

Solomon's Protocol

Kristine Uhlman

This handout includes selected sections from the unpublished work Solomon's Protocol. The sections are in the author's draft form. They provide an overview of the issue, information on prevention and maintaining contact with an abducted child.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Non-Hague, Islamic Countries – *Listing of those nations where the Islamic traditions influence family law, and a brief discussion of why there is perceived to be an increase in the number of international abductions.*

Simplifying Assumptions – *An observation of the common characteristics of Kidnapping cases from the United States to the Islamic countries.*

SECTION 2 : OVERVIEW OF SHARI'A LAW - *with a focus on marriage, children, and custody abduction.*

Marriage and Religious Conversion in Islam – *Many dual-national families in the United States consist of a western 'American' woman raised in the Judeo-Christian traditions who may, or may not, convert to Islam to marry.*

- The Islamic Marriage Contract:
- Marriage contract stipulations, divorce and delayed *dower*:
- Islamic conversion during marriage:
- Divorce:
- Custody following divorce:

Common Responsibilities – *Expected family roles of the Muslim father, mother, and children, and how the responsibilities and expectations differ from the current 'American' cultural expectations.*

- Motherhood and children:
- Circumcision of children:
- Children's responsibility to their parents:
- Restrictions on women:
- Extended family:

Divorce and *idda* – *How to reduce the risk of custody abduction during Divorce.*

Restrictions - *Religious, gender and age restrictions to custody. The mother's bond with her children.*

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

SECTION 3: RESOURCES - *reporting the abduction, available legal tools and how to find good advice.*

Legal representation – *Finding and educating your lawyer*

Government Agencies - *The jurisdiction of the US Government in our family, our expectations of protection and the reality of individual responsibility.*

- Department of State:
- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children:
- Embassy support:
-

Emergency Response to a Kidnapping

Civil and Criminal Actions - *Lack of enforceable legal remedy. What legal actions and documents you may need to assist in negotiations, what documents may harm your negotiating position.*

Decisions to be made - *What path is best for your family circumstance?*

- Communicating with the abductor:
- Role of the Media:
- Communicating with the Abductor’s Diplomatic leaders:

Recovery - *The lack of remedy to recover an abducted child taken to an Islamic nation and options to the legal process.*

- Recovery Actions:
- Diplomatic Means

SECTION 4 - PREVENTION

The Children’s Nationality – *Dual-national citizenship, religion, Spouse’s Ex-Patriot legal status / Immigration and Nationalization / Travel documents and travel restrictions.*

- Immigration:
- American citizenship:
- Relocation to the husband’s homeland:

Identification of Vulnerable Families - *Discussion of ‘Risk Indicator Factors’ and profiles of abductors, as previously presented in the various ABA Center on Children and the Law Research Projects.*

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

- Preventive Measures during Family Disputes:
- Physical abuse and battering:

Separation - Mediation under Islamic guidance. The realities of going underground.

Custody Disputes – Preventative measures.

SECTION 5: Maintaining Contact with your Abducted Child

Legal options to gain access to your child - *The decision to submit yourself to another country's jurisdiction, what you win and lose.*

The Child's Perspective – *Age and emotional development, and what to expect from your child in response to an abduction. Resiliency and typical emotional self-defense mechanisms of the abducted child.*

The Abductor's Perspective - *Why he believes he did the right thing and preparation for his reaction to your contact with your child.*

Attitude and Focus - *Finding strength when the real world has limited your relationship opportunities with your abducted child. Boundaries to respect, imposed limits to ignore.*

Realistic Goals - *Steps towards meeting your goals. How to chose your battles.*

Welfare and Whereabouts Visits – *What to expect. Why the reports never make you feel better.*

Phone, FAX, email and Letters – *Simple things that say, " I Love You".*

Self-Preservation and Survival - *Attitudes and the choices to be made.*

Help Your Child to Locate You - *Contacts to be maintained.*

Documenting Your Survival – *What to save for your child, your child's expectation of you.*

Words from our Children – *Statements from grown-up victims of international abduction. What was important to them during the conflict, how they perceive their parents today.*

Solomon's Protocol

Solomon's Children

*A guide to prevention
and an approach to surviving
custody abduction to the Islamic world*

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Children born to cross-cultural families do thrive within the diversity of experiences offered under each parent's heritage. When those families are in the process of dissolution, however, the children are at a greater risk than most children of divorce. The kidnapping of children to the Islamic Middle East by the non-custodial parent has become a too-frequent occurrence, and these children often find themselves in a tug-of-war between two cultures. As the Islamic countries are not signatory to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, there is no reliable legal process by which an abducted child can be returned to the United States. This manual is offered as a guide to those seeking preventative measures to reduce the risk of abduction, and to understand the options in responding to an abduction. Included are a directory of sources of support and suggestions of various survival strategies for victims of what is, to all appearances to be, an unjust and permanent act of kidnapping.

This document is meant to be a guide to help those who find themselves in the midst of a custody dispute over their child, or for those seeking to prevent such a dispute. The guide is based on the personal experiences of the author as well as several other parents who have agreed to share their experiences with you. Much of the resource material referenced here has been provided by the Department of State, Office of Children's Issues; the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC); as well as research conducted and published by the American Bar Association, Office of Children and the Law. The opinions expressed herein are the author's and individual contributors, and do not reflect the policy of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

As you read through this document, remember that custody abductions are not unique to the Islamic world, and in fact the most frequent destination country of abductors is Germany as well as the Scandinavian countries. Custody abduction is a criminal act conducted by an individual against his own family, not a function of nationality.

Solomon's Protocol covers prevention as well as survival, because much of the knowledge and many of the emotional tools necessary to face the trauma of potential or actual loss of a child is rooted in an understanding of the culture of Islam. We believe that by learning about the Islamic perspective of the family roles and responsibilities, the risk of abduction may be reduced.

Non-Hague, Islamic Countries – Listing of those nations where the Islamic traditions influence family law, and a brief discussion of why there is perceived to be an increase in the number of international abductions.

The Islamic population of the world is around one billion, with 30% in the Indian subcontinent, 20% in Sub-Saharan Africa, 17% in Southeast Asia, 18% in the Arab world, 10% in the Russian republics and China. Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan comprise 10% of the non-Arab Middle East. Although there are Muslim minorities in almost every area, including Latin American and Australia, they are most numerous as a portion of the populations of the Russian republics, Pakistan, and central Africa. There are an estimated 5 million Muslims in the United States. (1)

The language of Islam is Arabic, although both Arab and non-Arab cultures can be Muslim. Recitation of the Quran is always in the original Arabic, whereas some of the Hadiths and legal practices may be translated and recited in the language of the community, such as Farci in Iran and Urdu in Pakistan. The Hadiths are a series of documentations of reported sayings of the Prophet Mohammed, with varying acceptance of authenticity by author. Shari'a law is a combination of the Quran with various interpretations supported by selected Hadiths as well as the divisions between and among the various Schools of interpretation, four Sunni Schools and the Shia. Those countries of the Islamic world which found the need to effect changes in the law of the family in order to address contemporary requirements did so within the framework of Islamic legal principles, preserving the Islamic context of the law (2).

Shari'a law has been incorporated at varying degrees into the personal status of most of the Middle Eastern countries, excluding Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf States where no codes have been enacted but which rely on the doctrines of the locally applicable school of Islamic law. (2) Of these countries, the United States Department of State reports the largest number of cases involved children abducted to Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. Other countries children have been abducted to include:

Iran	Algeria	Iraq	Kuwait	Lebanon
Libya	Morocco	Syria	Tunisia	Yemen
Bahrain	Oman	Qatar	Sudan	Turkey
United Arab Emirates	Pakistan			

Typical American University campuses reflect a cross section of the Earth's societies, reflecting diversity similar to the member list of the United Nations and including most if not all of the above listed countries. As the world becomes

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

smaller and the numbers of cross-cultural marriages are increasing, so to are the divorces and international custody disputes. Many of the abductors had entered the United States as young men or women on student visas, and several of the abductors had entered the States under programs financed by their home country to obtain American University degrees.

The first highly publicized incident of an American woman facing a custody dispute with an Islamic country was with the publication in 1971 of Marianne Alireza's story, "At the Drop of a Veil." (3) A student at the University of California at Berkeley, Marianne met and married her Saudi Arabian husband in the early 1960's. Marianne set up housekeeping in Saudi Arabia prior to the availability of indoor plumbing, refrigeration, and radio. Following their divorce, her four children were raised in Saudi Arabia and she had no option but to return to the United States. By maintaining a cordial relationship with her husband's family, she has successfully nurtured the bond with her children and remains in contact with them as adults. Marianne traveled frequently to Saudi Arabia during the 1970's to visit with her growing children, and often lectured to various women's groups during that time within Saudi Arabia about her early life in the Kingdom.

The 1987 publication of Betty Mahmoody's book, "Not Without my Daughter", and the subsequent movie by the same title, brought widespread international attention to the topic. Betty, and her five-year old daughter Mahtob, were forcibly retained in Iran by her husband, and were subject to brutal physical and emotional battering (4). The laws in Iran are such that Betty became an Iranian citizen by her marriage, and both she and her daughter were considered the dependents of her husband. As legal custodian of both his wife and child while in Iran, Moody Mahmoody was within his legal, Shari'a rights, to prohibit travel outside of their home. Betty's courageous escape across the mountains and into Turkey with her small daughter was her only means to freedom: there were no legal means by which Betty could exit Iran, with or without her daughter.

Betty's difficult escape from Iran and from her husband has been repeated dozens of times by American mothers and children across the Middle East. Muslim husbands and fathers have the legal authority to restrict the travel of their dependents, and it is typical that visas to exit the Islamic countries require the permission of the child's father before a woman and her children can travel. American women have found themselves in desperate situations when they realize that the United States Embassy cannot escort them and their children out of their husband's country, much as Betty did when she escaped first to the Swiss Embassy expecting to be helped to leave Iran, only to be sent back to her husband. When asked during one of her lectures why she did not hate the Iranians or demonize the Muslims because of what had happened to her, Betty replied, "I cannot hate the Iranians because I could not have escaped without their help. This was the action of an individual, my husband, who took advantage of the laws of his country to try to control and brutalize me."

Simplifying Assumptions – *An observation of the common characteristics of*

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

kidnapping cases from the United States to the Islamic countries.

Most if not all of the cases of custody abduction to Islamic Countries involve a parent who was born or raised in a foreign country and continues to have close family, business, and/or religious ties to his culture. Most of the abductors are fathers, although a number of Muslim ex-patriot mothers have sought the protection of their homelands in efforts to either restrict access to a child or in dispute of an American custody order. Although statistics are not available, review of newspaper reports, interviews with various missing children's organizations, as well as contact with several victim families allow for the following observations and common characteristics of families where abduction has occurred:

The left behind parents reported the relationships to have been based on love. None presumed the relationship was solely for the benefit of the spouse's immigration status, although after an abduction some mothers accused the father of using her to enhance his immigration standing.

The father is an ex-patriot, foreign national, raised in an Islamic country prior to entering the United States. Many of the fathers in the examples presented herein entered the country on a student visa and met their future wives in a university setting.

The father's immediate family remains in his homeland, although he may have brothers or sisters here in the United States. The father is typically the first generation of his family to travel and/or study beyond the borders of the homeland.

In all of the cases studied, the father was characterized as 'westernized'. This term has been explained to mean he was not visibly different in his actions, behavior, and dress than other students or Americans in a similar setting. Families reacting to abduction have also characterized the father as displaying the attributes of being 'westernized' to the extent that his religious beliefs were not obvious. Fathers were generally not observed to practice the Islamic religion prior to or often during the marriage.

The father may or may not be an American citizen; most fathers obtained a permanent residence status ('Green Card') following entry into the States on a student visa. Permanent residence status was obtained either through employment or by marriage to the American wife.

The mother is usually an American citizen, born and raised in a middle-class, Christian home. The mothers characterize their upbringing as 'conservative.' Some mothers were from Muslim, first generation immigrant families originating from the Middle East.

Most abducting fathers were professionals; many were educated in the medical sciences and had completed the professional residency and certification process. The academic background and professional training obtain was sufficient to return to their homeland and begin a professional career. Many fathers had post-graduate

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

degrees. Left behind victim mothers occasionally reported that the abducting fathers were not satisfied with their careers in the United States or had difficulty with their employers. It was not uncommon for the abducting father to have complained about perceived (or actual) racial and/or religious discrimination in the work place. It was also not uncommon for the father to have complained about a perceived lack of respect for his academic achievements or business accomplishments.

In most of the cases the parents were married and the abduction occurred in the process of or immediately following a divorce, however, some parents never married. The marriage was typically a civil ceremony and a few Christian ceremonies were reported.

Most of the mothers reported that an Islamic ceremony was performed in addition to the other ceremony, with the meaning or intent of the Islamic ceremony not really understood. Some mothers converted to Islam.

Fear of abduction was typically reported by the mother in response to a verbal threat made by the father, and the threats were believed. All abductions were preceded by a threat to abduct; however, not all threats were followed by abduction.

Both male and female children were abducted between the ages of 2 and 12 years. Young girls are more often abducted than boys are; older boys are more often abducted than pre-teen girls.

Most of the contributions to this guide came from mothers and fathers who had lost their children; abducting fathers or mothers have generally not contributed. Contributors have been given the option to remain anonymous although a few have agreed to be named. Several grown children have also contributed, although their full names have been withheld to protect their privacy. The remainder of the text will proceed with the simplifying assumption that the mother is the victim parent, but as appropriate within the text, examples where this assumption is not true will also be presented. Examples are taken from several Islamic countries including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Tunisia, Kuwait, Jordan, and Iran.

Islamic law is unique in that it allowed divorce at a time when both secular and Christian religious law prohibited the dissolution of marriage. This long history, as well as the geographic distribution of peoples practicing the religion, has allowed for the development of many variations on interpretations of the law within each country of the region. Due to this diversity, only those attributes that are common to all are presented here. It should also be understood that in the effort to generalize these attributes, important and significant differences may be overlooked that may be important to your situation. Because of this, it is important to seek professional legal advice from someone expert in the local application of the Shari'a to your situation.

Do not use Solomon's Protocol as a substitute for obtaining qualified legal or other professional assistance. This publication is designed to provide accurate and

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

authoritative information based on the personal experiences of the victims of international custody abductions. Many opinions are expressed and a diversity of examples are presented. It is hoped that this wisdom grown from loss can protect you and your child.

SECTION 4 - PREVENTION

Each Islamic society and individual family will have widely differing expectations and local cultural traditions as it relates to the role of women and the family, but the basics as presented above are generally consistent across the Islamic world. It should be understood that the roles and responsibility of the family originate in the Quran, are further defined by various Hadiths, and have been practiced through generations until they have become tradition. This culturally based family structure is consistent across the various Islamic countries and practiced by both devout and non-practicing Muslims. A foreign-national male entering into a marriage with an American woman would have come from a family where roles would not be too dissimilar from these basics. The culture is inseparable, to some extent, from the religion. Christian Arab families in Egypt, Jordan, and the other Islamic countries would exhibit a similar structure, but more importantly, the personal status laws of those countries define marriage and divorce within the framework of Shari'a.

One should be aware of the possibility that the Muslim husband in a mixed American marriage would structure his concept of family on his past experiences and on the structure of his own family and upbringing, just as American wives would do the same. American mothers who have lost children to custody abduction observed some if not all of the following while their families were still intact:

- The husband expected to be the final authority on decisions in the home. He expected to be the head of the household. Many husbands would not share housework. Husbands were surprised if their wife questioned his authority.
- During arguments, the husband sought guidance from the wife's father. One American woman could not comprehend why every time she and her husband would argue the husband would call her father and ask for intervention. She could not understand why her husband just wouldn't talk it through with her.
- Misunderstandings can become based on what appears to be intentional testing of cultural limits and interpretations. An American wife reported that her husband, a Jordanian graduate student at a Midwestern University, wrapped their wet puppy in a wool afghan grabbed from a porch swing after a sudden thunderstorm. The wife responded angrily to the mud and dirt on the afghan, by shouting, "You SOB, I knitted that myself!" Although resident in the States for over 5 years, the Jordanian selected the literal translation of the colloquialism, and reacted to the perceived insult to his mother.
- In relationships that contained physical abuse, the husband expressed surprise that the wife would not accept physical discipline. Some of the relationships were characterized by serious physical abuse and battering.

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

- When under stress due to problems with finances, school, or employment, the husband sought emotional support from his family and not from his wife.
- Although the husband may have never expressed or practiced his Islamic beliefs, the birth of a child would initiate a significant change in the husband's behavior. The men most often becoming more conscience of their Islamic responsibilities as a new father. One pregnant American woman was surprised when her Jordanian husband suddenly forbade her consumption of pork products. In their weekly pizza parties with friends at a local Pizza Hut, she was forbidden to consume the pepperoni and sausage pizza her husband and his Arab friends continued to eat. When questioned, her husband said that the unborn child was not in a position to chose and that the mother should respect that the Muslim child may wish to remain kosher.
- All mothers reported that the pregnancy and/or birth of a child was the turning point in their relationship with their husbands. One Egyptian father, after having spent 18 years in the United States, decided that the United States was not a moral society in which to raise a child. With the birth of his first son, he began making plans to relocate to Egypt. By the time the second child was born, he had established a business in Cairo, and succeeded in convincing his American wife to relocate to Egypt.
- Many mothers reported a sudden desire on the part of their husbands to relocate to their homelands after the birth of a child. Several families did return to the father's homeland.
- Many American women were distressed by their inability to understand the expectations of their in-laws. Visits by non-English speaking in-laws became stressful, and the American woman was expected to anticipate the needs of her mother-in-law. One American woman became jealous of her Palestinian mother-in-law when she was hospitalized for cataract surgery. The sons organized and delivered Arabic meals during the mother's convalesce. The American woman had no such support when she had been hospitalized to remove her appendix, and she had had to continue to keep house and schedule meals for her own family.

The Children's Nationality – Dual-national citizenship, religion, Spouse's Ex-Patriot legal status / Immigration and Nationalization / Travel documents and travel restrictions.

The citizenship status of the children in these dual-national families can be complex. Children born in the United States are American citizens. American citizenship is automatically transferred to a child born overseas to an American parent, if the parent is 18 years or older. One young American mother residing in Kuwait was dismayed to discover that her twin daughters were not considered American citizens because the mother was 17 years old at the time of the birth. The twin

girls were granted citizenship twelve years later by citizenship application through their American grandmother.

Most Islamic countries also transfer citizenship status to children born of ex-patriot nationals. The importance of establishing paternity of children is such that the verbal acknowledgement of parentage is sufficient to include a child in the father's passport. Some countries, such as Iran, automatically transfer citizenship to the mother of children born of an Iranian father. Betty Mahmoody, in her book, *"Not Without My Daughter"*, (4) expressed surprise when she was told she could not leave Iran with her daughter because they were both considered Iranian citizens and could not travel without her husband's permission. Betty had not known that marriage to her Iranian husband, a 12-year resident of the United States, automatically changed her citizenship status.

- **Immigration:**

Although several marriages did occur so as to benefit the immigration status of an ex-patriot on a visitor or student visa, most wives interviewed expressed the belief that their marriage had been for love. Husbands who established permanent residence status within the United States as a result of marriage to an American, often made every effort to remain in compliance with the immigration rules for frequency of re-entry and residence within the country. Those who did obtain American citizenship often neglected to inform his native country of his change in citizenship. For some countries, such as Iran, carrying an Iranian passport in addition to the American passport was necessary to travel into Iran where the American passport has been prohibited. In Saudi Arabia, where holding dual-nationality is a serious violation of Saudi law, it is not uncommon for the father to hold two sets of passports for himself and his children. The American passport is convenient for international travel and it appears that every effort is made to seek the advantage of holding both the American and the native passport.

Even in those cases where the permanent residence status has been violated, the Immigration and Nationalization Service has been casual in the application of deportation law. In one case where an Iranian father holding a permanent residence status ('Green Card') abducted a 5-year old girl to Iran, the American mother flew to Iran in an effort to retrieve her child. The father held the mother in Iran against her will for ten years, during which time another child was born. Finally convincing the father of her loyalty, the family returned to the United States for a business trip.

Escaping the father at customs, the mother and her two children went underground in the United States, hoping the Iranian father would be deported. Although the father's Green Card was revoked, he was allowed to remain in the United States for a year pending a deportation hearing. During that year, the mother was able to obtain a divorce and was granted custody of her children. The Iranian father continued to harass the woman's family, making it impossible for her to return home in fear of encountering her ex-husband. Several friends and family reported being approached by private investigators, seeking her whereabouts. Two years

after the mother had successfully fled the husband, the father is currently employed at a college in the Southwest. His immigration status is not known.

- **American citizenship:**

American citizenship holds no protection if a naturalized citizen father abducts a child. One of the more heart breaking situations involved a Jordanian father who had obtained American citizenship by marriage to his wife in Portland, Oregon. Two daughters were born of the marriage, and during the divorce the father kidnapped the two girls and took them out of state. The girls were recovered, but the judge ordered unsupervised visitation because the father had “learned his lesson” after the first kidnapping incident. A medical professional, the father then found employment in Saudi Arabia and he then abducted the girls on their American passports. After fifteen years in the Kingdom, the mother was allowed to visit with her daughters during the wedding ceremony of the youngest girl, then 19 years old.

One of the most difficult realities American women have had to face when they marry an ex-patriot Islamic national is the control granted the male in travel within his country. American women married to men from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Kuwait, and the Arab Emirates cannot leave those countries without an exit visa approved by their husbands. In Lebanon, the husband can obtain a court order prohibiting his wife from traveling without his permission. Of serious concern is the fact that the minor children of the dual-national marriage cannot travel in the Islamic world without their father’s permission. Children in Iran, Algeria, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syrian Tunisia, Yemen, Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia cannot leave the country without their father’s permission.

If a child is abducted to some of the Islamic countries, the American mother cannot enter that country to visit with her child without the father’s permission. The most notorious country for restricting a mother’s right to access is the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where the ex-husband may be required to provide a letter of no-objection if a mother is to be allowed an entry visa for the purpose of visitation. In the example of the Oregon mother with two daughters in Saudi Arabia, the American citizen, Jordanian national father was required to authorize sponsorship with the Saudi authorities before the mother could enter the Kingdom.

- **Relocation to the husband’s homeland:**

Several families did relocate to the father’s homeland following the birth of children, and these women were sincere in their belief that their family could thrive in the new environment. American mothers who later lost children to custody abduction observed some of the following attributes in their relocated family once in their husband’s homeland:

- Their husbands had made little to no effort to educate them as to what to expect in their homeland. For some mothers, the first time they saw their husbands in native dress was on arrival at the airport.

- Once in their husband’s homeland, the mothers were under intense pressure to accept conversion to Islam and to adopt the cultural manifestations expected of women, such as wearing the veil. For those women who had already converted, they were pressured to become even more devout. The women sensed that there was no middle-ground, that any effort on their part to accept the traditions of their husband’s culture were met with even more criticism to go further.
- Once in their husband’s homeland, many mothers were displaced within their own homes by their mother-in-law. The American wives were expected to undergo re-training by the mother-in-law, cooking and cleaning under her direction and expectation.

Although many of the American wives were aware of the strain on their marriage introduced by these cultural and religious differences, most believed the relationship was strong enough to overcome the stress. None of the American women anticipated the break-up of their family or believed their husbands could interfere with their parental relationship. None of the mothers anticipated the abduction of their child until the father threatened to remove the child from the mother. Typically, the threats took the form of “obey me, or I will take the child away from you”, or, “this is my country, do as I say or I will take your child away”. Some threats were not made until divorce was faced, at which time the future abductor would say, “if you leave me, I will take your child and make you suffer for the rest of your life.” Although all cases of abduction were preceded by a threat, not all of the mothers believed the threat.

Identification of Vulnerable Families - Discussion of ‘Risk Indicator Factors’ and profiles of abductors, as previously presented in the various ABA Center on Children and the Law Research Projects.

The American Bar Association, Center for Children and the Law, conducted a project supported by the U.S. Department of Justice, titled, *“Issues in Resolving Cases of International Child Abduction.”* (18) By interviewing 97 left-behind parents of children abducted between January 1990 and December 1994, the study attempted to characterize risk factors and identify preventative measures to reduce the risk of parental abduction. A quarter of the abductions during the study period were to Muslim countries.

Although the ABA Center study reported that over 80% of the left-behind parents reported that, prior to the abduction, the abductor threatened they would never see their children again, this percentage is of all international abductions to both Islamic and non-Islamic countries. Every case known to the author of abduction to the Islamic world was preceded by a threat to abduct.

Parents who have strong ties to another country are at risk of abducting their children, and this risk is significant when in the process of separation and divorce. The left-behind parents interviewed in the ABA study, as well as the cases known

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

to the author, found the following to be important factors in the identification of vulnerable families:

- The abductor recently experienced severe loss or humiliation, such as the loss of a job or a coveted employment or academic position;
- The abductor idealized his own family, homeland, culture and religion;
- The abductor deprecated American society and culture, and often placed blame on his spouse for political situations overseas;
- The abductor dismissed the child's mixed heritage;
- The abductor depreciated the importance of the other parent's relationship with the child, often criticizing the parenting skills, political beliefs, family, and upbringing of the other parent; and,
- The abductor had strong emotional / financial / business support from their homeland.

Successful abductors had strong ties to their countries or were able to find employment within a neighboring country of similar cultural and religious traditions. Employment opportunities are numerous for American educated engineers, scientists, and medical professionals, with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates offering employment and residence for many Islamic nationals from several countries.

- **Preventive Measures during Family Disputes:**

Most people facing stress and turmoil seek comfort in the safety of their past. They return to patterns that gave them solace in the past, and most often this means returning to their roots and to their families. It is common to return to the comfort of tradition, and for an uprooted young person seeking his path in a new country, new culture, and often a new relationship, longing to return 'home' should be expected.

Returning home does not always mean a physical return to his homeland, but more often means a realization of the importance of his past in building the foundation of his new life. This realization is exhibited by increased contact with his family by phone and/or mail, and may also include increased contact with the ex-patriot community here in the United States. These activities will most often occur in response to stress, and almost always in response to the impending birth of a child. With the birth of a child all families face stress and experience uncertainty with the financial and emotional status of the family. Differentiating between damaging turmoil and that expected in any healthy family is difficult, but examples from other dual-national families faced with abduction may help.

All victim parents reported that the birth of a child signaled a change in their relationship and, from the perspective of hindsight, was the beginning of the turmoil that led to divorce. One American mother reported that everything was fine in her marriage to a Jordanian business student until she became pregnant. Her Jordanian husband wanted her to start wearing clothing that would cover her legs, arms, and hair. He demanded that she break off ties with her best friend, a Jewish girl. "It was like all of a sudden he was reminded of what he was supposed to do as a good Arab father."

All victim parents reported that the abduction was preceded by a threat to remove the child, although the threat may not have immediately preceded the actual abduction. One abductor, resident within in the United States for 18 years, returned to Egypt with his two young sons claiming that the American society was not safe for children. Exposure to drugs and violence in American schools is routinely cited as justification for removing a child to what is believed to be a more stable moral environment in the Islamic world.

If the upbringing of the children is the focus of family disputes, consideration should be given to incorporating Islamic instruction in the children's upbringing or enrolling the child in full-time schooling at an Islamic institute. It must be understood that an Islamic upbringing may become a moral imperative on the part of the father, even if his prior behavior and statements were not typically Islamic. Those abductions that were motivated by the sincere desire to protect his child from the perceived evils of the non-Islamic world could have been avoided by including the American Islamic community within the family. A father who is following a moral imperative to provide his child with an Islamic upbringing will not restrict the mother's access to her child.

- **Physical abuse and battering:**

Another attribute of family dysfunction that can be found across all social and economic classes, as well as religions and cultures, is the physically abusive spouse. Although Islam allows for the symbolic physical punishment of a disobedient wife, damaging physical abuse is not acceptable and can be a basis by which a woman can seek legal separation from her husband under Islamic law. In example cases where the threat to abduct was accompanied by physical abuse and battering, family discord could not be modified with compromise in cultural or religious aspects of the family. Batterers who abducted children were both robbing mothers of their children as an act of retaliation, and acting out their need for control and power. Preventive measures for a family situation where battering is a key aspect of family dynamics requires professional intervention.

Many of the victim parents reported their partners abducted their children following an event that was humiliating or involved the loss of face or pride. The loss of employment or the perception that racial discrimination or religious bigotry was responsible for a failure to succeed in the American society often led to blaming the American partner. After one American woman become more successful and began to earn a greater salary than her Iranian husband, the husband began to call her

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

“American piece of shit” and threatened to teach her a lesson by returning to Iran with their daughter. Again, this abductor’s motives appear to be more of saving face and retaliation by robbing a mother of her child than protecting his child’s Islamic heritage. A preventive measure for a family situation where the father is transferring his anger onto his partner includes professional intervention and mediation. In this, as well as the battering example, separation and divorce is the most likely outcome, and legal protective measures are appropriate to reduce the risk of child abduction.

Separation - *Mediation under Islamic guidance. The realities of going underground.*

If the root of the family discord seems beyond repair, physical separation may allow for the personal space and time alone that marriage partners need to reassess their situation and re-define their goals. Although a temporary separation after a family fight seems logical and expected in American culture, physical separation following a dispute with a Muslim husband may exacerbate the situation.

Family disputes are expected to be mediated by senior male members of the family, or by close and respected family friends. Prior to initialing the independent action of moving out or leaving the relationship, understand that this act could make the dispute worse and will most likely not be understood by your husband. Leaving the marriage home with your children and without your husband’s knowledge or permission can be perceived as a final, irrevocable separation, not as a temporary reaction to a short-term dispute. You can also be arrested in some Islamic countries if you are traveling without your husband’s permission, and charged with disobedience for abandoning the home. (19)

Under Shari’a law and within the Islamic culture, families are expected to follow the tradition of seeking help from within the family before separation. If separation is found necessary after the intervention of mediators, the husband would then announce his intent to divorce. Only then can a wife legally be physically separated from the marriage home.

Great opportunities exist for misunderstanding if you leave home following a domestic dispute. What you may perceive as time needed to cool off, your husband may perceive as an extreme act of importance greater than the original argument.

During separation, a married woman is expected to return to her father’s home or to reside in a situation that is ‘honorable’, such as living under the guardianship of her brother or grown son. Young children would be expected to remain with their mother, but only if the circumstance of her new living arrangement is morally appropriate. If you are resident in your husband’s country and he states his intention to divorce for separation, he is usually expected to provide living arrangements for you for the period of custody of the children. Once the children are of the age where the father may claim custody, the ex-husband no longer has any legal obligations towards your living arrangements and support.

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

The declaration of the intent to divorce is commonly perceived as a warning, and three such declarations are usually necessary before a divorce is final. Many opportunities exist for misunderstanding your spouse if you are not aware of the cultural expectations during family disputes. To obtain a morally and legally appropriate period of separation, the husband is expected to allow physical separation by announcing his intent to divorce. Many American women have reacted to such an announcement as though their marriages have ended, not realizing that such a request was more likely his culturally appropriate method of communicating his need for personal space and time alone.

One Minnesota mother took full responsibility for the abduction of her daughter, stating that she had been naïve during fights with her husband and was not sensitive to the obvious cultural differences between them. She constantly returns to her 'if only' scenarios, 'if only' she had understood his threats for divorce was a reaction to her leaving home after a fight. Once divorce was mentioned, she moved in with an ex-boyfriend, making remediation of the marriage impossible.

Leaving the marriage home and hiding you and your children from your husband during a family dispute is the least acceptable option if you wish to reduce the risk of future abduction of your children. Beyond the domestic expectations of obedience within the marriage and the authority and responsibility of the father over the children, severe loss of face occurs in the Islamic community if a man is perceived to have lost control over his family. Going underground with your children will most certainly exaggerate his intent to find you, and retaliation should not be unexpected.

Custody Disputes – *Preventative measures.*

Identification of children at risk begins with the understanding of the circumstances in the marriage or during the divorce that contribute to the father's religious or cultural imperative to protect the child. Attention should also be given to those situations where the father may be driven to retaliate against his spouse by taking advantage of the differences between the American secular and the Islamic Shari'a law. Protective measures for children at risk are found in the NCMEC Family Abduction book (15), and include:

- Supervised visitation, on a pre-determined schedule, in a setting comfortable to both parents as well as the child;
- The father should be restricted from removing the child from the jurisdiction of the court, and this restriction should be stated in the order so as to facilitate enforcement actions if an abduction were attempted;
- Restrictions on the issuance of an American passport for the child should be registered with the Department of State;

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

- Although it is recognized that multiple passport may exist, the father should be required to deposit his passport during the visitations;
- Orders pertaining to custody / visitation should be copied to the home Embassy of the father, with certification of receipt;
- The father should make every effort to obtain reciprocal Orders through his home Embassy and religious courts;
- The Orders should reference the 1990 amendment to the Immigration and Nationality Act, which states that any alien, who, in violation of a custody order issued by a court in the United States, takes or retains a child out of the United States may be excluded from the United States. (8USC(a)(9)(C)(I)). In addition to parents who abduct their children, the exclusion also can be applied to relative or friends who assist in keeping the child abroad; and,
- Both parents should be encouraged to operate within the restriction of the Orders, especially as they pertain to the father's rights of access to the child.

The ABA studies reported that five-year olds were the most often abducted, however children as young as 18 months have been taken from their mothers. Older children were more likely to be unlawfully retained in the Islamic country after court ordered unsupervised visitation or following an amicable agreement between the mother and father to allow visits to the father's homeland.

The most important protective measure to reduce the risk of abduction is to make every effort to maintain a civil relationship with the father of your child. One parent shared his belief that the most effective preventative measure is to "stay in love" with the other parent of your child. Acknowledge the importance of the other parent's heritage in your child's upbringing. One custody agreement from California ordered the mother to cook and serve Iranian food to her son once a week and enter the child in Persian classes so as to assure the continued connection with the father's culture. Study of and respect for the Islamic traditions will alleviate some of the father's concern for your custody of the child.

Some circumstances do not allow for the establishment of trust, and some abductions seemingly could not have been prevented without undue restrictions. In one case involving an 11-year-old boy from Seattle, the Saudi Arabian father assured the mother that he would be returned after a summer visit to his extended family in Saudi Arabia. The child had been given Islamic instruction at the local Mosque, and the mother had made every effort to instill a respect for the religion and culture of the father while he was growing up. The father accompanied the mother to the Saudi Embassy, where the child's exit visa and return airfare was presented as evidence of the father's sincerity to return the child. Unfortunately, the child was not returned after the summer visit. In this instance, the father's justification for the unlawful retention of the child was to introduce him to a proper Islamic upbringing that was not available in the United States. Without cause for a sincere mistrust of the father, there was no means by which this abduction could

have been prevented. Once in Saudi Arabia, the boy was not allowed to leave the country without his father's permission. Due to the age of the child, and the fact that the mother had remarried, she has no legal rights of access to her child in the Kingdom.

SECTION 5: Maintaining Contact with your Abducted Child

Islamic family law is the collection of those laws, backed by tradition and culture, which govern the relationships among the family and is the basis on which the Muslim family is founded. Islamic law considers your children Muslims. From the strictly spiritual point of view, a Muslim must observe Islamic law, and a Muslim who does not act in consonance with Shari'a imperils his spiritual salvation. The child's Muslim father may use this to justify his actions and under this authority may control contact with your abducted child. But also under the authority of the Islamic law may assist your efforts to gain access. Certain facts may impact your opportunity to establish contact:

- If you have renounced Islam or if you are not Muslim, several case examples have shown the children were taught that Islam forbids obedience to you. You may be prohibited from visiting with your children if your ex-husband is successful in establishing that your contact could imperil the child's religious upbringing.
- If you are Muslim and if your child is younger than seven (or nine or twelve, if a female in some jurisdictions) you do have the right of physical custody of the child. You may reside only at a location that meets with the approval of the father, who maintains legal custody of the child at all times. The father has the right to prohibit travel.
- Remarriage, even if to a Moslem, terminates all rights to custody to your child.

Even if the father is not a practicing Muslim, the Shari'a law will support the enforcement of Islamic guidance on your relationship with your child while within your ex-spouse's country of residence.

Although rare, there are examples of American Muslim fathers who have lost a child by abduction to the Islamic countries. It is expected that the father would have the legal right to remove the child from the physical custody of the mother when of age, however some countries are reported to have placed restrictions on that option. Although citizenship cannot pass from the mother's line, a recent case involving Saudi Arabia has indicated that a law does exist that apparently prohibits the removal of a child from Saudi Arabia without the mother's permission.

Legal options to gain access to your child - *The decision to submit yourself to another country's jurisdiction, what you win and lose.*

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

Several mothers have been successful in obtaining physical custody of their abducted child in the Shari'a court. In Egypt, Syria, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia, mothers have taken residence in the country, obtained local attorneys, petitioned the court, and won the right to live with their child for the period of permissible custody. The father retained legal custody and travel restrictions prohibited the removal of the child from the father's country.

Some mothers, unable to commit to establishing residency outside of the United States, have been able to obtain supervised visitation within the abductor's country of residence. Once you have established the precedent of one uneventful visit with your children, work towards another visit and/or a schedule of routine visits. Routine and consistent visitations with your children are your ultimate goal.

Most countries in the region will not accept or acknowledge your American court orders. In Saudi Arabia, for example, if you are not a resident of the same province as your children, you must obtain permission to have your case heard within the court nearest to your children. The process for addressing the Shari'a' court within a separate province within the Kingdom requires acknowledging the appropriate protocol of notification.

Finding employment and establishing residence in the country in which your children live is an option many mothers take. It also provides an opportunity for the abductor's family to get to know you. For some, this affords the opportunity to find alternative options for returning their child to the United States at a later time.

Many mothers have traveled to their ex-husband's country of residence so as to maintain contact with their children. Traveling as an un-escorted woman, however, is restricted in some countries and may be difficult in most other countries in the region. Her congressman supported one Florida mother in her efforts to contact her abducted daughter. Because of his intervention, the Saudi Ambassador sponsored the travel visa for the woman who traveled with her uncle as a *Mahram* (chaperon). During her short visit she was able to say good bye to her daughter, something that she had not been able to communicate appropriately following the abduction.

The Child's Perspective – *Age and emotional development, and what to expect from your child in response to an abduction. Resiliency and typical emotional self-defense mechanisms of the abducted child.*

Few children have had the opportunity to document their emotions following abduction, and at best, they may report scenes or events from memory years after the event. Psychologists studying victim trauma have published studies evaluating the response of a child to abduction, and brief summaries of the findings are summarized here (20):

Once aware of the abduction, the child expresses surprise, panic, fear and possibly excitement within the first few minutes to an hour after the event.

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

Within the first month following the separation from the left behind parent, the child begins to settle in and to adjust to the situation. The child's 'survival instinct' allows him to begin to adapt and cope to the new situation. Depending on the age and overall level of functioning, the abduction may be more or less traumatic.

Psychological findings report that within the first month to first several months, the child's coping strategies allows for adjusting to realities of not seeing the left behind parent and family. Depression can become more pronounced at this point. Older children report feeling anger at the left behind parent because the parent did not have the power to rescue the child.

Those children who are perceptive to the conflict between their parents will sense that they are in the midst of a war between the two. Having realized they have lost one parent in this war; the child will do everything to hold onto the existing parent. The child will not be able to distinguish between or take sides, other than to fear the loss of their remaining parent.

After months to years of separation, the abducted child reaches an acceptance of his surroundings, although there are still psychological issues that remain unresolved, but the day-to-day living has become accepted with little discussion about the past. There may still be some curiosity about other missing family members but now the story and the fabrication which has been built into the abduction scenario has begun to become a natural part of the child's belief system. Those children who have been reunited with a left-behind parent years after an abduction have challenged the victim parent to respond to the allegations fabricated by the abductor.

Although it seems inconceivable that the child does not seriously suffer as a consequence of international abduction, the available research is unsatisfactory in establishing reliable conclusions. (21) Children are resilient and will adapt to their circumstances. The innate survival instinct of a child allows them to cope and eventually settle in to a life beyond the abduction – a skill that most victim parents are not able to acquire.

Some children, years after the event, recall vivid details of their abduction. Younger children tend to report on the events, but older children (four years or more) report a sense of abandonment once they realized their familiar caretaker (the mother) was not going to repair the changes that had occurred.

Eighteen years after the event, Hani remembers the day of his abduction: "I was two or three when it all happened so all I remember is flashes, but what I remember of it I remember it perfectly and to the smallest details, like the toy kangaroo dad gave me so I would calm down (and in other words to shut me up!). But, I remember I wasn't that scared, I guess that was because I was happy to see my dad, and I still remembered him, and maybe because I saw him cry when he first got us in the car. I think I felt safe."

Abducted to Saudi Arabia at the age of two and a half, Sarah, now fourteen, recalls her father taking her to Disneyland. She remembers waving goodbye to her mother and she also recalls a woman who was covered up on the floor of the car traveling with them for part of the journey. Sarah waited for her mother to recover her. She envisioned ways to escape so she could return to her mother and at the age nine, she and her mother were reunited.

Twenty five years after her mother spirited her away from Saudi Arabia, Nadia recalls her past: "I was about two or two and a half, I think, when my mom got me out of Saudi, although I could be mistaken. My mom doesn't like to talk about it much. I never did either, but now I've gotten to the point where I think nothing will change unless you educate yourself and others about it and work through things. Mom still doesn't like to deal with it, and I used to get so annoyed when she didn't even want to talk to me about it when I brought it up....Talking about it aggravates her though, where it helps me to work through it and remember what is really important." Nadia sought out and later reunited with her left behind father during her teen years.

Eleven-year-old Noel called her mother from a hotel room in Paris, effectively aborting an abduction in process to Tunisia in 1980. A few months after her return, she reported, "I wasn't really scared, we were with my dad, but I knew mom would be worried about us. That's why I called. I didn't know why dad wanted to take us away from our mom, but he kept telling us we would really like it in his country and he wanted us to be with him. When I grow up I want to visit my dad and get to know him." Ten years later, Noel sought out her father and traveled to Kuwait where her father was working. After a two-week visit, Noel returned to the states. She continues sporadic contact with her father but will not speak about her visit with him.

The Abductor's Perspective - Why he believes he did the right thing and preparation for his reaction to your contact with your child.

- Are you a good witch or a bad witch?
- Who me? Why, I'm not a witch at all. I'm Dorothy Gale, from Kansas...
- And so, what the Munchkins want to know is, are you a good witch or a bad witch:
- But I've already told you. I'm not a witch at all.

From *The Wizard of Oz* Movie

As Dr. Skoler points out in his article on international child custody and his analogy from *The Wizard of Oz* (22), the cross-cultural tendency is to view persons from another culture in an overly idealized or overly devalued way. To use the language of *The Wizard of Oz*, cross-cultural custody conflicts often mobilize the "bad witch" convictions towards the other parent. Such good guy verses bad guy, and black verses white emotional thinking is characterized of many parents who engage in parental abduction.

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

Psychological studies and profiles report a consistent motivation of all abductors: the need to control and the adamant conviction that they are the better parent. They see themselves as saviors, not scoundrels, and therapists and social scientists that treat and study parental kidnapers note their tremendous sense of self-justifications. (23) To the abductor, the justification for the abduction is as clear as black versus white, and they are the good guys. The left behind parent is the wicked witch. Coupled with the Islamic and cultural mandate to take a leadership role in the family, an abducting father's motivation seems straightforward. A chronological summary of the abductor's likely emotional state follows (20):

For the first minutes to an hour after the abduction he must exercise control, will use whatever restraints or verbiage needed to control the victim and the victim's behavior. The abductor's behavior is manipulative, controlling and self-justifying until the end of the first week, when he is likely to be hypervigilant, avoiding being caught will be of primary concern. If not already within the safety of home country, he may continue to be mobile and relocate to a variety of places.

After the first few months, the abductor will put more pressure and effort into controlling the child and his/her feelings. Embellishment of past events as well as fabrications and deceptions will become more elaborate so as to support the abductor's attitude of, "better with me than with her."

Months to years after the event, the abductor will still be very protective of child's whereabouts and very protective of who child spends time with. The abductor will begin to feel more stress in keeping/maintaining control of the growing child's behaviors and emotions. The abductor may begin to believe child "buys" story about other family members because child is not questioning the past as much, if at all.

The moral imperative of the father to raise his children as Muslim is often cited as justification for the abduction, however, other factors may contribute to this act. An abductor may be running from a sense of loss of pride or face, or perceived failure in his marriage. The abductor may also be punishing his wife, retaliating against her. In any event, whether the motivation stems from his Islamic beliefs, or if he is taking advantage of the authority the Islamic law empowers, the abductor gains control by abducting the children.

"They are Saudi, they are mine," was reported in a 1981 newspaper interview immediately after a violent, highly publicized abduction. This abductor was given a hero's welcome when he returned to Saudi Arabia with two young children. Local Arab News reports characterized the abduction as a 'rescue' from the decadent moral climate in the United States.

Many mothers have had to face their abductors in Shari'a court or in other circumstances while trying to establish contact with their children. Few have had polite interactions with their ex-spouses, and many report their husbands continue to exhibit a high degree of emotion and anger with their ex-wives. Many abductors

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

blame the wife for the need to kidnap the children. Some mothers report the abductors act as though the event happened recently, even though years may have passed. "He is still angry after 20 years, even though he has the kids," reported one left-behind parent.

***Attitude and Focus - Finding strength when the real world has limited your relationship opportunities with your abducted child.
Boundaries to respect, imposed limits to ignore.***

Of the many victims of an abduction, the left-behind parent faces the greatest loss and yet must prepare for the months, and often years, of strength sapping grief. At a minimum, you will find it to be true that what doesn't kill you can only make you strong – focusing your energy so as to allow strength to survive will be your greatest challenge. Psychological studies of the left-behind victims of abductions identify the following as what you should expect following the abduction of your child (20):

First minutes to an hour after an abduction, the left behind parent is panicked. Fear, anger, and early stage depression begins to set in. One mother reported a numbing paralysis and she was unable to use her fingers to dial for the police. The panic expands into a feeling of loss of control and sense of disbelief and vulnerability.

By the end of the first week, depression and a great sense of loss sometimes develops into physiological complications. Within a month, the continued depression and frustration with legal authorities is offset by aggressive seeking of information and contacts with relatives of the abductor. Over the next several months, hostility, anger, and frustration with the abductor and perceived lack of progress and support with the system exacerbates the left behind parent's emotional distress.

Months to years after the abduction, the continued anguish, anger and depression becomes focused into recovery activities and networking. Some left behind parents report thoughts of suicide. Serious consideration is given regarding the future relationship opportunities with the abducted child. The surviving victim parent begins to plan for contact with their adult, grown child.

Many left behind parents report significant changes in their metabolism, sleep patterns, and health. Exhaustion is prevalent, as is the desire to fold inward and isolate yourself from community or family activities. As so much focus is needed to address immediate legal concerns, media attention, financial impacts, and other day-to-day concerns, most left behind parents report operating an 'auto-pilot' during the first few months after an abduction.

There is no 'appropriate' response to this sort of life changing trauma, but the most important boundary you must respect is that of the physical needs of rest and nourishment for your body. You must provide basic care for yourself, or place

yourself in a setting where someone can care for you. You alone have the means by which to face the days, which sadly usually become years, of separation. You must manage your physical resources so as to best survive.

Several left behind parents reported the need to sleep, with as much as ten to twelve hours of sleep per night becoming normal. One mother characterized the first year after the abduction as a year of sleep, awakening only to work, and then returning to her bed to spend the entire weekend in sleep or dream-like state.

The tragedy and loss experienced by the left-behind extended family often seriously affects family communications, with the topic of the abduction becoming taboo least negative recollections are discussed. This further isolates the victim parent, often resulting in broken family bonds. Many women married their foreign national husband against the advice of their own parents or siblings. In response to the abduction, many women were shamed by the attitudes of their families, who justified their earlier negativity with the marriage with the fact of the ultimate failure. Victim left behind parents who find comfort and support from within their own families are few.

Others will impose their expectations on you, the victim parent, criticizing you for marriage to a 'foreigner' and expressing bigoted contempt for the culture and religion of Islam. Ignorance of international travel will lead to comments such as, "why don't you just go back in there and take them back yourself?" Another typical response is "Surely our government will help – they are American citizens!" One mother was greeted at a social event with the comment, "How can you go on living?" There is no adequate response to these comments. You're best reaction is to ignore their insensitivity and focus on those individuals who support your needs.

You will lose contact with some family, as well as friends, and you will find yourself limiting your contact to only those people that help you survive day to day. The abduction will become the focus of your life, and all future life events will be mortgaged by the loss.

Realistic Goals - *Steps towards meeting your goals. How to chose your battles.*

Except under very unusual and lucky circumstances in those countries where an American order may be acknowledged, your child will not be returned once abducted. As a general rule, there exists no legal means or process by which your child can be returned. In light of this, you should prioritize your energy on those efforts that are most likely to allow you contact with your child. Some suggested steps include:

- Negotiate directly with the father for access to your child. Offer to drop criminal charges in return for the return of the child, or for a schedule of visitations with your child.

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

- Negotiate with a senior male family member or friend of the father. As it is customary for family disputes to be mediated within the extended family, you are more likely to gain access in this way. It may be appropriate to request that a male member of your family, such as your father or brother, intervene on your behalf.
- Request assistance from your ex-husband's Embassy or Islamic leaders. This tactic is more likely to be successful if your congressman or other political leader supports your efforts. Assistance provided by the Embassy could include assisting you in locating your child or allowing you the opportunity to enter the country to visit or litigate for access.
- If none of the negotiation or mediation efforts are successful, consider litigating for access in the abductor's country of residence. If you are seeking physical custody you should consider establishing residency within the country. If you are seeking visitation access, it is expected that you attend the hearing of your case, however, you may be able to manage a portion of your effort from within the United States.
- Sometimes the act of taking the abductor to court in his own country shames him into allowing you access. In a case involving Saudi Arabia where the Shari'a judge would not allow visitation with the five-year-old daughter but would allow visits with the four-year-old son, the Uncle of the children intervened on behalf of the mother. The Uncle, an older brother of the children's father, insisted on allowing the mother an extended visit with her children in the Uncle's home. The family of the abductor took pity on the efforts of the mother and respected her tenacity.

It is important to maintain contact with people you have known who may have some connection with your children. Do not burn your bridges with these individuals, as you may need their insight and support in building a network into the country your child resides. Make every effort to remain on positive terms with the abductor, as he ultimately controls your future contacts with your child. If the abductor is hiding your child's whereabouts, his family members are your most likely source of information.

Welfare and Whereabouts Visits – *What to expect. Why the reports never make you feel better.*

Welfare and Whereabouts visits are conducted by the local United States Embassy and Consulate personnel whose career decision to join the diplomatic corps of the Department of State probably did not consider the role of reporting on the welfare of children of abduction. Consular officials reporting on your child are not psychologists, nor are they trained or experienced in reporting on the behavior of young children. Reports are routinely too brief and blunt to provide comfort to the left-behind victim parent, and many have complained that the reports cause more pain than solace.

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

The intent of the visit is to report on the health and welfare of the child. A secondary intent of the visit is to assure the abductor that the United States government supports the left-behind parent in his or her efforts to remain in contact with the child. Although American law has no jurisdiction within the abductor's country, it will not go unnoticed that American interests include the status of a minor child. The abductor's compliance with the request to visit with the child is a positive indication of the potential for future negotiations for access. A typical report for a five-year-old boy, Rakan, abducted by his mother to Saudi Arabia, follows:

CONOFF (Consular official) and ACSFSN (American Citizen Service Foreign Service National) met with Rakan on Wednesday, April 7. Rakan's mother again requested that the visit take place at the office of the Emirate in the presence of the director of Public relations for the Emirate. Rakan's uncle Majed was also present.

Rakan appeared to be in good health and spirits. He spent the first few minutes coloring in a book. He told CONOFF he likes his school. Likes to color and swim, and loves to play on his computer. Rakan answered CONOFF's questions in Arabic but switched to English at his mother's instruction.

Rakan's mother also said his grades in school were very good and he does not appear to be having problems with any particular subjects. Rakan was very active during the 45-minute visit and was affectionate with both his mother and uncle. He was more reserved with CONOFF and interacted well with female ACSFSN.

Rakan's mother promised to make Rakan available for future welfare and whereabouts visit as long as they took place at the office of the Emirate.

Many parents are stricken by the apparent lack of compassion in the reports, and many find fault in the American Consular choice of wording. It is not unusual for a report to state that the abducting parents was 'polite' or even 'nice' during the visits, and many parents become alarmed at the perception that the Consulate is taking sides. Please remember that sides have not been taken; the Consulate is observing the willingness of the abductor to negotiate for access to the child. A polite abductor is more likely to allow more contact with your child than otherwise.

The parent in control of the child may prohibit a visit, and may also restrict allowed topics of conversation. Photographs may or may not be allowed, and gifts may or may not be carried to the child on behalf of the left behind parent. Some abductors prohibit any contact with the child by the American Embassy. There is no mechanism by which to compel the abductor to allow a visit.

Phone, FAX, email and Letters – *Simple things that say, "I Love You"*.

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

Due to the protection the Islamic law affords children residing in the Middle East, many abductors do not go to extremes to hide the child and they do allow contact with the left-behind parent. It is also understood and sometimes expected that the abductor may only allow your contact with the child so that he can maintain some manipulative control over you. Whatever the reasoning for the opportunity, many left-behind parents take advantage of the opportunity to remain in contact by mail and phone.

Establish a routine of writing to your child, and copy your letters to those who may be in contact with your child. Focus your efforts on the extended family of the abductor, as well as the abductor himself. Do not ask others to intervene on your behalf because this will put others in an awkward or even uncomfortable situation and when asked, you will most likely be refused. Depending on your relationship with the abductor's acquaintances and friends, ask for their help, however, know that they may be limited in what they can do. Instead, allow those who are in a position to have enough information to act when they feel free to do so.

One mother wrote repeatedly to her child, and faxed photocopies to the head mistress of the child's school. The letters never revealed to the child that copies were being sent to the school. The letters were simple, discussing the tasks the mother completed during the day and the times that she would think of the child. At the end of the school year, the child's teacher wrote to the mother. Although the teacher kept her identity a secret, and asked that the mother not reveal that a letter had been received, the teacher was generous in her contact.

Cards mailed to your child, addressed care-of the abductor or a family member, should be simple but numerous. One mother mailed a simple card or postcard weekly, inundating the family with notes that stated, "I love you, I miss you, hugs and kisses – mom". Many of the cards found their way to the child and became precious reminders of mom. The consistency of the mail allowed the child to realize that his mother still remembered him. As the child grew, he realized that breaks in receiving the mail was attributable to his father, and not to the left-behind mother.

Phone calls are difficult for both the child and the left-behind parent. Young children are frightened by the expression of raw emotion, so if you are not able to control your tears it may be advisable to limit your calls. If you are able to speak directly to the child, realize that he will most likely be monitored by the other parent. One abductor recorded all phone calls between the mother and abducted child, and played them back to the mother, as an example of his control over her. The abductor used every phone call made by the mother in his continued manipulation and abuse of the mother's emotions.

Some parents have established email contact with their children. Realize that email can and most probably will be intercepted and copied to the abductor. The topic and focus of your email should be such that neither your child nor you can be harmed by this interception.

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

One mother went to great expense to mail gifts to her abducted daughter. The girl had been kidnapped while wearing red patent-leather shoes, her favorites after watching the Wizard of Oz movie where Dorothy wore magic ruby slippers. The mother shipped new red shoes to the girl and followed up with a phone call. “Did you get the ruby-red shiny shoes I sent you?”

The 5-year old girl responded, “No, but my daddy gave me some!”

Realizing that the abductor was taking credit for the gift, the mother stopped sending gifts.

Maintaining consistency and frequency of communications is more important than the actual form of communication with your child. Hundreds of postcards over years of separation carry more impact than a few letters or gifts. Simple messages that say “I love you”, repeated routinely and often, will remain with your child. Even if the abductor or his family does not let the child get the communications, it is expected that the letters will impact the abductor to some degree, and may soften his heart.

Self-Preservation and Survival - *Attitudes and the choices to be made.*

Religious and spiritual leaders look at loss as an opportunity for personal spiritual development and growth, something from which to recover from – but loss of a child by abduction is different. There is no closure, no point from which to move on to recovery because every day brings a reminder that your child is separated from you. Grief is normal and natural, and is the most typical response to death or the loss of a loved one. Yet all the parents with whom I have spoken have stated the unbelievable, the abduction of a child is worse than death.

The process of moving through the intense emotional pain that is so private and misunderstood that you, as well as your family and community, have very little idea of how to deal with it. Those parents who have most successfully survived did so because of the belief that their child would return to them in the future.

In addition to the loss of a child, you are in grief for the loss of the relationship you had with your spouse. This is very significant, the loss of the person and marriage bed, the other parent of your child. A loss of a familiar lifestyle. Although rarely spoken to directly, it is the nature of our human spirit to want to heal. But healing from the day-to-day absence of a growing child demands a spiritual healing greater than that realized from the loss of a spouse.

Survivors attend support groups, they read books, they seek others like themselves, they seek counseling, and each of these things may bring a small amount of relief from the loss. Spiritual healing and repair cannot be found unless you move through the process of grief, and that is best done by realizing the action of doing something, of taking action, is necessary. Taking action initiates the repair and the opportunity to move through the process of grief.

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

Work by Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross (24) on the stages of grief experienced by dying people parallels the reports by many that have come to survive the abduction of their child. The process of grief includes:

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

Each of these emotional stages takes time, and not everyone is successful in sequencing from one to the next. Many experience all of these emotions everyday following an abduction. Some spend years within any one stage, such as depression, only to return to anger or denial.

We cannot fully recover from this trauma, but we can learn to accept, we can feel better. Acceptance means being able to remember your child and allowing yourself to feel the loss, perhaps some guilt, or regret about lost moments. Acceptance is also necessary if you are to be able to maintain a constructive attitude when you do visit with your child, or when you reunite with your child in the future.

Left behind parents have reported various emotional disturbances during the period of transition before they are able to accept the loss. Even after they have reached what they believed to be acceptance, they often fall back into periods of depression, anger, and denial. Problems include:

- Sleep disturbances;
- Periods of confusions – not being able to make simple decisions, periods of bewilderment and feeling lost;
- Expecting things that aren't there – for example, keeping a pair of shoes by the door, expecting the child to step into them;
- Behavior disorders – drugs, alcohol, eating disorders;
- Physical disorders – anxiety, headaches, digestive disturbances, irritability moodiness, frenzied activity, fatigue, poor memory, difficulty concentrating, allergic reactions, trembling hands, heart palpitations, dizziness, shortness of breath, ceased menstrual periods, and angry energy;
- Fear and depression; and,
- Feelings of isolation, becoming emotionally withdrawn from day-to-day life events.

Several victim parents have sought professional help, and many have found support by networking and connecting with others who share similar loss.

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

To accept the changed status of your life you will have to acknowledge that your children most likely won't come back. It is important to acknowledge, however, that your children will most likely seek you out in the future. You have lost your child, but you have every opportunity to regain your adult, grown child. The path towards surviving and accepting your loss includes an acknowledgment that you have the opportunity to make your child proud of your strength and survival.

We are responsible for our own survival, we cannot transfer our feeling to others, and we cannot make others responsible for our feelings. Parents have survived by taking personal responsibility for their survival, example goals include:

- Returning to consistency and building a routine. Many parents felt better when they returned to the routines of their job or built a schedule for action. One mother decided that every Tuesday she would routinely write to her children. By scheduling a day when she allowed herself to focus on her children, it freed her to maintain her emotions over the rest of the week. Another mother reported scheduling when she would allow herself an emotional breakdown.
- Sigmund Freud stated that, "work is the closest thing to sanity." Work also pays the bills. Many victim parents reported that they eventually kept the story of the abduction of their child confidential from those with whom they worked. Over time, some parents led a double life. Many did not reveal to their employer or friends that they had lost a child to abduction. In this way their work place became a safe haven from the grief.
- Gaining awareness and learning all that they can about the culture and religion of their children's new home. By networking with others in the same circumstance, they were able to hear "I know what you feel" and feel comforted by that, as well as learn from the experience of other victim parents.
- Accepting responsibility and acknowledging that their success in developing a future relationship with their children is dependent on their actions today. Parents whose goal was to be someone their adult child would be proud to know were able to focus on the future.
- Identifying goals towards recovery. One mother could not enter a supermarket without bursting into tears whenever she would hear a small child call for his mother, or heard her child's name, or saw a child that resembled her lost child. For several years, the mother would not trust her emotional response, and she avoided supermarkets. When she identified that recovery meant she had to control her reactions, she worked diligently on conquering her fear of the supermarket.
- Taking actions, whether it is towards gaining access to your child or working towards prevention support for others facing the risk of abduction. In all instances, parents consistently reported that taking action helped their recovery

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

and acceptance of their life. Working to help others always gives you the opportunity to share in success.

- Focus outside the event. Some parents found relief by taking up a physical hobby such as marathon running, gardening, or Scottish dancing. Many parents remarried and started new families.

In grief, people become oblivious to things obvious (20). Some lose their skill for survival and sources of comfort are overlooked. For this reason it's important to stress some very basic self-care activities which can help you to feel better.

Healing is natural, but you need a period of protection and care. You may need a period of isolation, or others may find the need for being surrounded by family. Certain people and places are sometimes best avoided during this time – your parents might say, “you should never have married him”. Avoid the “I told you so” people, you are emotionally bruised so avoid persons who do not support you when you are down.

Anticipate difficult days. On anniversary dates or birthdates expect unexpected trouble. Acknowledge that things will never be the same.

Because mourning and grief takes energy, it is often characterized by long periods of depression. Mobilizing yourself for any activity can be very difficult. Work and returning to life will be drudgery, but many parents report that after at least a year, the intensity and constancy of the depression diminishes. However, sometimes the depressed mood is so profound, overwhelming, unrelenting, and unresponsive to external events that professional help and medication may be needed.

Help Your Child to Locate You – *Contacts to be maintained.*

Stories of adopted children seeking out their birth parents are common, abducted children are motivated by the same curiosity and need to understand their heritage. Many adult children have sought out their left-behind parent years after the abduction. Some children abducted as a small child will have memories of another parent in their lives. If you have been able to negotiate visitation with your children, your visits will be sufficient to mobilize his curiosity to seek you out later as an adult and to maintain a memory of you in his head.

In all examples of abduction to the Islamic countries, the abductor remained in contact with his extended family. There are no known cases of an abductor hiding the child from his own Islamic family, most likely because of the protection offered by the Shari'a law and the cultural template of the extended family. Because of this, you are at an advantage in that you know whom to contact to assure some future connection with your child.

One grown abducted child told his mother that his uncle would express delight at the yearly New Years card the left-behind mother mailed yearly. The mother was surprised at the revelation that the uncle even received the cards – she had never

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

received an acknowledgement for nearly 20 years of one-way correspondence. She had continued to mail the uncle on the hope that some contact would be made and that her efforts would eventually be acknowledged. As it was, the uncle would mention the cards whenever he saw the abducted child. This example emphasizes the importance of maintaining positive contact with anyone that could have any contact with your child. The correspondence need not be lengthy, and should not place blame or accusations on the event. The intent of all your correspondence to the abductor's family is to:

- Assure them of your tenacity of intent to remain in touch with your child;
- Provide them with your address, telephone, and other contact addresses so as to empower them to contact you if they wish; and,
- Know that your effort will eventually reach your child.

As in any family, the behavior of any one adult does not reflect the morals or belief of the whole family. There is no need for you to demonize the actions of the abducting parent; someone within his extended family will be critical of him for keeping you from your children. Someone within his extended family will keep your memory alive.

One California Grandmother printed cards (example inserted here from Barbara Dooley) with a picture of her abducted grandson. These cards were distributed to everyone she met helping to alleviate the pain as well as leaving a record for the child.

One father had a street address for his abducted daughters. He routinely wrote short letters to every address ten digits above and ten digits below the address of his girls.

Write to teachers, family friends, and business associates that may have contact with your child. The tone of your communication should be positive, and should not impose on the reader to take sides or to pass judgement. Do not expect a response, but continue to write on a regular basis.

If you are able to write or phone your child, do so on regular basis. Consistency is important, as your child should come to trust and expect to hear from you.

Write to the American Embassy or Consulate near to your child on a regular basis. The Department of State can provide Welfare and Whereabouts visit once very six months (with the approval of the parent) but you don't want them to limit their knowledge of your case to the infrequent cable from Washington. Know that Consulate and Embassy personnel rotate assignments every two years and that there is a regular replacement of staff personnel. Copy your correspondence to the Washington D.C. Office of Children's Issues, your congressmen, as well as the Ambassador representing the country in which your children are held.

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

Share your mailing list with your family and friends and ask them to write to your children and your extended mailing list. One victim-parent's family was fearful of saying the wrong thing or sending an inappropriate card so she directed them to send Mother's Day cards to the Ambassador of the country in which her children were held. Polite cards, requesting that the mother be allowed access to her children, should be sent. Ask the foreign Ambassador to forward the letters to your child.

Stay in contact with your congressmen and other politicians, as well as any newspaper, magazine, or television reporters that showed interest in your situation. Over time, there will be the opportunity for someone to speak on your behalf. A congressman may have a social or diplomatic function with the Ambassador; a reporter may include mention of your case in a current abduction story. The importance of networking and communicating to keep your case current in the minds of those who can provide a contact with your child can prove fruitful.

Documenting Your Survival – *What to save for your child, your child's expectation of you.*

A malicious abductor who's intent is to punish his spouse will make every effort to alienate the child from his mother. The most successful alienation is to convince the child that his left-behind parent has forgotten about him – do not allow the abductor to succeed in this accusation. Do not allow your child any evidence that he was at any time forgotten. In addition to your cards and letters, suggestions include:

- Keep a scrapbook of the newspaper articles on the case. Include copies of letters and other communications with those on your mailing list.
- Keep a diary for your child. Write about the events of your day, your efforts to stay in touch, focus on his birthday or other days that may be of importance.
- Public radio stations, parks, zoos, and other organizations routinely acknowledge donations with public announcements. When your local public radio station is requesting donations, make a contribution in the name of your child.
- Make a photo-memory book for your child, asking for friends and family to contribute pictures and written memories of their own children to share with your child. Copy the book to the Ambassador as well as to the American Consulate – ask that the book be included in the file about your child and given to your child if at all possible.
- Keep your child's toys and clothes packed safely away for future access. One mother reported that her adult son recognized a stuffed toy years after the abduction.
- Learn Arabic (or Urdu or Farsi). Learn the language of your child.

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

The most important way in which to document your survival for the benefit of your child is to become active in educating others as to the risk of abduction. Focus your energies to change the laws and situations that allow abductions to occur. Work on prevention and building bridges between the nationalities. Honor your child by respecting his heritage, culture, and Islamic upbringing.

Words from our Children – *Statements from grown-up victims of international abduction. What was important to them during the conflict, how they perceive their parents today.*

Even those children that have been intentionally alienated from the left behind parent remain curious about their heritage. Hani was abducted from his home in Colorado at the age of two. Eighteen years after the abduction, Hani talks about his memories of visits with his mother and the efforts of his stepmother to alienate him and his sister from their left-behind mother:

....” About the part before we were taken away, I don’t remember much just small things that sometimes I think are just dreams. And about the first time you came to see us! Now that I remember perfectly! I remember meeting you and you kneeling down and hugging me, and I don’t think I was crying! And the good thing about that time is that I still remembered you and I didn’t feel weird with you, it was like nothing happened!” But Hani, at the time of his first visit with his mother after the abduction, had not seen her in nearly two years.

“The other times you visited I remember too. Usually when we would know that you were going to come, I would be happy because I knew you would bring gifts, what a selfish hypocrite was I! But for some reason when you used to come, the longest you would stay was for a week or so, and by the end of that time I would be attached to you. It takes me a hell of a long time for me to attach to someone. But before you would come our heads would be filled with things to say to you, mean threats, you know who would fill our heads with them! But when you got there we forgot about them.”

“And about my sister, I think that the reason why they [the visits] were so upsetting was because she wanted a normal life and what people said matters to her so she would try to convince herself that everything was OK. But when you came my stepmother would start talking and showing my sister that her life is not normal. So my sister would give you a hard time hoping that you would not think of coming back.”

When asked if Hani thought all abducted children would make an effort to seek out the left behind parent, he responded:

“Well, that depends on the way they were raised. If the parent raised them in the Islamic, proper way, ***‘Always remember, respect, obey your parents whenever and wherever they are’***, then yes, they will contact the left behind parent. But if the kid was raised to hate the other parent then I don’t know...and if

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

the other, left-behind parent keeps contacting the kid, then a relationship must happen between them and contact will happen, look at me and you!”

“If I was talking to some one who was worried that their children might be kidnapped or were already kidnapped, the advice I’ll give them is this – if they are still with him and her husband is still with her, I’ll tell her to try her best to stay with her husband. But if the parents are already separated, then it all depends on the status – did he divorce her, did she leave him....most commonly (and this is what happened to us) the woman will get fed-up with the man because he changed his way or because his family or culture is weird, so she just gets up and leaves, and that is what starts it all! The man will try to get back to the woman, especially if he is an Arab, it has something to do with our pride. And the only way to do it is by getting the children and not allowing the mother to see her children.

“And sometimes it’s all related to religion, the father thinks that the mother is going to raise them in a non-Islamic way. It is the father’s duty in Islam to raise his children in an Islamic way. But it all comes down to the father and mother. If the woman agreed to marry a man that promised her that he will leave the children for her to raise, then she is definitely going to end up without the children because sooner or later that man will realize that he is a Muslim and he will want to raise his children according to Islam.”

The abduction...“definitely affected my life! Any child who grows up without one of his parents will be affected too! But the good thing about it is that I was able to turn all the effects to my side so I could benefit from them. I am happy the way I grew up because I knew both my parents loved me and they both wanted what was good for me. That is why I believe my dad took me and my sister (I^{do} don’t like to call it kidnapped), and that is why I believe my Mom wasn’t worried about us being with him.” (Editorial note from Mom – I worried, but you only saw my happy face, I was so happy to see you the few times I did.)

Another left behind mother talks about her survival, and re-establishing contact with her grown daughters:

“I hope that people are doing more to prevent abductions now than they were in 1981 when I faced this possibility. Nothing was really done then [to prevent an abduction]. Today there are crisis hotlines, shelters for women and children, people to talk to find resources. Hopefully, attorneys are educated about restraining orders, placing holds on children’s passport, believing women who tell them they are living in fear of an international abduction. Hopefully, judges take these situations into consideration when making custody and visitation decisions. All of these things might have helped my children and me. None of them were offered to me. I was told I was a hysterical woman who just needed to calm down and give my children’s father unsupervised visitation or the judge would give him custody. The rest is history because he left the country during his first unsupervised overnight visit with our children who were 3 and 5 years old at that time.”

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

“ As for survival – well that is very personal isn’t it? We all find ways to cope with life’s difficulties as they come. I have learned to place responsibility where it belongs. I have learned to manage my grief, for the most part. I have learned to find support when I need it. I have learned not to overload myself during times of great emotional stress with other responsibilities. I ask for help from my husband, my pastor, and my friends. Music has been a tremendous healing power in my life. Turning myself toward the beauty of music has helped to brighten my perspective on the world and to find expression for the emotional pain I have suffered. I am enjoying the fulfillment of a childhood dream of mine to play the violin.”

“Survival at this state is not so bad. I have a relationship with my grown daughters. I have a role in their lives, which is expanding in positive ways. I am utterly thrilled with the possibility for the future. It has been a long time coming though and I wish we had somehow been spared this life scarring experience.”

“Meeting my grandchildren was a joy. Nedda is very much like her mother, my daughter, in appearance and personality. It was like seeing my baby again! It was really fun that she liked me too. My grandson, at 17 months, was pretty shy with me, but tremendously cute.”

“I am certain that as my relationship grows with my daughters that we will confront difficult issues about the past and how it has affected their lives and mine. I hope that we can always love and respect one another even as we examine the past and the lessons we have learned in such a difficult manner.”

And Hani’s concluding statement, “Why focus on the past? We have our future in front of us Mom!”

Appendix: Listing of Embassy addresses in the United States
Suggested Reading

References to text:

1. Embassy of Saudi Arabia, “Understanding Islam and the Muslims,” The Islamic Affairs Department, 601 New Hampshire Ave., NW, Washington DC, 1989. Page 30, 30pp.
2. El Alami, D.W., and D. Hinchcliffe, “Islamic Marriage and Divorce Laws of the Arab World”, Kluwer Law International, University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1996. Page 35, 4, 3, 19, 14 total pages -

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

3. Alireza, Marianne, "At the Drop of a Veil, The True Story of a California Girl's Years in an Arabian Harem," Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1971.
4. Mahmoody, Betty, with W. Hoffer, "Not Without my Daughter," St. Martins Press, New York, 1987.
5. Jomier, J. "How to Understand Islam," Crossroad Publishing, New York, 1991. PAGE
6. Khouj, Dr. A.M., "Islam, Its Meaning, Objectives, and Legislative System", distributed by Saudi Arabia Television in the USA, 1215 Jefferson Davis Hwy, Suite 302, Arlington, VA 22202, 1994. Page 252, 334 pp.
7. Badawi, R. Jamal A., "Status of Woman in Islam", distributed by the World Assembly of Muslim Youth, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. 1980. Page 17, 28 pp.
8. Judicial Document, Civil Action, Said El Arabi Mohammed Ahmed / Cairo v. Melani Rena George / Texas, January 18, 1999, South Cairo Court, Circuit 41 Personal Affairs / Foreigners
9. Bukhari, Muhammad Ali Sabuni, Makhtasar Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Vol. 3, Page 54; Beirut, 1981.
10. Lauz, Ali Abu, translated by Jamaal al-Din Zarabozo, "Answers to Common Questions From New Muslims", Islamic Assembly of North American, Ann Arbor, MI, 1995. Page 28, 64 pp.
11. Cairo Family Planning Association, "Bodily Mutilation of Young Females", report published in *Children in the Muslim Middle East*, pages 168 to 173, edited by Elizabeth Warnock Fernea, University of Texas Press, Austin, Texas, 1995. 477 pp.
12. Hoodfar, Homa, "In the Absence of Legal Equity: Mahr and Marriage Negotiation in Egyptian Low Income Communities", in *Arab Studies Journal*, Georgetown University, Vol. VI No. 2 and Vol. VII No. 1 / Fall and Spring 1998/1999. Page 99, pp. 98-111.
13. Girdner, L.K. and J.R. Johnston, "A Judges Guide to Risk Factors for Family Abduction and Child Recovery," presented at the 22nd National Conference on Juvenile Justice, national Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and the National District Attorneys Association, March 20, 1995. 11pp.
14. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Childrens Issues, International Parental Child Abduction Information Packet, 1999, including publication # 10489, July 1997. PAGE
15. Hoff, Patricia M, Esquire, "Family Abduction, How to Prevent an Abduction and What to do if Your Child is Abducted", American Bar Association, Center on

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

Children and the Law, distributed by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 1994. 116 pp.

16. Steidel, S.E., editor, "Missing and Abducted Children: A Law Enforcement Guide to Case Investigation and Program Management", National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Arlington, Virginia, 1997. 219 pp.
17. Bilchik, S., editor, "When your Child is Missing: A Family Survival Guide," Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington D.C., May 1998. 93 pp.
18. Chiancone, J. and L. Girdner, "Issues in Resolving Cases of International Child Abduction, Research Summary," American Bar Association, Center on Children and the Law, Washington D.C., under a grant for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice. DRAFT 1999.
19. Mahfus, Najib, "The Mistake", in Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak, Edited by Elizabeth Warnock Fernea and Basima Qattan Bezirgan, University of Texas Press, Austin, 402 pp. 1977. Page 95 – 123, as excerpted from Najib Mahfus, *Bayna Al-Qasrayn*, Cario: Matbuat Maktabat Misr, 1960
20. Thorud, R. A., "Victim Trauma: A Psychological Perspective of Abduction", Illinois Department of State Police, presented at the National Conference of Missing and Exploited Children, Chicago, Ill. March 1986. 7 pp.
21. Freeman, M., "The Effects and Consequences of International Child Abduction," in *Family Law Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 3, Fall 1998, pp 603 - 621. Page 605, "Although children subject to overseas abduction should look worse than children who have not been abducted, they may not look worse than those who are domestically abducted." Cited within text from Geoffrey L. Grief, *Impact of Children of International Child Abduction*, paper presented at the International Society of Family Law, 8th World Conference, Families Across Frontiers, June 30, 1994.
22. Skoler, G., "A Psychological Critique of International Child Custody and Abduction Law," in *Family Law Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 3, Fall 1998, Section II, A dysfunctional Abduction Convention for Dysfunctional Parents, page 565, pp 557-602
23. Abrahms, S., "Children in the Crossfire, The Tragedy of Parental Kidnapping," Athenaeum Press, New York, 1984 page 124, 297 pp.
24. James, J. W., and F. Cherry, "The Grief Recovery Handbook, A Step-by-step Program for Moving Beyond Loss", Harper and Row, New York, 1988. PAGE
25. Stearns, A. K., "Living Through Personal Crisis," Thomas More Press, Chicago, 1984 PAGE

REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT – REVIEW DRAFT

