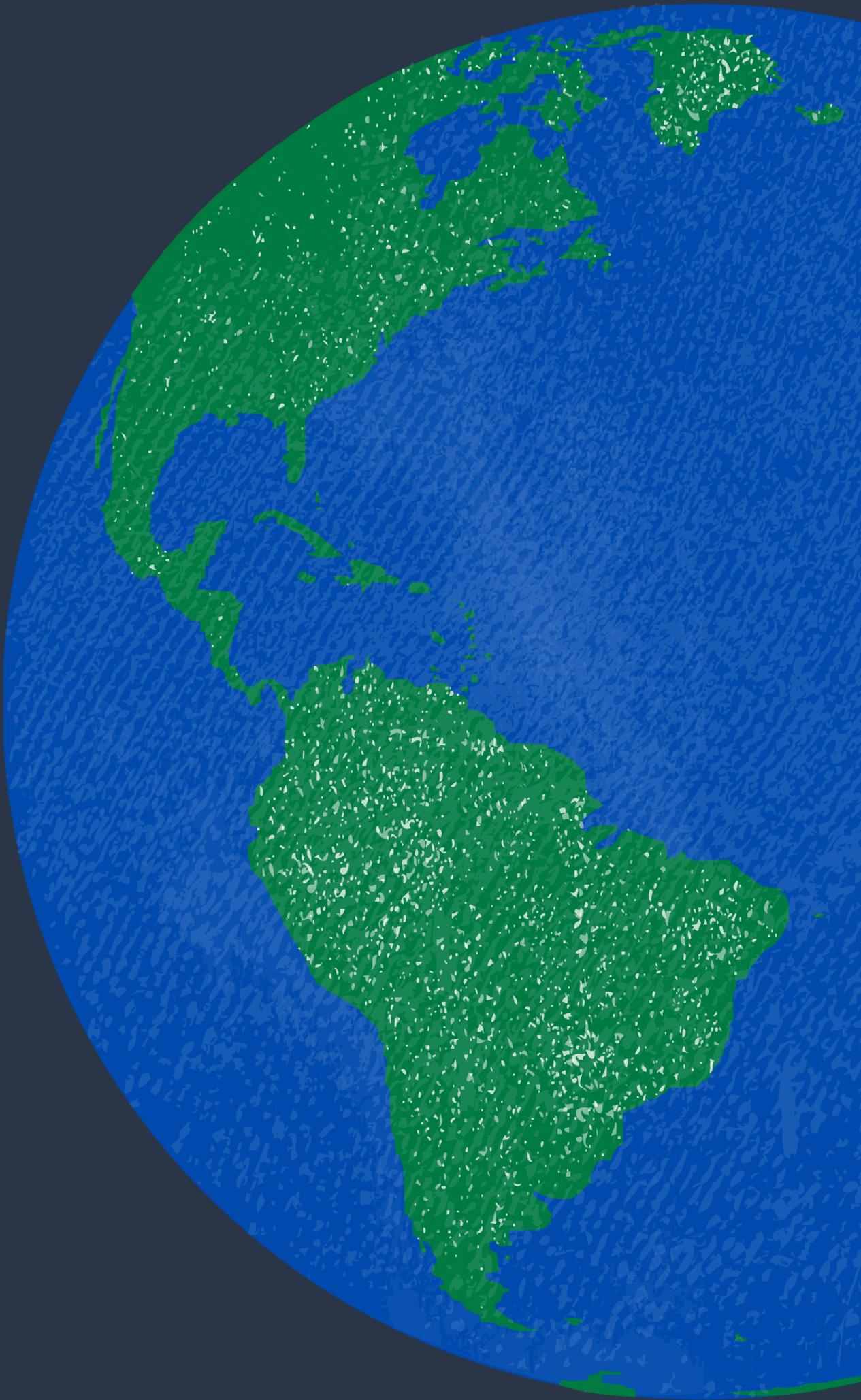


Spring 2021 Issue

IPCA NEWSLETTER



U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* STATE



SPECIAL ADVISOR'S CORNER



BY MICHELLE BERNIER-TOTH,
SPECIAL ADVISOR FOR CHILDREN'S ISSUES

WELCOME TO THE FIRST IPCA NEWSLETTER!



As Special Advisor for Children's Issues, it is my privilege to focus on two issues that impact children - intercountry adoption and international parental child abduction. A major part of my role is to promote accession to, and proper implementation of, the respective Hague Conventions, and normally that would involve a lot of international travel as well as domestic outreach. Having started this position just before COVID-19 shut down international travel, I traveled to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to discuss IPCA cases and issues with officials in each country. But then....

Luckily, I work with truly dedicated colleagues in the Office of Children's Issues who were determined not to let the pandemic get in their way as they sought to prevent and resolve cases of international parental child abduction, retain and enhance relationships with counterparts in foreign governments, and offer technical assistance to countries in the form of training and consultations. Since we all started working from home in March, CI has hosted videoconference meetings and workshops with close to 30 countries and supported me as I met virtually with senior government officials from around the globe. As someone commented, thanks to video-conferencing, we can meet with officials from Latin America in the morning and East Asia at night - and time zones are far easier to deal with than jet lag!

INTRODUCTIONS



Scott Renner - Director, CI

Scott assumed the role of Director of the

Office of Children's Issues in 2018 and was thrilled to work once more with CI colleagues in responding to the challenges of international parental child abduction, having served in the office from 2010 to 2014 as a Branch and Division Chief. He joined the Department of State in 1997, and his overseas postings include Lagos, Santiago, Mexico City, Warsaw, Bogota and Toronto. Scott has a Master's degree from the Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource Strategy and is a graduate of the University of Colorado School of Law. Prior to joining the Department of State, he worked as a Public Defender, focused on juvenile law, in Boulder Colorado and served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Mali from 1987-1989.



Nausher Ali – Division Chief, EHA

Nausher Ali joined the Department of State in 2004, and has served in Burkina Faso, Belgium, Bahrain, Afghanistan, Canada, and two different offices in Washington, prior to joining CI in July 2020. He

supervises the two teams that make up the Eastern Hemisphere Abductions division (EHA), which covers abductions throughout Asia and Africa, including the Middle East. Nausher chose to be a consular officer in order to help U.S. citizens overseas.



Elena Corona – Division Chief, PE

Elena Corona joined CI in 2010 and is a civil service division chief supervising two teams: Prevention and Europe abductions (PE). Prior to joining CI, she worked

at the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. Having worked in the missing children's field for 16 years, Elena is motivated by helping new colleagues understand the complexities of child abduction and finding solutions that put the children first.



Martin Oppus – Division Chief, WHA

Martin Oppus joined the Department of State in March 2000 and is currently the Western Hemisphere Affairs Division (WHA) Chief in CI. Immediately prior to his

current assignment, he was a National Security Affairs Fellow at the Hoover Institution. His previous overseas assignments have been in India, Mexico, Vietnam, and the Philippines. Consular work offers Martin the opportunity to directly engage and serve the Department's most important constituent: U.S. citizens.



BILATERAL AND VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENTS IN 2020



Though nonessential travel was restricted and physical presence in the office was limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic, CI leveraged technology to strengthen bilateral relationships with partner countries and to address patterns of noncompliance under the Hague Abduction Convention. Since March 2020, over 30 formal bilateral engagements have taken place virtually with countries including Argentina, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Germany, Ghana, Honduras, India, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Mexico, Pakistan, Peru, Romania, Saudi Arabia, and Trinidad and Tobago. Of course, CI has continued working-level conversations with counterparts in dozens of other countries. These engagements include updates on complex cases, the exchange of diplomatic notes regarding abduction cases, and notifications of court suspensions of activities abroad.



Through phone meetings and videoconferencing, CI has a better understanding of the challenges that countries face when implementing the Hague Abduction Convention, especially during the pandemic. CI is committed to helping countries fulfill their obligations under the Convention, and we have participated in training sessions for judges and prosecutors in some non-compliant countries. This collaboration, along with open communication, will help CI emerge from the pandemic with more resilient partnerships for the benefit of the American public.

NEXT ISSUE:

Prevention Resources
Resources for Incoming Cases
Welfare and Whereabouts

FEEDBACK?

Email
AbductionQuestions@state.gov
for feedback and questions

PAKISTAN PARTNERSHIP

On October 1, 2020, the Hague Abduction Convention entered into force between the United States and Pakistan. We are pleased to welcome Pakistan as our 80th Convention partner. Pakistan has the second largest IPCA caseload in South Asia and is only the second country to partner with us in the region. Parents whose children are abducted to or retained in Pakistan or the United States from their habitual residence in the other country, after October 1, 2020, may apply for their child's return or access under the Convention. CI will continue to work on behalf of the 'pre-Hague' cases in Pakistan.

