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Armed police turn up at family home with a battering ram to seize their children after they defy Germany's ban on home schooling

- **Youngsters aged from seven to 14 taken from their home in Darmstadt**
- **Judge said to have authorised force 'against the children' if necessary**

By [Damien Gayle](#)

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Armed police in Germany launched a terrifying raid on a family's home to seize their four children after they defied the country's ban on home schooling.

A team of 20 social workers, police officers, and special agents stormed the home of Dirk and Petra Wunderlich because they refused to send their children to state schools.

The youngsters were taken to unknown locations after officials allegedly ominously promised the parents that they would not be seeing them again 'any time soon'.



Seized by the state: The Wunderlich family with Mike Farris, chairman of the Home Schooling Legal Defense Association. The children aged seven to 14 were taken away after their parents defied a ban on homeschooling

The only legal grounds for the removal of the children, aged from seven to 14, were the family's insistence on home schooling their children, with no other allegations of abuse or neglect.

According to court documents obtained and translated by the Home Schooling Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), officials did not even allege that the parents had failed to provide an adequate education.

The raid took place on Thursday morning at 8am at the Wunderlichs' home near Darmstadt, 25 miles south of Frankfurt, in south-west Germany.

Citing the parents' failure to cooperate 'with the authorities to send the children to school', the judge even authorised the use of force 'against the children' if necessary, according to court documents cited by the HSLDA.

Describing the moment police arrived at his home, Mr Wunderlich said: 'I looked through a window and saw many people, police, and special agents, all armed.

'They told me they wanted to come in to speak with me.



Attack: Social workers, police officers, and special agents stormed the home of Dirk and Petra Wunderlich in Darmstadt after they refused to send their children to state schools (file photo)

'I tried to ask questions, but within seconds, three police officers brought a battering ram and were about to break the door in, so I opened it.'

He went on: 'The police shoved me into a chair and wouldn't let me even make a phone call at first.'

'It was chaotic as they told me they had an order to take the children. At my slightest movement the agents would grab me, as if I were a terrorist.'

'You would never expect anything like this to happen in our calm, peaceful village. It was like a scene out of a science fiction movie.'

'Our neighbours and children have been traumatised by this invasion.'

The Wunderlichs have, over the past four years, moved from country to country in the European Union looking for a place to where they could freely homeschool their children.

Although they found refuge from homeschool persecution in France, Mr Wunderlich was unable to find work, and last year the family had to return to Germany.

'They weren't being nice at all. When my wife tried to give my daughter a kiss and a hug goodbye, one of the special agents roughly elbowed her out of the way and said — "It's too late for that"'

Dirk Wunderlich

Within days of the family registering their presence in Darmstadt, authorities initiated a criminal truancy case, and just months later city's 'Youth Welfare Office' was granted legal custody of the children.

They were allowed to remain with their parents after it was judged that they were being well treated, but authorities seized the youngsters' passports to stop them again leaving the country.

Mr Wunderlich said that he and his wife had been left devastated by the authorities' decision to take their children. He said that his 14-year-old daughter Machsejah had to be forcibly taken out of the home.

'When I went outside, our neighbour was crying as she watched. I turned around to see my daughter being escorted as if she were a criminal by two big policemen,' he said.

'They weren't being nice at all. When my wife tried to give my daughter a kiss and a hug goodbye, one of the special agents roughly elbowed her out of the way and said — "It's too late for that".

'What kind of government acts like this?'

Mrs Wunderlich said her heart was 'shattered'.

'We are empty. We need help. We are fighting, but we need help,' she said.

Mike Donnelly, HSLDA's director for international affairs, accused German authorities of acting in a way reminiscent of a 'darker time' in the country's history.

'My question to the political leadership of Germany is: How long will you permit these kinds of brutal acts to be perpetrated against German families?' he said.

'Why is it so important to you to force people into your state schools? The echo of this act rings from a darker time in German history.

'When will leaders stand up and make changes so that brutality to children like the Wunderlichs no longer happens because of homeschooling?

'Isn't there any German statesman willing to stand up for what is right anywhere in Germany?'

No German officials were available to comment on the case.