

ALIANȚA FAMILIILOR DIN ROMANIA

ALLIANCE OF ROMANIA'S FAMILIES

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The Honorable Tove Bruvik Westberg
Ambassador of the Kingdom of Norway
Royal Norwegian Embassy
Str. Atena 18
Bucharest

Via facsimile transmission
40-21-306-9890
and via electronic delivery

Re.: Parental Rights Violations in Norway
The Marius and Ruth Bodnariu Family

Dear Mr. Ambassador, Your Excellency:

Greetings! I am writing on behalf of the Alliance of Romania's Families, a grassroots movement which promotes pro-family and pro-life policies and views in Romania and internationally. We also promote parental rights, among them the fundamental right of parents to live with and raise their biological children.

In recent weeks we have learned, with great concern, about the gross violation of the parental rights of Marius and Ruth Bodnariu. We have been in daily contact with the Bodnariu Family, attorneys, and other persons with direct knowledge of relevant facts and are very much disturbed by what we conclude is a de facto confiscation by the Norwegian authorities of the Bodnariu Family's five (5) children. The children are small, from three (3) months old to seven (7) years. We are also aware of the recent decision of a Norwegian court to affirm the confiscation of the children and to severely restrict the biological parents' access to them. It appears that the biological parents are only allowed to see the youngest of the children twice a week for two (2) hours. Dissociating a three-month old baby from his natural, biological and permanent bond with his biological mother is harmful to the child beyond measure and extremely traumatic to the parents, especially the mother. In this situation, the best interest of the child is not served, but the state has inflicted upon him grievous emotional harm. This, in our opinion, is a violation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The court also decreed that the mother can only see her boys, of whom one is nearly five (5) and the other is two (2), once a week. To our knowledge, neither parent is currently allowed to see the oldest of the children. The children have been placed, we have been told, in foster care with other families. Our organization does not believe in, and in fact rejects, social parenting and psychological parenting. We believe in biological parenting except in the most extreme of circumstances. We promote the primacy of biological parenting. We promote the right of biological parents to raise their biological children without state intervention. Once the state hijacks this relationship, the whole of society suffers and slides down a slippery slope.

We are cognizant that courts typically are to be accorded some deference and latitude in making their rulings. But even courts can sometimes be wrong, especially where, as here, the authorities provide evidence to courts which is misleading, obtained by questionable means, and, therefore, unreliable. Our communications with the persons directly involved in the case reveal an excessive zeal on the part of Norwegian authorities to secure incriminating evidence from the Bodnariu children against their parents. Leading questions were asked of them with the apparent design to inculpate the parents. This is an improper use of state authority, especially where, as here, it involves very young children.

We are further concerned that, to put it bluntly, the punishment does not fit the crime. In our opinion, the reaction of Norwegian authorities has been extremely subjective, an incredible display of totalitarian

extremism. The Bodnariu family has been accused of spanking its children. Yet, the authorities translated this accusation into child abuse, which is the farthest from the truth. Biological parents have the inherent right to reasonably discipline their children. The fact that Norway has banned the corporal punishment of children does not mean Norway is right in this matter and the rest of the world wrong. In fact, the opposite might well be true. We note that according to *the 2015 Good Childhood Report* the happiest children in the world are reported to be Romania's children. Norway is behind in sixth place [The Good Childhood Report 2015 <http://goodchildhood2015.childrenssociety.org.uk/>] Reasonable discipline of children is a parental prerogative which the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has not abrogated. Though Norway might wish to be a step ahead of the Convention in this regard, the Convention does not give it the right to confiscate children from their biological parents. The reaction of the Norwegian authorities has been disproportionate to the improprieties the Bodnariu parents are alleged to have committed. It has been irrational and extreme.

Please also consider that Romania only escaped totalitarianism about a generation ago. Some of us recall, with horror, similar practices of the communist state, in Romania, the Soviet Union, and elsewhere in the totalitarian world, including Nazi Germany. In Romania, the communist state interrogated impressionable children to secure incriminating evidence against their parents. Not rare were the instances where, as a result of such evidence, the communist state separated the parents from their children, raised them in state-run institutions and turned them into reliable agents of the political police and of the totalitarian state. The excessive zeal of Norway's Barnevernet reminds the whole of Romania of the inhumane practices of its totalitarian past. We can only hope that Norway will not drift in this direction.

Still commenting on the excessive zeal of Norway's Barnevernet, we have been informed that Norwegian authorities have made highly inappropriate comments to the Bodnariu family about their faith and creed, as well as comments that "your children don't miss you." The Bodnariu are Christians, as are more than 99% of all Romanians. Romania is home to 20 million Romanian Christians. The diaspora is home to 5 million Romanian Christians. The Republic of Moldova is home to 3 million Romanian Christians. In derisively commenting on the faith of the Bodnariu Family the Norwegian authorities have insulted 28 million Romanian Christians worldwide. Norway has lost the Bodnariu case in the court of public opinion. It will take at least a generation before Norway regains its respect with the Romanian people. For the next decade or so whenever the people of Romania will think or talk about Norway, the confiscation of the Bodnariu children will inevitably come to mind. This is a scar imposed by Norway's Barnevernet not only on the Bodnariu Family but on all of us Romanians.

In recent weeks we have additionally become aware that Norway seemingly targets ethnic families for similar treatment, not only Romanian. East European families and families from outside of Europe have also complained that Norway systematically violates parental rights in separating, on a whim sometimes, their children from their biological parents. There are even more serious allegations leveled against Barnevernet that it separates ethnic children from their parents by design to ensure the children grow up Norwegian, uprooted from their ethnic, religious, or racial identities. We can only deplore such policies and respectfully ask that they be stopped.

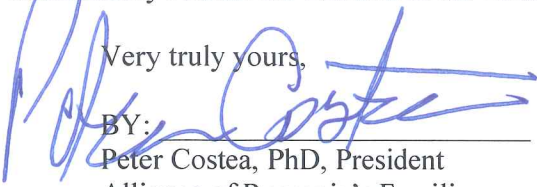
So, it is with these concerns in mind that we register this note of protest with your office. What happened to the Bodnariu family in Norway would not have occurred in today's Romania, a country which only a generation ago freed itself of the totalitarian regime. Therefore, we encourage the Norwegian Government to revisit its policies on parental rights and to protect them.

We express our solidarity with the Bodnariu Family and with all families who have been victimized by Norway's Barnevernet. We call upon the Norwegian authorities to immediately reunite Marius and Ruth Bodnariu with their children and to cease violating their parental rights.

We close by assuring you that, in spite of the sometimes spirited nature of this correspondence, the people of Romania harbor feelings of friendship and admiration for the people of Norway. Feelings of respect and solidarity as citizens of our common home, Europe. Every Romanian child sooner or later reads the works of the great Norwegian writer Henrik Ibsen. Our nations are also connected by our Christian faith. We hope the

people of Norway will understand our concerns and will grant our plea and the pleas of many others to immediately reunite the children of the Bodnariu Family with their biological parents.

Very truly yours,



BY: _____

Peter Costea, PhD, President
Alliance of Romania's Families