

Pestalozzi Trust

(IT6377/98)

**the legal defence fund for home
and civil education**



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Att. : David Diaz (consejeroepol@za.embacuba.cu)

Embassy of Cuba in South Africa

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Dear Mr. Diaz

The Pestalozzi Trust is a civil rights organisation established in 1998 in order to protect the rights of parents who choose to educate their children in the context of the family, as articulated in art. 26(3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Right: *"Parents has a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children."*

During the period of apartheid, home education was illegal in South Africa. The parents Andre and Bokkie Meintjies were jailed in 1994, and their children were placed in an orphanage, because they educated their children at home. However a few years later the Nelson Mandela government legalised home education in South Africa with the publication of the South African School Act in 1996, in which provision was made for home education in sec. 51. Since it was legalised, homeschooling has grown exponentially in South Africa, and is widely recognised as an successful proven alternative to public schooling. Tens of thousands of parents will be able to testify how home education serves the best interests of their children.

We are writing to you today to ask for your assistance for the protection of this important human right in Cuba. We are pleading with you to act and to respect and protect this right in the case of the Rigal family. Senor Ramon Rigal is a pastor and father who, along with his wife have decided to home educate their children. On February 21 at 8:15 p.m., two police officers showed up at Ramón and Adya's home with the intent to take them to the police station. After pleading with the police not to take them because their children were home, Ramón offered to that he and his wife would appear at the office later. When they arrived at the police station, the Rigals were formally arrested and charged with *"acting contrary to the normal development of a minor"* and were detained the entire day as well as the next day. Both parents are now required to check in with the police every week in person until their trial.

The Pestalozzi Trust would like to urge Cuban government to protect the human rights of the Rigal family and create an opportunity for children in Cuba to receive the benefits that tens of thousands of South African children are receiving. In the United States alone there are over two million students who are educated by their parents at home. Countries such as Australia, Canada, France, South Africa, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom report significant numbers of homeschooled students, ranging from tens to hundreds of thousands.

Yours sincerely

CE van Oostrum

(Executive Officer)