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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

April 11, 2024

CHAIRMAN, CONGRESSIONAL EXECUTIVE
COMMISSION ON CHINA

CHAIRMAN, GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBAL
HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

CO-CHAIRMAN, TOM LANTOS HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSION

SENIOR MEMBER, HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE

www.chris-smith.house.gov

The Honorable Kishida Fumio
Prime Minister of Japan
HAND DELIVERED at U.S. Capitol

Copy:

Via Yamada Shigeo, Ambassador to the United States
The Embassy of Japan
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Your Excellency,

As our two countries continue to take steps to strengthen our democratic, economic and security ties, I would like to draw your attention to an open wound that threatens to derail many ongoing efforts.

To date, more than 500 American children have been abducted to Japan by one of their respective parents and remain separated from their American parent. These abductions often occur against pre-existing court orders and, in some cases, with the passport assistance of the Japanese government.

While it was hoped that Japan's 2014 accession to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction would help properly address this crisis, it simply has not fostered greater access or the rightful return of these children and hundreds of American children endure, daily, the pain of separation from their American parent.

For the sake of the children who are suffering, and for the sake of U.S. and Japanese relations, I seek your public commitment to reunite these families.

The U.S. Congress has been united and outspoken on this issue for years, urging your government to work to return American children.

Co-Chairman of the following: Task Force on Alzheimer's Disease • Bi-Partisan Taskforce for Combating Anti-Semitism • Lyme Disease Caucus
Coalition for Autism Research and Education • Congressional Pro-Life Caucus • Bosnia Caucus • Poland Caucus • Friends of Ireland Caucus
Congressional Caucus on Human Trafficking • Vietnam Caucus • Congressional Heart and Stroke Coalition • Fragile X Caucus • Spina Bifida Caucus • Hungarian Caucus
Malaria and Neglected Tropical Diseases Caucus • Hong Kong Caucus • Congressional Pediatric and Adult Hydrocephalus Caucus

In 2010, the U.S. House of Representatives passed [H. Res. 1326](#) calling on Japan to *“address the urgent problem of abduction to and retention of United States citizen children in Japan, to work closely with the Government of the United States to return these children to their custodial parent or to the original jurisdiction for a custody determination in the United States, to provide left-behind parents immediate access to their children...”*

In 2014, Congress adopted and the president signed, the [Sean and David Goldman International Child Abduction Prevention and Return Act \(Public Law 113-150\)](#) to prevent the terrible crime of international parental child abduction and empower the U.S. executive branch with tools to address this problem bilaterally with countries of particular concern.

Regrettably, the abduction of American children to your country remains an ongoing human rights crisis that cannot be sidelined or overlooked. As I have said before, “when a country such as Japan has failed to resolve 30 percent of abduction cases that have been pending more than 12 months, U.S. law requires the Secretary of State to take action.”

Over the years, I have chaired 16 comprehensive congressional hearings in the U.S. House of Representatives on the issue of International Parental Child Abduction with numerous experts and left-behind parents testifying about this horrific human rights abuse—many focused on the crisis in Japan. While all of the abduction cases are tragic, some are the epitome of injustice.

- Jeffery Morehouse has been fighting since 2010 for the return of his young son. He has testified multiple times before U.S. Congress and most recently at a hearing I chaired on May 23, 2023. He had legal custody in Washington State which was recognized by Japanese courts—but he still cannot gain access to his son in Japan.
- Retired Navy Capt. Paul Toland is his young daughter's only living parent, and he cannot even visit her in Japan.
- Marine Corps Sgt. Michael Elias suffered the abduction of his two children to Japan after courts in New Jersey decreed shared custody and that the children were not allowed to leave the United States. The children's mother, a former employee of the Japanese consulate in NY, abused her Japanese consulate connections to obtain replacement Japanese passports—a crime for which she has yet to be held to account. With the replacement passports, she abducted little Jade and Michael Jr. just before Christmas in 2008 and has not permitted Sgt. Elias any contact with them.
- Randy Collins has been unable to contact his son in the 16 years since Reiko Nakata Greenberg-Collins abducted him from California to Japan, in violation of U.S. court orders.

Mr. Prime Minister, there is no doubt that child abduction is a form of child abuse. Children who are kidnapped by one parent to live overseas and kept away from another are at grave risk of serious mental trauma, and may experience anxiety, eating disorder, nightmares, mood swings, sleep disturbances, aggressive behavior, resentment, guilt, and fearfulness.

According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children parental child abduction victims are often taught by their kidnapper one or more of the following: 1) the left-behind parent does not want them; 2) the left-behind parent is dangerous and harmful; 3) the left-behind parent is dead; or 4) the other parent is unknown. This trauma is not easily erased.

Your Excellency, it is my sincere hope that these Japanese American children will become a source of strength between our two countries rather than a reminder of an ongoing injustice and a barrier to a robust United States-Japan relationship.

I respectfully request that you work with the United States to create a process by which families can be reunited and heal.

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, MC

Chairman

Global Health, Global Human Rights,
International Organizations
Subcommittee, House Foreign Affairs
Committee

CC: Takeru Terao
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