

March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Dear Ambassador Emanuel,

First, we want to congratulate you on your post as the US Ambassador to Japan. After years without a representative, we are hopeful that together we can act as partners to create a stronger American-Japanese alliance that safeguards our children.

Did you know that **24 children are abducted by a parent in Japan every hour**, making daily parental abductions cases much higher than daily deaths by COVID-19 in Japan?

You were briefed by Senator Mendez that there have been over 475 known cases of international abduction of American children since Japan ratified the Hague Convention. But you should know the **problem is much larger** and affects **several thousands of Americans** and many, many children of various nationalities.

Many **American children** – including those of **American military personnel** such as Captain Paul Toland and Iraq veteran Michael Elias – are not included in that figure. Deployed in Japan, Captain Toland spent a total of three decades defending America and Japan only to have his daughter Erika kidnapped by his former wife and then grandmother. The US and Japanese governments did nothing to help him and today Erika still has no contact with her father - her only living parent. I am sure you would agree that it is beyond ridiculous that **American heroes are not given the same protection their parent has provided for the American and Japanese people.**

**Is this the value American leaders put on the sacrifices our military members make for our nation?** There are over 50,000 American military members in Japan. How many must lose their children before America acts?

We must not forget about the **unaccounted-for American children who are abducted domestically** by a parent when the family is living in Japan. These are mixed children of Japanese and American parents, such as Meline – the five-year-old daughter of Find My Parent co-founder Enrique. These are also children with two American parents who moved to Japan where their marriage subsequently fell apart. In such situations, one parent can *awfully* abduct their children solely because they are living in a **country that refuses to uphold children's fundamental right to love and be loved by two parents.** Now you know why Japan is referred to as the *Black Hole of Parental Child Abduction!*

Japan signing the **Hague Convention has done nothing** for abducted children. **Japan continues to unlawfully condone the abduction of American children** in violation of the very treaty they signed. For parents, such as James Cook, who followed the legal process and won twice, Japan still finds ways to stop the return of his four American children and he still has no access to them despite it being guaranteed under the Hague Convention.

Japan is continuously guilty of delaying Hague cases to the point of no-return when our children have already been brainwashed, alienated, and made afraid, resulting in them saying they “don’t want to return home.” It is no surprise that American parents have **lost all faith in the Hague Convention.**

The **Japanese government is manipulative and actively encouraging its nationals to abduct** our children. They have held seminars to show parents how to use the so-called loopholes in the Hague and delay tactics in court. The Implementation Articles in Japan actually have unenforceability written into them, so the enforcement officers do not have the power to take the child(ren) and there are no criminal consequences for contempt. Domestically, there are internal memos from the local police to not interfere and lawyers get rewarded financially for being proponents of domestic abductions.

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The abduction of children is facilitated by the US's failure to apply **the Goldman Act** – the very law designed to pressure countries such as Japan to uphold the agreements they have signed and to return our children home. Japan knows this all too well. In 2017, the now Prime Minister Fumio Kishida even stated that 'until now, there is not a single example in which the U.S. applied Goldman Act sanctions toward foreign countries.' Undoubtedly, our failure to implement our own laws has enabled Japan to continue its encouragement and protection of abductors.

The Japanese MoFA will not even provide embassies with the information they need to check on the well-being of abducted American children, leaving the parent with absolutely no information about their own children.

While Japan refuses to return abducted American children or extradite abductors on the FBI most wanted list, **our leaders have gladly handed over our American national heroes when Japan demands it**. How is it that America extradited US Army Special Forces veteran Michael Taylor and former Green Beret Peter Taylor to a Japanese legal system with a 99% conviction rate, yet we cannot get our own children back? **Why is Japan not returning our innocent and helpless children who were illegally abducted?**

Lisa, the brave young American woman who reached out to your staff at the Embassy has gone through the nightmare of being abducted by her mother at the age of 12. Told lies since then, it was not until a decade later when she watched a video about parental abduction online that she realized what had happened to her. Now 24, she had to find her father without her mother's knowledge and now is trying to rebuild a relationship with him. Luckily, she still speaks English. Find My Parent co-founder Enrique has recently been given access to his daughter - not because of the efforts of the US Embassy or government - but because his ex-wife finally realized it was in their daughter's best interest. Now he is tasked with teaching his 5-year-old daughter English so she can communicate with her own father. **Both Meline and Lisa's lives would have been very different had the US stood up for them.**

It is abominable that Japan calls the United States its **closest ally while openly encouraging the kidnapping of American children**. The Japanese attack the innocent and most vulnerable Americans with zero repercussions from the United States or the rest of the world.

**We count on you, Ambassador Emanuel, to proactively stand up for American children**. Our children deserve the best upbringing possible and not one filled with poverty, mental health problems, bullying and a general feeling of hopelessness. These children lose half of their identity, culture, and extended family overnight. Waiting for them to become adults and reunite with their parent is not a solution either. **Their lives and well-being are not puzzles that can simply be put back together**. Some children never see their parent again.

**A top and immediate priority** for your tenure at the Embassy must be to pressure Japan to

1. Honor its obligations as a signatory of the Hague Convention,
2. Honor custody orders of the child's country of residence,
3. Provide American parents with information about their children in Japan, and
4. Reconnect children and their American parents.

By doing so, you would not just be helping thousands of American children but also the estimated **210,000 children** of Japanese, European, Australian, Canadian, British, and Korean parents abducted **each year**.

**Japan's blatant disrespect for American authority and the rights of our citizens must stop** and you – as a father of three children – are in a unique position to push for that change. We know from our relationships with politicians in other countries, and Japan, that the U.S. can resolve this issue permanently for every nation in the

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world. As a group of abducted children, left-behind parents, and advocates, **we are ready to work with you to make a lasting impact** on the lives of American and Japanese children.

The task at hand may be challenging and complex, but success will be rewarding. It will not only improve the lives of thousands of children who are suffering from divorce, abduction and their effects but it will also mean a stronger, more productive and happier society in Japan. As Ambassador, you would leave a **lasting legacy on Japan**, its families and US-Japanese relations.

We hope to work closely with you and your team to create this positive change and believe you can start working towards that by:

- 1 **Requiring an update from the State Department and Japan Central Authority regarding the status of all access cases** and demanding immediate access for parents that have been denied, in accordance with 'comity' and treaty agreements. Per the Hague, **a parent is guaranteed access with their child(ren) no matter the status of litigation.**
- 2 Write a **letter to the Japanese Joint Custody Parliamentary League and Prime Minister Fumio Kishida** advocating that domestic and international abduction should be considered crimes and that joint custody is in the best interest of the child.
- 3 Request the Japanese government to share an **action-oriented timeline** of steps it will take to address the abduction of American children and **actively follow-up** on progress made.
- 4 Consider **meeting with local politicians** in Japan, such as Dietary members **Yukiko Kada, Masahiko Shibayama, Hideki Makiyama and Mitsuo Mitani**, who are also actively fighting for a change to the country's archaic sole-custody family law system.
- 5 Ask other Ambassadors to Japan about children from their countries who have been abducted and **how the US can lead multi-national efforts** to secure the return of all these children.

We, other NGOs and a group of American parents and victims of parental abduction, **are ready to support and work closely with you and your team** to put an end to parental abduction in Japan.

We will keep working for a better future for American children and look forward to your involvement. We invite you to visit [www.findmyparent.jp](http://www.findmyparent.jp) to learn more about the issue.

Kind regards,



Lisa Lewis (USA/Japan)  
Abducted to Japan from Hawaii at 12 years old by her Japanese mother. Mother changed her last name to Kikukawa for all Japanese documentation  
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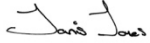
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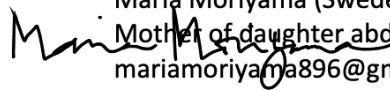


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End of letter

## References

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