



Sending list:

Social committee of the Riksdag (Riksdagens socialutskott)
Parties of the Swedish Parliament through their group leaders
Ministry of Health and Social Affairs
Ministry of Justice
Family Law and Parental Support Authority (MFoF)
The National Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen)
The Ombudsman for Children in Sweden (Barnombudsmannen)

Notification to:

Associations for adoptees
Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKL)

February 13, 2018

Petition to the Swedish Riksdag and Government from the Association of Ethiopian and Eritrean Adoptees:

Adoption begins with an adoption process, but the life of the adoptee begins at birth.

On February 27, 2018, the Swedish Government plans to put forward the bill “Modernare adoptionsregler” (*More modern rules for adoption*) based on a report from the year 2009 (SOU 2009:61). The aim is to strengthen the child rights perspective and to create better conditions for adoption processes to be efficient and have higher legal certainty. To claim that something is modern implies that it is up to date. However, the Association of Ethiopian and Eritrean Adoptees, AEF¹ opines that this bill gives evidence to a persisting outdated view upon inter-country adoptions. The AEF argues that it is time for a shift of paradigm and for a recognition of the exceptional position of adoptees.

An adoption begins with an adoption process, but the life of the adoptee begins at birth. The members of the AEF are adults, active on all levels of society and many are also parents themselves. Our collective knowledge and experience within the AEF today, points to the fact that inter-country adoption is a lifelong process, where the adoptee should be in focus. We claim, that it is with that in mind, that future legislation should take responsibility for both legal and psychosocial issues, in relation to the adoption process as well the living conditions of adoptees in Sweden.

We, who were adopted through inter-country adoptions, were not clean sheets of paper who were born at Arlanda Airport. We have biological parents, just like everyone else. But due to the adoption our ties were cut off and we had to leave essential parts of our origins behind. In our luggage, each one of us carried unique experiences. As it turned out, this luggage was something that others were allowed to lose, exchange, forget or deliberately hide away from us, without any penalties. A luggage, that can be a central link for many adoptees who seek their roots in order to create a clearer picture of themselves and their own history.

Regardless of what luggage we arrived to Sweden with, we came to face different challenges as adoptees. These challenges were anything from developing attachment bonds to new caregivers and to process past separations and/or trauma, to looking different from the Swedish appearance norms and growing up lacking role models from our ethnic, cultural and historic origin. We all have

¹ The AEF (Adopterade etiopiers och eritreaners förening), is a national NGO for adult adoptees from Ethiopia and Eritrea in Sweden. The AEF was founded in 1996 and is politically and religiously independent. The association has approximately 50 members and arranges various activities to shed light on experiences of being an adult adoptee from Ethiopia and Eritrea in Sweden. Web page: aefinfo.wordpress.com

different experiences of our adoptions and our life as adoptees, but national, as well as international studies have found adoptees to run a higher risk for psychosocial illness and socioeconomic difficulties. Therefore, support for adoptees should be given with regard to their specific life conditions.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasizes the importance of the child's right to his or her identity, name, family relations, ethnicity, language and culture. Therefore, society should offer adoptees and adoptive parents support in these issues. Remarkably enough, according to the committee report from the Council of Legislation, questions on advocacy and support for adoptees who wish to seek their roots, were not issues included in relation to the bill "Modernare adoptionsregler". How can Sweden, so consistently, deny adoptees their rights, we wonder?

Just over a year ago, the Swedish Riksdag decided to raise the adoption subsidy handed to parents who have finalized an adoption process, from SEK 40 000 to SEK 75 000. From the AEF's point of view, the bill "Modernare adoptionsregler", is consistently based on the perspective of the parent, whilst the issues of child rights concerning the rights to receive support and guidance for adoptees, is absent. Therefore, we submit the following demands on the Swedish Riksdag and Government. Our demands are based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and aim to illuminate the exceptional position of adoptees and strengthening their rights in Sweden. The AEF urges that these demands will be subject to significantly more modern reports and decisions than we have met so far.

Eight demands to strengthen the rights of adoptees and modernize adoptions in Sweden:

- 1) To create better conditions for the rule of law in the adoption procedure by allowing the state instead of non-governmental adoption organizations, to mediate adoptions.
- 2) That the right to home language instruction should be regarded as a special support which, by law, also should include adoptees in Sweden. The right shall apply in accordance with a lifetime perspective on the adopted child's special needs of the mother tongue. It should apply regardless of whether the language is spoken in the Swedish home or not. The law should include a possibility of appeal to a higher body.
- 3) That education on adoption issues should be included in all vocational education within health care, nursing, social services, education and law.
- 4) That municipalities and counties shall offer health promoting initiatives for adoptees and those closest related to the adoptee, through for example open preschools, further education for professionals who encounter adoptees, group meetings and ombudsmen who monitor the rights of adoptees.
- 5) That adoptees should be entitled to qualified support and conversational therapy for adoption-related issues, with high-cost protection within the municipality and county in which they reside.
- 6) That recurring follow-up studies at population level are implemented, to illuminate adoptees in relation to health, integration, racism and discrimination, education and the labor market and social factors.
- 7) That adoptees, in connection with searching for their roots, have the right to receive both practical support (such as legal advice, interpretation/translation and information seeking) and

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financial support (for expenses such as flights, accommodation, DNA tests, insurance and vaccinations).

8) The adoption process, and the documentation of it, must be conducted in an ethical manner with legal certainty, focusing on the best interest of the child and maintaining clarity and transparency at all stages. The forthcoming government bill is, according to the AEF, based on a report that ignores knowledge about the specific needs and the exceptional position of adoptees. Therefore, we demand that the Government promptly produce a renewed study and bill that takes in account the above listed requirements.

We await your reply to this petition.

Stockholm, February 13, 2018

The Association of Ethiopian and Eritrean Adoptees, AEF.

For feedback or questions, please send an email to: aefkontakt@gmail.com