

Japan's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) and the Child Guidance Centre must faithfully implement the 4th and 5th recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child!!

The Child Guidance Centre (CGC) must immediately stop the abduction of children and the act of intimidation towards families!

Dear International Residents, Visitors and Correspondents Staying in Japan!

Recently, several major European countries began issuing the safety warning for travellers to Japan, about the potential risk of the abduction of children by the spouses (In breach of the Hague convention). This is important, yet this risk concerns couples with a Japanese spouse.

More serious, yet little known risk that international families in Japan must be warned of is the existence of **Article 33 (1) of the Child Welfare Act**. It stipulates, 'a **child guidance centre [CGC]**'s director may, **when s/he finds necessary, take temporary custody of a child** or entrust an appropriate person...'. Note that **your child, or anyone's children, can be the target of this 'abduction'** by the CGC director for a period of at least TWO MONTHS. **No prior judicial review or concrete evidence** of child abuse **is required**. The child is taken to the CGC detention quarter, which is rife with human-right infringements, including the sexual assault and violence by the CGC staff, and prohibition against attending school (which is unconstitutional). The CGCs aggressively remove children from families, because of the **annual fiscal quota** for 'abduction' (*rachi norma*).

Once the two-month term is about to expire, the **CGC personnel often intimidate the parents into agreeing to an extension**. The children are often ultimately sent to the 'institution' or an **alternative care facility (ACF)**. Since the ACFs are run by private social welfare corporations, **they need children to fill their beds** and thereby earn allowance (*sochi-hi*) from the government, **in order to run their business**. A US-based human right organisation claimed in its report *Without Dreams* (2014) that forcing the children to stay in the ACFs is in itself constitutes child abuse.

With serious concern for this monetary-interest driven human right infringements by the CGC and ACF, the **UN Committee on the Rights of the Child** issued strict recommendations in March 2019 to the Japanese government. They are, *inter alia*:

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- 29 (a) "Introduce a **mandatory judicial review** for determining whether a child should be removed from the family, set up **clear criteria for removal of the child** and ensure that children are separated from their parents as **a measure of last resort only**, when it is necessary for their protection and **in their best interests, after hearing the child and its parents**"
- (c) "**Abolish the practice of temporary custody of children in child guidance centres**"
- (b) "**prompt deinstitutionalization** of children..."
- 28 (c) "There is allegedly a **strong financial incentive** for the child guidance centres to receive more children"
- (e) "Children placed in institutions are **deprived of their right to keep contact with their biological parents**"
- 27 (a) "**Support and strengthen families**, including by facilitating an appropriate balance between work and family life, and provide sufficient social assistance, psychosocial support and guidance to families in need, *inter alia*, to **prevent abandonment and institutionalization of children**"
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Nevertheless, **the MHLW**, now notorious worldwide for turning the *Diamond Princess* into the incubator for Coronavirus, **takes a defiant stance** to these criticisms from the international community. Instead, the MHLW continues to encourage the CGCs to remove ever more children from families and has established more detention quarters, in order to protect and promote their vested interests (*not* the rights of the child). **International families in Japan are CGC's favourite targets**, due to insufficient Japanese language capability and a lack of legal proficiency.

Therefore, we would like to make you aware of this risk and request you to **widely share this information in your country and with anyone who reside in or plans to travel to Japan.**

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THE CONCERNED JAPANESE CITIZENS FOR THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD TO ERADICATE CHILD GUIDANCE CENTRE SUFFERINGS

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