

# HELSINKI COMMISSION TO HIGHLIGHT INTERNATIONAL PARENTAL CHILD ABDUCTION AT UPCOMING BRIEFING

Monday, October 23, 2017

**W**ASHINGTON—The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the Helsinki Commission, today announced the following briefing:

## “THE CRIME OF INTERNATIONAL PARENTAL CHILD ABDUCTION”

Friday, October 27, 2017  
10:00AM  
Rayburn House Office Building  
Room 2103

Live Webcast: [www.facebook.com/HelsinkiCommission](http://www.facebook.com/HelsinkiCommission)

Nearly 1,000 American children a year are victims of international parental child abduction. International parental child abduction occurs when one parent removes a child from the child’s country of habitual residence, or retains a child outside the country of habitual residence, in contravention of the other parent’s custody rights. The experience of the abduction and the subsequent loss of contact with the left-behind parent is very traumatic for the child as well as devastating for the left-behind parent. Between 2008 and 2016, nearly 11,000 American children were abducted, according to the U.S. Department of State.

In order to quickly resolve abductions in civil court, minimize emotional damage to children, and ensure that the custody decisions of one country are respected in other countries, the international community adopted the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction in 1983. Currently, 51 of 57 OSCE participating States and seven of 11 OSCE partner States are signatories of the Convention.

However, governments of many signatory countries consistently fail to enforce return orders; some even revoking the return orders after their failure to enforce. Returns under the Convention are surprisingly infrequent and painfully slow—leading the United States to look at enforcement mechanisms, such as sanctions and criminal extradition.

The briefing will examine the measures that have been most effective in resolving international parental child abduction, and include presentations from the following panelists:

- **Leo Zagaris**, Survivor of parental child abduction to Greece
- **Alissa Zagaris**, Advocate and former left-behind parent of child abducted to Greece
- **Augusto Frisancho, M.D.**, Father of three children abducted to Slovakia
- **Jeffery Morehouse**, Father of child abducted to Japan and Executive Director of Bring Abducted Children Home (BAC Home)
- **Noelle Hunter, Ph.D.**, President of the iStand Parent Network and former left-behind parent of daughter abducted to Mali

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