

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 29, 2015

The Honorable Shinzo Abe
Prime Minister of Japan

Your Excellency,

As our countries take steps to strengthen U.S.-Japan ties, we would like to draw your attention to an open wound that threatens to derail full cooperation. Namely, more than 50 American children have been abducted to Japan by one of their respective parents and remain separated from their American parent—often against pre-existing court orders and, in some cases, with the passport assistance of the Japanese government. In fact, back in 2010, the House passed H. Res. 1326 calling on Japan to address the abduction of United States citizen children to Japan, to work with the United States to return these children to their custodial left-behind parent, and to provide left-behind parents immediate access to their children. Regrettably, five years later, the children and left-behind parents this legislation sought to assist remain separated and desperate for assistance.

We believe that this is an ongoing human rights crisis between our two countries. Since 2009, the House of Representatives has held seven hearings on the issue of International Child Abduction with numerous experts and left-behind parents testifying about this horrific human rights abuse. While all of the abduction cases are tragic, some are the epitome of injustice. For instance, 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 prosecuted in Japan. With the replacement passports, she abducted little Jade and Michael Jr. just before Christmas in 2008. She will not allow Sgt. Elias or the paternal grandparents any contact whatsoever with the children.

Jeffery Morehouse has been fighting since 2010 for the return of his young son. As he testified at a hearing before the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights on March 25, he has legal custody in Washington State and in Japan—but he *still* cannot get access to his son in Japan.

Randy Collins has been unable to contact his young son in the seven years since Reiko Nakata Greenberg-Collins abducted him from his home in Santa Ana, California, and took him to Japan in violation of U.S. court orders. She also took \$200,000 and is listed on the FBI's top ten most wanted list for parental kidnapping.

Child abduction is a form of child abuse. Children who are kidnapped by one parent overseas and kept away from their mother or father are at grave risk of serious emotional and psychological problems, and may experience anxiety, eating problems, nightmares, mood

swings, sleep disturbances, aggressive behavior, resentment, guilt, and fearfulness. Still, Japan has yet to order and enforce the return of a single abducted American child. While we are very grateful for Japan's accession to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Parental Child abduction and are hopeful that Japan will faithfully implement the access and return requirements of the Convention—the more than 50 abduction cases predating the Convention must be resolved for the sake of the children who are suffering, and for the sake of U.S.-Japan relations.

Last year *The Sean and David Goldman International Child Abduction Prevention and Return Act* (P.L. 113-150) was enacted to give the State Department new, real and effective tools to help parents who have been trying to secure the return of and access to their children. The first compliance report due under the law is expected later this month, and will determine whether the State Department is required by the law to degrade the U.S. relationship with Japan.

Your Excellency, it is our sincere hope that these Japanese-American children will become a source of strength and accord between our two countries, rather than a thorn in the side of the U.S.-Japan relationship. It is our sincere hope that you will work with the United States to create a process by which these cases can be resolved. Your Excellency, you have the opportunity to change these tragic family histories and begin to heal the festering wound between the U.S. and Japan. We hope that you will seize this opportunity. The U.S. government stands ready to work with your government to resolve this issue.

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

Chairman

Subcommittee on Africa, Global
Health, Global Human Rights, &
International Organizations

House Foreign Affairs Committee



MATT SALMON

Chairman

Subcommittee on Asia and
the Pacific

House Foreign Affairs Committee