



Writer and Editor Tiffany Fontana

Shining Hope

The "Shining Hope" newsletter offers valuable resources and support to families facing child abduction and parental alienation. Our publication provides uplifting and informative messages to parents dealing with the abduction of their children, fostering a strong and supportive community throughout their difficult journey. Stay informed and up-to-date with the latest news, events, and pressing issues through our comprehensive and timely newsletter.

Donate now at STL's official website! Your support brings kids HOME!

Bi-Weekly Parent Support Zoom Call: Email contactshinethelight@gmail.com for dates and the link to join.

STL's new [YouTube channel](#) is now live, offering weekly tools, stories, and encouragement to help families stay supported and empowered!

“
Systems can fail, justice can delay,
but the commitment to bring
children home must never waver.
”



45 Years of the Hague Convention: Progress, Gaps, and Hope Ahead

In December 2025, the international community commemorated the 45th anniversary of the [Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction](#), the cornerstone treaty designed to ensure the prompt return of wrongfully removed or retained children across borders.

The treaty's basic mechanism remains powerful: if a child is taken from their habitual residence without consent, the left-behind parent can petition through designated Central Authorities to seek return. Signatory states are required to act swiftly.

(Continued on page 2)



Left-Behind Parents Take Action
Page 2



When Panic Shows Up:
Understanding, Responding,
and Getting Help
Page 3

45 Years of the Hague Convention

Continued from page 1

Children taken to countries not party to the Convention remain in a legal gray zone. A 2024 study commissioned by the [European Parliament](#) underscores that effective mechanisms are urgently needed to support returns where treaties don't apply, including mediation and diplomatic pressure.

Nurturing the Convention: The Role of Special Working Groups

One Special Working Group (SWG) has identified three priority areas that reflect a growing shift in the international response to child abduction. Foremost is raising awareness, recognizing that parental child abduction is far more than a legal matter. It is a serious concern that profoundly affects a child's emotional, psychological, and relational well-being.

The second priority focuses on prevention, exploring how to reduce the likelihood of abductions and limit the harm they cause when they do occur. Finally, the group highlights the importance of nurturing the Convention itself, ensuring it continues to protect children effectively while supporting families through timely and coordinated responses

International experts agree that while the Hague Convention remains essential, it cannot address all the challenges of international child abduction on its own. Current discussions focus on ways to strengthen the system, including improved specialized mediation, stronger enforcement protocols, guidance from human-rights principles in domestic courts, and targeted support for parents navigating complex cross-border cases.

Criticism of how the Hague Convention works in practice is also common among experts and affected families. One major concern is delay and inconsistency in enforcement. Even when courts issue return orders, some countries fail to act promptly. As a result, cases can linger for years before meaningful progress is made.

Despite these challenges, most families continue to turn to the Convention because it remains the strongest international framework available.

Still, these systemic flaws leave parents emotionally exhausted, often facing complex processes alone. [Shine the Light](#) addresses these failures by providing support and advocating for stronger enforcement of the Hague Convention to better protect children and families.

Left-Behind Parents Take Action!

Shine the Light provides a ready-to-use form letter to help you contact your local government representatives. Raise awareness about the gaps in the Hague Convention and advocate for stronger protections for children and parents affected by international abduction.

**Request your
letter at**

stlforabductedchildren@gmail.com



When Panic Shows Up: *Understanding, Responding, and Getting Help as a Left-Behind Parent*

Why Panic Is Common in High-Conflict Legal Trauma

- Loss of daily contact with your child
- Powerlessness within legal or international systems
- Financial strain and prolonged uncertainty
- Repeated setbacks, delays, or perceived injustices
- Living in a state of “waiting without resolution”.

Learning to Notice Panic Early

One of the most effective tools is not fighting panic but recognizing its early signals.

Early signs may include:

- Increased irritability or restlessness
- Trouble sleeping or sudden fatigue
- Holding your breath without realizing it
- Feeling detached or “on edge” for no clear reason

When to Seek Support (and Why It Matters)

Ongoing or worsening panic attacks require professional medical or psychological support. Helpful forms of care include:

- Trauma-informed therapy (especially CBT or somatic approaches)
- Medical evaluation to rule out physical contributors
- Support groups for parents experiencing prolonged separation or legal trauma

Your body has lived under prolonged uncertainty and loss. Panic is not a failure but a stress response to danger that never fully resolved. Getting support and learning to regulate your nervous system are essential tools for enduring this road.

References & Further Reading

- American Psychological Association (APA): Panic Disorder & Stress
- van der Kolk, Bessel, M.D. *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*.
- Porges, S. *Polyvagal Theory*
- National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH): Panic Disorder
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): Trauma and Stress-Related Disorders

A Final Word to Left-Behind Parents



Contact Us

Hours: 24/7

stlforabductedchildren@gmail.com

(570) 916-1308

stlforabductedchildren.org

Share your stories, ideas, or feedback with our Editor at info@tiffanyfontana.com. We value your input and look forward to hearing from you!