

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Parent Led Group Advocates for Return of Parentally Abducted Children in Advance of Missing Children's Day

Washington, D.C. – May 25 was National Missing Children's Day, and Bring Our Kids Home and other parent groups took to Washington on May 19-20, as part a coalition led by iStand Parent Network, to advocate for the more than 64 American children, victims of parental child abduction to India from the United States.

At the core of this issue, is the wrongful removal of children from their home and country by a violating parent, and taking them to another country, such as India, where they are wrongfully retained. Often Courts in India treat these cases as "routine child custody" issues, instead of child abduction and human rights violation issue.

On May 13, 2015, the Office of Children's Issues at the U.S. Department of State issued their Annual Report on International Parental Child Abductions, which noted that India, along with 21 other Nations, was found to have demonstrated a persistent failure to work the United States to resolve IPCA cases.

Bring Our Kids Home ([www.bringourkidshome.org](http://www.bringourkidshome.org)) advocates for children and families affected by international parental child abductions from the U.S. to India - embarked on the nation's capital to raise awareness of this crime, and to request support for remedies. The group met with both the majority and minority leadership of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, receiving strong bipartisan support to ensure the proper enforcement of the 2014 International Child Abduction Prevention and Return Act (ICAPRA).

ICAPRA, also referred to as the Goldman Act, grants the Department of State a wide variety of tools, including sanctions, to secure the return of U.S. children illegally retained by a parent abroad. "Not only is it a persistent problem in the U.S., it's a pandemic," said Noelle Hunter, co-founder of iStand, referring to the illegal parental abduction and retention of American children abroad.

Bring Our Kids Home supports the Goldman Act and believes, if implemented with the spirit in which it was written, it is a strong mechanism for securing the return of abducted children. "For those of us with children abducted to countries like India, who are not signatories to the Hague Convention or without a bilateral agreement with the United States, the Goldman Act provides new hope for the return of our children," said Tova Sengupta mother of child abducted to India. For this reason, a primary goal of the visit this week was to ensure that lawmakers remain vigilant over the interpretation and use of this new legislation.

In addition to encouraging meetings with various Congressional leaders, Bring Our Kids Home had a positive experience with representatives from the Office of Children's Issues Prevention Branch. "Prevention of future abductions lies at the heart of our advocacy, and of the Goldman Act," said Dr. Samina Rehman, mother of child abducted to India "We were encouraged by discussions with the Prevention Branch regarding opportunities to build upon existing mechanisms toward strengthening prevention efforts."

While in D.C., parents also met with Officials from the, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs at the State Department, which is led by Assistant Secretary Nisha Biswal. The parents urged proactive engagement with the Government of India for prompt and safe return of all parental abducted American children back to the United States, and reminded the officials that in many cases left behind parents in the U.S. have not seen or heard from their children in years. State Department Officials informed the parents about Amb. Susan Jacobs' recent visit to India from May 11 to 14, where she had very constructive meetings with officials of the Ministry of External Affairs in India, including discussion of specific child abduction cases.

Since 2014, parents have sent letters to President Obama, Prime Minister Modi, Indian's External Affairs Minister Swaraj, Ministry of Law & Justice, Ministry of Home Affairs in India, in addition, to reaching out to members of Congress, State Department and Department of Justice officials. Parents have met with officials of India Caucus Members from the House and the Senate, including Rep. Ami Bera, Rep. Grace Meng, Senator Cornyn, Senator Schumer and Senator Booker to seek their support. Rep. Christopher Smith from New Jersey has championed the cause of parentally abducted children, his office is actively engaged in helping parents from Bring Our Kids Home.

In March 2015, parents from Bring Our Kids along with Dr. Noelle Hunter from iStand, met with Mr. N. K. Mishra (Minister Community Affairs) and Mr. Suneet Mehta (First Secretary Congressional Liaison) at the Embassy of India in Washington, D.C. to urge the Government of India to take prompt action to bring abducted American children home, while partnering with U.S. Government to find a long term and comprehensive solution to prevent international parental abductions between the two countries. Left behind parents eagerly await a response from the Government of India on the issue of international parental child abduction. Each passing day of inaction means, the children who are the real victims of parental abductions to India, are deprived of their left behind parent, their family and friends in the United States, human rights and meaningful, equitable justice.

Members of the Indian American and broader community who wish to support the cause, should reach out to Bring Our Kids Home.

