

Berlin Authorities Endorse Forced Psychiatric Treatment of a Transsexual Girl

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Abstract

A German child, who has been living as a girl since she started school nearly seven years ago, is to be committed to the Charité University hospital in Berlin - where she will be “cured” of her transsexualism by being encouraged to take up boyish pursuits. This follows a ruling by the Berlin Court of [...]

Article

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This follows a ruling by the Berlin Court of Appeal that Alex Kaminski (name changed) may be separated from her mother, with whom she now lives, and forcibly moved to a psychiatric ward in the Charité.

The court has agreed with the view of a nurse in the Berlin Youth Office and Klaus Beier, the chief medical officer at the Charité that despite living as a girl for many years, Alex’ transsexuality has merely been induced by her mother.

Following treatment at the Charité, where behaviours that more closely match behaviours appropriate to the biological sex of the child will be encouraged, Alex would then be transferred to the care of a foster family.

The situation arises because Alex’ mother and father have been separated for some time now, and key decisions on her welfare have fallen to the Berlin Youth Office. Despite the fact that Alex has lived as a girl since beginning primary school, Alex’ father has recently made representations to the Youth Office arguing that her identification as female is entirely induced by her mother.

This view was supported by a nurse in the Youth Office - and led to Alex’ initial institutionalization when she objected to having her gender questioned and, unwisely, may have expressed the view that she would rather die than grow up as a boy.

In the course of the hearing, Alex and her mother, supported by Hamburg sex researcher Hertha Richter-Appelt requested that a formal psychiatric assessment be carried out. This was rejected as an “outdated point of view”. Rather, the court held that Alex’ status could be determined on an outpatient basis alone.

The court’s decision was soundly criticized by Alex’s lawyer, who called the decision “appalling”, adding

that nowhere in literature is there support for the view “that transsexualism could be ‘induced’.

They went on: “This is an invention of the nurse, who would have talked only once for an hour with the child, whose own views on the matter they have ignored.

Attorney and family now plan an appeal to the pre-Federal Constitutional Court, which may decide matters very swiftly in custody matter.

Growing outrage

Alarm over this case has been growing both locally and internationally. On Monday, a demonstration of around 250 members of “Action Alliance Alex” took place in front of the Berlin Senate Department for Youth, with the motto: “Stop the forced institutionalisation of Alex - now!”.

A spokesperson for this group said: “This story is not unique. Institutions such as the Youth Office and the Charité have been using coercion and psychological pressure to enforce their views on individuals! Race and gender identity is a right, not a disease. ”

During this demonstration, a delegation was received by the State Secretary responsible for the Youth Department. She appeared to acknowledge for the first time the seriousness of the case, and while the State Department cannot directly order the Berlin Youth Office in matters of this sort, but it has agreed to put itself forward as mediator in this issue. A roundtable involving all parties is now expected to follow.

A petition is also under way at online site change.org.

Addressed to the Mayor of Berlin Klaus Wowereit, it says: “This young girl will be taught how her feelings are wrong, and pushed more into the denial that has claimed the lives of so many transgendered people, thanks to biased decisions by the Youth Welfare office this child’s life could be irrevocably ruined.” So far, nearly 12,000 people have signed.

The action committee concerned with this issue brings together around 15 different organisations and meets on alternate Sundays: its next meeting is scheduled for 1 April at the offices of TransInterQueer in Berlin.

cross-posted from Jane Fae’s blog

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