

Annual Report on International Child Abduction

2023

REPORT ON COMPLIANCE WITH
THE HAGUE CONVENTION ON THE CIVIL ASPECTS OF
INTERNATIONAL CHILD ABDUCTION
APRIL 2023

SUBMITTED PURSUANT TO
THE SEAN AND DAVID GOLDMAN
INTERNATIONAL CHILD ABDUCTION
PREVENTION AND RETURN ACT OF 2014
22 U.S.C. §9111, ET SEQ.



United States Department of State

Secretary of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Dear Reader,

The Department of State is committed to protecting the safety and well-being of U.S. citizens overseas, especially our most vulnerable citizens – children. We take seriously our responsibilities to lead U.S. efforts to resolve and prevent cases of international parental child abduction, and to meet our treaty obligations under the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (the Convention). Within the Department, the Office of Children’s Issues in the Bureau of Consular Affairs serves as the U.S. Central Authority for the Convention. The Office’s dedicated staff works closely with our interagency partners, foreign counterparts, and other stakeholders in pursuit of our common goals.

We strongly believe the Convention provides a critical legal mechanism for resolving cases of international parental child abduction. We actively engage with foreign governments to encourage them to ratify or accede to the Convention, and then to fulfill their treaty obligations. Unfortunately, there are countries that are reluctant to ratify or accede to the Convention and others which, although treaty partners, fail to live up to their commitments. We hold these countries accountable, as evidenced in this report.

Our evaluation of country performance uses the standards defined in the Sean and David Goldman International Child Abduction Prevention and Return Act of 2014 (the Act). Despite some progress, 14 countries (two new, Bulgaria and Russia) demonstrated a pattern of noncompliance in 2022. Three countries cited last year improved their performance and were not cited this year. In addition, our evaluations include some specific concerns about countries that we did not cite, but whose performance needs close monitoring.

We are committed to encouraging these countries to take more effective measures to resolve cases of international parental child abduction. I trust this report will be a valuable resource for Congress, parents, attorneys, judges, and law enforcement officers.

Sincerely,

Antony J. Blinken
Secretary of State

COUNTRIES DEMONSTRATING A PATTERN OF NONCOMPLIANCE

Korea, Republic of

Country Summary: The Convention has been in force between the United States and the Republic of Korea since 2013. In 2022, the Republic of Korea continued to demonstrate a pattern of noncompliance. Specifically, Korean law enforcement authorities regularly failed to enforce return orders in abduction cases. As a result of this failure, 50 percent of requests for the return of abducted children under the Convention remained unresolved for more than 12 months. On average, these cases were unresolved for two years and ten months. The Republic of Korea was previously cited for demonstrating a pattern of noncompliance in the 2022 Annual Report.

Initial Inquiries: In 2022, the Department received two initial inquiries from parents regarding possible abductions to the Republic of Korea for which no completed applications were submitted to the Department.

	Cases	Children	Cases	Children
	2021	2021	2022	2022
Abduction cases open at the start of the year	5	7	3	5
New abduction cases	1	1	1	1
Total abduction cases	6	8	4	6
Abduction cases resolved during the year	3	3	2 (50%)	3
Abduction cases closed during the year	0	0	0 (0%)	0
Abduction cases still open at the end of the year	3	5	2 (50%)	3

Central Authority: The U.S. and the Korean Central Authorities have a productive relationship that facilitates the resolution of abduction cases under the Convention.

	Cases	Children	Cases	Children
	2021	2021	2022	2022
Abduction cases filed with the FCA at the start of the year	5	7	3	5
New cases filed with the FCA	1	1	1	1
Total cases on file with the FCA during the year	6	8	4	6
Cases that have been unresolved for more than 12 months	3	5	2	3
FCA caseload unresolved at the end of the year	50%		50%	

Voluntary Resolution: The Convention states that central authorities “shall take all appropriate measures to secure the voluntary return of the child or to bring about an amicable resolution of the issues.” In 2022, one abduction case was resolved through voluntary means.

Location: The competent authorities regularly took appropriate steps to locate children after a Convention application was filed. The average time to locate a child was 34 days.

Judicial Authorities: The judicial authorities of the Republic of Korea routinely ordered the return of children in Convention cases; however, cases were generally pending with Korean judicial authorities for over one year. Additionally, while courts in the Republic of Korea ordered the return of children in Convention cases, the need for multiple enforcement proceedings resulted in delays.

Enforcement: While courts in the Republic of Korea ordered the return of children under the Convention, decisions for return were generally not enforced, including one case that was pending for more than three years as of December 31, 2022. There were two cases (accounting for 100 percent of the unresolved cases) that have been pending for more than 12 months in which law enforcement has failed to enforce a return order. Additionally, left-behind parents can spend months in legal proceedings seeking to enforce the return order, resulting in delays to return. Unless the taking parent voluntarily complied with a return order under the Convention, judicial decisions in Convention cases in the Republic of Korea were generally not enforced, which contributed to a pattern of noncompliance.

Department Recommendations: The Department will continue intense engagement with the Korean authorities to address issues of concern.