

The Honorable Mr. Andris Teikmanis
Ambassador of Latvia to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
The Embassy of Latvia
45 Nottingham Place
London
UK - W1U 5LY

Brussels, 7 April 2014

Re: Forced adoption of Katya Brice

Dear Honorable Ambassador,

Against Child Trafficking is a Brussels based child rights non-profit organisation. We assist, inter alia, parents who are at risk to loose, or have lost, children to (intercountry) adoption. In this context, we have taken it upon us to support Ms. Laila Brice with advice and advocacy, based on our expertise and experience with similar cases.

Ms. Laila Brice and her two daughters are Latvian citizens and reside in Great Britain. The youngest daughter Katya was taken into care by the Merton social services and put up for adoption, without the consent of her mother and older sister.

As a Latvian citizen, Ms. Laila Brice and her daughters would need your urgent help to prevent this adoption, as it would permanently destroy their family. It would also strip Katya of her Latvian nationality, and there would be no continuity in the child's upbringing and to the child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background.

On the 19th of March 2014, in Brussels, we attended the European Parliament's Petition Committee, where Ms. Laila Brice and her oldest daughter Ms. Maija Zargarjana presented their individual Petitions in which they called upon the EP Petition Committee to investigate the forced adoption system in the UK.

The facts had been analyzed in debt by the Committee beforehand. The Chairman of the European Petition Committee announced an investigation whereby the Committee would, as a first step, write to Merton social services to ask for explanations.

That same day, a manifestation took place in front of the British Embassy in Riga where the Petition was served for the UK Ambassador in Riga by local campaigners on behalf of Ms. Laila Brice.



This matter is now rather urgent, as the adoption order may be filed any day now.

As observers of forced adoption cases we know that too often the reasons why children are taken away from their parents do not justify terminating parental rights permanently. Adoption is not a measure of child protection. Adoption is rather a civil order, which creates new relationships with the adoptive family and severs the relationship between the child and his or her birth family.¹

Britain's most senior family law High Court Judge Munby has recently warned UK social services that they must not seize control of the lives of foreign children. He said no UK Court can order a child from Europe to be taken from their parents or give it up for adoption.²

For your information we provide a link to an article written by Professor Jane Ireland on how the UK Family Courts are failing children.³

We know that in the past there have been successful repatriations of children at risk of being forcibly adopted. This was possible due to diplomatic intervention. For example:

- ✓ two Slovak children were repatriated in 2012, after the Slovak government had announced to take the UK to the European court of Human Rights in Strasbourg over 'illegal' child-snatching⁴
- ✓ after diplomatic intervention of the Indian government, two children who had been taken into care in Norway were repatriated to India⁵
- ✓ the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, in 2008, stepped in in order to have a Romanian children repatriated from Italy⁶

¹ Opinion of the Independent Panel of EU Family Law Experts (2004):

<http://periodismohumano.com/files/2010/06/Opinion-on-adoption-May-2004.pdf>

² UK courts must not decide the fate of foreign children, says top judge

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2539601/UK-courts-not-decide-fate-foreign-children-says-judge.html#ixzz2y6vjUWk2>

³ Family courts and how incompetent (but highly paid) so-called experts are failing children

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2114616/Family-courts-incompetent-highly-paid-called-experts-failing-children.html>

⁴ Foreign government may take UK to European court over its 'illegal' child-snatching

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/9545361/Foreign-government-may-take-UK-to-European-court-over-its-illegal-child-snatching.html>

⁵ Norway custody row children return to India

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-17821841>

⁶ Repatriation of a Romanian child from Italy

http://www.bbc.co.uk/romanian/news/story/2008/06/080609_italia_copii_romani.shtml

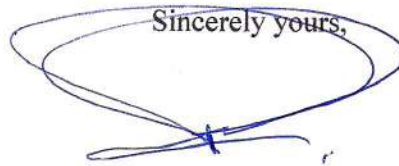
Considering the above, we kindly ask you to urgently intervene on behalf of Ms. Laila Brice and her daughter Katya.

We have been informed that that meeting has been scheduled between your Embassy and the Merton Social Services. We would be obliged if you could give Ms. Laila Brice and her eldest daughter Ms. Maija Zargarjana a chance to meet with you before this meeting takes place.

In any case, we would appreciate it if Ms. Laila Brice could participate to the meeting with the Merton Social Services, together with the McKenzie Friend who supports her, for note-taking.

To close, we would like to express our gratitude for your intervention, as we trust that the Latvian government values and respects the rights of its children.

Sincerely yours,



Roelie POST

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Encl.: Printout of links as provided in footnotes

Cc.: Ms. Laila Brice (mother of Katya)
Ms. Maija Zargarjana (sister of Katya)
Mr John Hemming (Member of Parliament United Kingdom)
Ms. Tatjana Zdanoka (Member of the European Parliament)