

Vincent Fichot Support Committee

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PRESS RELEASE

"FREE MY CHILDREN, HOSTAGES OF THE JAPANESE JUSTICE": A FRENCH FATHER STARTS A HUNGER STRIKE IN FRONT OF THE TOKYO OLYMPIC STADIUM AND APPEALS TO PRESIDENT MACRON

Tokyo, July 10th, 2021

FACTS:

Deprived for three years of any news on his children, kidnapped by their mother with the complicity of Japanese justice, French national Vincent Fichot, 39, has started a hunger strike in Tokyo. He said:

"After trying every legal avenues, I decided to start a hunger strike this Saturday, July 10th. It will last until my children's right to access both parents is restored. Threats from judges and the Japanese police won't stop me. I will give my children everything I have, down to the last drop. I will lead this fight in front of the Tokyo stadium for the Olympic Games, which will start on July 23rd. "

BACKGROUND:

A Father's Distress:

On August 10th, 2018, the eve of his son's third birthday, Mr. Fichot's wife abducted his two Franco-Japanese children: his little boy Tsubasa, now six years old, and Kaede, his four-year-old daughter.

"Tsubasa was about to start French school. He was starting to master this language, which he has most certainly forgotten by now. Every morning he would ask me not to go to work so that we could stay together. At night when I got home, I would barely have taken off my shoes and Tsubasa would ask me to play. Every evening at the dinner table, he would put his little hand on mine - something I would look forward to since the morning.

Kaede was only eleven months old when her mother took her away: she did not speak, did not walk, but a simple glance from her was enough to acknowledge our bond. She would love it so much when I kissed her little neck — but she no longer knows who I am, and what it is to have a father.

Since that date, I have not heard from my children. I don't know where they are or if they go to school. I don't know their address. I cannot even certify that they are healthy, or even that they are alive. As a matter of fact, the Japanese authorities, repeatedly called upon by the French Consulate in Tokyo to locate my children and ensure their well-being, refuse to cooperate."

No Relationship, No Information:

Vincent Fichot is not allowed to make any contact with his children. The police informed him that if he tried to approach them, he would be arrested for attempted child abduction. However, he still holds parental authority, and the Japanese justice system has nothing to blame him for.

Judges in Japan, however, had warned Mr. Fichot that he would not see his children again if he made their abduction public: they executed the terms of this blackmail. **“Therefore, this hunger strike is my last resort,”** Mr. Fichot said.

A Practice Contradictory to International Law:

Since the kidnapping of his children, Vincent Fichot, like other French and foreign fathers, has repeated appeals against an inhuman system, that of a State which, although having ratified the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), does not care about children's rights and their well-being.

“After unsuccessful attempts in Japan where I was refused to file a complaint on the grounds that my case was a "private matter ", I decided to turn, with the unconditional support of my lawyer Maître Jessica Finelle of the law firm Zimeray & Finelle, specialist in human rights, to the UN, French and European institutions.”

Complaint Filed in France:

French criminal justice has opened a judicial investigation currently underway for the abduction of a minor.

Me Finelle also denounced the role of the Japanese Embassy in France, which had hosted a meeting aimed at advising Japanese spouses of separating couples. At the meeting, "advice" was given to enable Japanese parents to evade international law provisions prohibiting child abduction. This unacceptable situation was also denounced by a Japanese parliamentarian.

Complaint Filed with the United Nations:

In August 2019, the United Nations Human Rights Council received from several fathers a complaint against Japan for serious violations of children's rights.

President Macron Deemed the Situation "Unacceptable":

In June 2019, Mr. Fichot and other fathers in a similar situation were hosted by President Macron, on a visit to Japan. M Fichot said:

"He deemed these tragedies "unacceptable" and opened up to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who had previously been questioned on the same subject by 26 European ambassadors in office in Japan in 2018, who then expressed their "deep concerns".

European Parliament Intervention¹:

On July 8th, 2020, the European Parliament adopted almost unanimously a resolution condemning the abductions of European children in Japan and criticizing “the reluctance of Japanese authorities to comply with international law”.¹

It has been made clear that Japan does not care about the ongoing international actions and diplomatic pressure, at this time powerless to remedy this tragic situation.

WHAT CAN EMMANUEL MACRON DO?

The French state has an obligation to protect its citizens, and more particularly its children, even outside its borders.²

But the actions of the French government towards these human rights violations remain modest and insufficient even as Japan continues to ignore its demands.

France must take adequate measures and demand immediate reparations for the serious violations our children’s rights in accordance with the United Nations principles.³

The International Court of Justice could be seized by France:

If Japan persists, it will mark its clear and permanent refusal to respect the fundamental rights of French children on Japanese territory. Therefore, it will be up to France to take the case to the International Court of Justice. Failure to act in this direction would give the Japanese authorities a blank check to persist in their contempt for the best interests of Franco-Japanese children.

¹<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20200706IPR82720/parliament-sounds-alarm-over-children-in-japan-taken-from-eu-parents>

² In two orders of April 9, 2019, confirmed by a decision of the Council of State dated April 23, 2019 (CE, April 23, 2019, n° 429668), the summary judge of the Administrative Tribunal of Paris considered (TA Paris, April 9 2019, ordinance n° 1906076/9 and n° 1906077/9, §4): “It is incumbent on the State, guarantor of respect for the constitutional principle of the right to safeguard human dignity, to ensure that the right to any person not to be subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment is guaranteed. (...) These obligations are imposed on the State as part of its general duty to protect its nationals on French territory, but also outside its borders. “The administrative judge added:” The same applies to respect for the best interests of the child recalled by the Constitutional Council in decision No. 2018-768 QPC of March 21, 2019 “(§4)

³ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/remedyandrepairation.aspx>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S30_Be3sD6A
