about it. There was no case put before a court of law before this happened. Five years later I was divorced by a German Family Court. My presence was not required.

I knew that, in Germany I would not have any rights and that I would never see my child again. This breach of international law by the Germans was not expected by the French Authorities. After the many years of grief and helplessness that I experienced afterwards, a feeling of absolute injustice came up in me which is irrepressible.

With time, I lost all my friends, my profession, my house, my social contacts and, almost, my life itself. All the values that I had believed in up to this point just vanished into thin air. Up until this loss, I had always believed in Germany.

Julian was a child with German-French nationality who spoke both languages and who felt at home in both cultures. Today, Julian is a German citizen who only speaks German. I was not and never will be able to experience my son as a child. In order to bear this agony, I need to explain my situation to all parents and all nations so that we, all together, can get rid of this injustice.

Ms Merkel, German Lawyers and **JtheJugendamts** are on the best way to bringing the whole nation into discredit.

Sebastian Weygand, Germany

As a citizen of Germany, I can assure you that I was, without any doubt, once proud of my country. I had no doubt as far as the constitutional legality of our nation was concerned. I was all the more appalled when, over the years, I had to see what was being done to children and parents, mostly of other nationalities, in our country.

In recent times, I have come into contact with many cases in which people who love and need each other have been torn apart, apparently arbitrarily and beyond any international standards.

My whole sympathies are for those parents and children who have been separated by the German Authorities; without any hope of being able to see each other during the coming Christmas season. I think about those children who had to live through a desolate childhood because they were always told that their parents didn't want to have anything to do with them any more - while, at the same time, these distressed parents actually sought to find out where their children had been hidden.

I do not understand how the justice and the **JtheJugendamt** could be accessories to the separated German parents in their tearing apart of sisters and brothers and permanently keeping them away from one of their parents.

On the basis of several cases that I personally know of, I have doubts concerning the constitutional legality of such a social marginalisation or even criminalisation of a foreign parent.

Especially because parents and children of other nationalities are particularly affected and as Germany is apparently not in a position to supervise its **JuJugendamtities** appropriately, we are appealing to you and the German Government: Clear the way towards international or at least European supervision over this institution.

Yours sincerely

Copies of this letter are being sent to several governments and international organisations.

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