

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

August 11, 2020

His Excellency Shinsuke J. Sugiyama
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Embassy of Japan in the United States
2520 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Ambassador Sugiyama:

We write today regarding the issue of international parental child abductions to Japan. While the Japanese Government has improved compliance with its obligations under the Hague Abduction Convention, there remains much work to secure the return of American citizen children who have been abducted to Japan. This is particularly true for children involved in pre-Convention cases which remain open despite years of efforts by their American citizen parents.

In the 2018 and 2016 State Department Annual Reports on international parental child abduction, Japan was cited for failing to make sufficient progress in enforcing Hague court orders for the return of abducted children. This failure resulted in a pattern of noncompliance with Japan's obligations under the Hague Abduction Convention. The 2020 Annual Report found there were 13 open and active abduction cases in Japan throughout 2019, involving 19 children in total. At the end of 2019, 5 cases remained open involving 9 children. In addition to these open and active cases, there are still 13 pre-Convention abduction cases which remain unresolved.

We are also encouraged that Japan enacted a new law in 2019, effective April 1, 2020, which revised existing statutes governing enforcement of return orders in Hague Abduction Convention cases. We remain concerned, however, about ensuring that American parents, both pre and post-Convention, are able to have their cases quickly resolved and their children returned.

While these metrics provide important context, they also do not fully reflect the depth of the ongoing challenge posed by international parental child abduction to Japan. While cases are being closed, there are many reasons other than reunification which prompt closure. For example, the Convention does not cover children after they reach the age of 16, which means a case is closed even where an abduction was not in fact resolved. As a result, while the numbers themselves tell a story of improvement, the facts on the ground show there is more work which must be done between our governments to bring American citizen children home to their parents.

Recent changes made to Japanese law indicate a willingness by your government to provide greater cooperation on international parental abductions. Accordingly, we ask that you encourage your government to act in good faith and resolve *all* remaining international parental abduction cases. Further delay by your government will only add to the anguish of left-behind American parents and the American public, and may cause us to consider additional legislative measures to resolve this issue.

We thank you for your attention to this matter, and for recognizing our joint commitment to securing the return of every single American child abducted abroad. We are counting on you to secure the return of our citizen children. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Seth Williford with Senator Tillis at 202-224-6342 or Lindsay Erickson with Senator Feinstein at 202-224-6443.

Sincerely,



Thom Tillis
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator