

**Report of the Russian Foreign Ministry Commissioner for Human Rights,
Democracy and the Rule of Law on Violations of Children's Rights
in Intercountry Adoption in the United States**

Introduction

Owing to deficiencies in the federal legislation and state regulations, the system of intercountry adoption in place in the United States fails to ensure respect for fundamental inalienable rights of the child and leads to mass violations of the legitimate interests of minors. The Department of State and other competent federal and regional agencies responsible for overseeing the activities of the relevant companies themselves often fail to comply with the agreements applicable in this regard. The United States remains the only state that has not ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child¹, which sets out basic standards for the comprehensive protection of children's rights.

Attempts by a number of U.S. lawmakers to introduce a national legal framework to bring the situation of adopted children under government control have been unsuccessful. In view of the fact that state courts have primary jurisdiction, the federal judiciary system has not established any precedents in resolving specific cases which could serve as legal guidelines ensuring that the best interests of a child are taken into account. The jurisprudence across states is divergent and inconsistent, which adversely affects the level of legal protection afforded to adoptees.

The process of intercountry adoption remains opaque, corrupt, resource-intensive and exposed to the influence of neo-colonial political agendas.

¹ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by resolution 44/25 of the UN General Assembly of 20 November 1989 // Collection of International Treaties of the USSR, issue XLVI, 1993; List of states that ratified the Convention: United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1577, p. 3
<https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/MTDSG/Volume%20I/Chapter%20IV/IV-11.en.pdf>

Following the introduction of a ban on the adoption of Russian children by U.S. citizens² as of 1 January 2013, the focus of such activities has shifted to Ukraine and other post-Soviet states, which are seen as new "markets" for the adoption of white Caucasian children. Washington's sham concern about the situation with children in the zone of the special military operation is caused primarily by the fact that the U.S. authorities had regarded Ukraine, including Donbass, as a source for international adoptions (particularly of children of Slavic origin). It is noteworthy that, according to Deputy Chairman of the State Duma A.Y. Kuznetsova,³ just before the start of the special military operation and the advancement of the Russian Armed Forces to Donbass, the Kherson and Zaporozhye regions, children from Ukrainian orphanages in these areas had been taken to Western Ukraine, most likely for their subsequent transfer abroad. Estimates vary, ranging from just a few children to as many as 65,000. The current whereabouts of these children are unknown.

² Federal Law of 28 December 2012 № 272-FZ "On sanctions against individuals violating fundamental human rights and freedoms of citizens of the Russian Federation" // *Collection of Legislation of the Russian Federation*, issue No 53 of 31 December 2012, art. 7597.

³ From the interview by A.Y. Kuznetsova to the "Iznanka. Zhenshchiny" project, YouTube video hosting platform, 2022: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pj7OycKdyk4>

Agreement between the United States and Russia on Bilateral Cooperation in Adoption of Children of 2011⁴

In accordance with its international obligations and national legislation, Russia has taken a number of consistent steps to combat offences in the area of intercountry adoption, including the initiative to conclude a relevant bilateral agreement with the United States. The U.S. authorities (both Democrats and Republicans) have been reluctant to conclude any such agreements with other countries of origin of adoptees, pushing for their accession to the 1993 Hague Convention⁵ and seeking to create an international adoption services market based on a neo-colonial pattern, with developing countries as providers of children and Western countries as recipients.

At the same time, given the existing legal, administrative and financial realities, the adoption of U.S. citizens abroad was not encouraged by federal or state authorities, which is evidenced, among other things, by official statistics (between 2008 and 2021, 918 children were adopted, with the majority sent to Canada, the Netherlands and Austria).

The Russian side came up with a constructive alternative to such unilateral approaches designed to ensure respect for the principle of the best interests of the child on a non-discriminatory basis. Following intergovernmental negotiations involving representatives of the competent authorities, the sides developed an agreement, formally known as the Agreement between the United States of America and the Russian Federation regarding Cooperation in Adoption of Children, which was signed on 13 July 2011. Yet this agreement, which entered into force on 1 November 2012 (terminated on 1 January 2014), led to no radical improvement in the situation of adopted Russians in the United States and did little to promote the stated goal

⁴ Agreement between the United States of America and the Russian Federation regarding Cooperation in Adoption of Children // *Collection of Legislation of the Russian Federation*, 19 November 2012, No 47. art. 6416.

⁵ Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption. The Hague, 29 May 1993 // [https:// www.hcch.net/en/instruments/conventions/full-text/?cid=69/](https://www.hcch.net/en/instruments/conventions/full-text/?cid=69/).

of ensuring the well-being of adopted children from Russia in a traditional American family. The main reason was the failure of the United States to fulfil its core obligations and the inability of the authorities, social services and specialized agencies to ensure the necessary level of control over respect for the rights of adopted children from Russia.

Cases of gross violations of rights (murder, rape, grievous bodily harm and abuse) of minor Russian citizens continued (including an increase in illegal "adoptions" by same-sex couples and "assignment of parental rights" to third parties). The State Department did not even fulfil the formal requirements to inform the federal and regional authorities and the relevant courts of the Agreement. Administrative and judicial authorities refused to comply with the obligations under the Agreement when dealing with specific cases of adoptees, particularly those involving instances of sexual and other forms of violence against Russian minors.

It is noteworthy that the U.S. Department of State covered up numerous high-profile violations of criminal, administrative, migration and social legislation in the United States that took place at the time of the adoption of Russian children, without reflecting this information in its annual profile reports.

General statistics on intercountry adoptions in the United States (2008-2021)

Prior to the ban on adoptions of Russians on 1 January 2013 Russia was the leader in terms of the total number of adoptions of persons of Caucasoid race by U.S. citizens.

According to the official data (annual reports on intercountry adoption) of the U.S. Department of State,⁶ the total number of adopted Russians from 2008 to 2013 is **5,533** (2008 – 895, 2009 – 1,588, 2010 – 1,082, 2011 – 970, 2012 – 748, 2013 – 250). At the same time, according to the data from the Citizenship and Immigration Services of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the total number of U.S. visas issued to adopted minor Russian citizens, as well as for the purpose of completing the above-mentioned process on the territory of the United States, in 1992-2012 was **61,625**.⁷ One of the reasons for the discrepancies is that State Department reports were not issued until 2008. At the same time, as of 1 July 2013, 37,589 persons (about 60% of all adopted persons)⁸ were on consular registration in Russian Foreign Missions in the United States. This indicates that almost 40 per cent of American adoptive parents have not fulfilled their obligation to register their adopted children with Russian consulates, thus violating the requirements of Russian courts that have ruled on the adoption of Russian citizens by foreigners.

At least 22 Russian minors have died at the hands of adoptive parents⁹ (these are only known cases, information about which has been accumulated by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation). According to NGOs monitoring the deaths of Russian children in the families of American

⁶ Data from the U.S. State Department's annual reports on intercountry adoption// https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/Intercountry-Adoption/adopt_ref/AnnualReports.html.

⁷ See Appendix 1: U.S. Department of State statistics on Russian children adopted by U.S. citizens.

⁸ See Appendix 2: Data on the number of children adopted by U.S. citizens registered with Russian consular posts in the United States.

⁹ See Appendix 3: Summary table of deaths between 1996 and 2013 of Russian citizen children adopted by U.S. citizens.

adoptive parents, at least 40 Russian minors have been killed or mutilated in the United States.¹⁰

However, the above figure (61,625) needs to be clarified, because in 1991-2001 there were numerous cases of Americans adopting children from Russia without a court decision and without granting the child US citizenship or a residence permit; the process bypassed the officially established procedure, both as a result of importing Russian children from third countries and violating the conditions of medical and educational programmes. Because of these facts, according to experts, we should be talking about 66,000-68,000 adopted Russian children in the United States.

In the same years, Ukraine was at the second place in this category of adopted children – **2,706** people (2008 – 189, 2009 – 607, 2010 – 445, 2011 – 632, 2012 – 395, 2013 – 438 people). However, already in 2014 the total number of Ukrainian citizens adopted in the United States was 521. Overall, Ukraine is becoming one of the key suppliers of children to the US: the total number for the period 2008-2021 is **5,040** (2015 – 303, 2016 – 303, 2017 – 215, 2018 – 248, 2019 – 298, 2020 – 211, 2021 – 235 people). From 1 October 2007 to 30 September 2021 – **5,037** people. In essence, Ukraine has replaced Russia in the American market of adoption services.

Traditionally high in 2008-2012 are the figures for adopted citizens of the Republic of Korea – **3,827** (2008 – 522, 2009 – 1,079, 2010 – 863, 2011 – 736, 2012 – 627 kids).

Quite often children were removed from the post-conflict zone of Haiti (2008 – 158, 2009 – 330, 2010 – 133, 2011 – 33, 2012 – 154, 2013 – 388, 2014 – 464). In total, **1,660** individuals during the above-mentioned period.

Similarly, a significant number of children were removed from Ethiopia between 2008 and 2014 (2008 – 1,031, 2009 – 2,269, 2010 – 2,513, 2011 –

¹⁰ Communication on the website of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs by K.K.Dolgov, Commissioner of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, dated 26.12.2013 // <https://www.mid.ru/print/?id=1661482&lang=ru>.

1,727, 2012 – 1,568, 2013 – 993, 2014 – 716, 2015 – 335, 2016 – 183, 2017 – 313, 2018 – 177, 2019 – 10, 2020 – 6 persons). A total for 2008-2020 – **11,841** people.

Of the 61,600 officially registered cases of adoption of Russian children by American families, only one third are considered successful by monitoring bodies and adoptive parent organisations. The other third is considered relatively acceptable. These are mostly cases where parents, faced with language barriers and psychologically determined behavioural peculiarities of the child, sought to bring the child's level of development and health up to the American average. The remaining one-third of adoptions are considered unsuccessful, associated with physical, sexual abuse and psychological pressure, a sharp deterioration in the well-being of adopted children, and abandonment, including return to Russia and placement in specialized children's homes or other adoptive families.

The scale of the problem is also evidenced by the fact that at the time of the termination of the practice of adopting Russian children (for the period 2007-2013), the Russian Embassy in the United States alone provided legal, psychological, diplomatic and consular assistance to about 500 Russian minors who were victims of ill-treatment by American adoptive parents.

To a certain extent, this situation is related to the dangerous pseudoscientific concept of Attachment Therapy (AT), one of the largest AT centres is located in Evergreen, Colorado. Adherents of this "concept" "label" foster children with their invented "diagnosis" of "attachment disorder". This "diagnosis" declares children with the alleged "attachment disorder" to be "aggressive," "conscienceless," etc. Under the influence of such ideas, American adoptive parents often quickly became disillusioned with the child brought from Russia and, instead of being patient and waiting for the child to get used to them, placed the child in a "therapeutic centre".

Particularly remarkable have been the efforts of R.S. Federici and S. Adler, the pseudo-experts who regularly appeared in courts supporting American adopters in cases of murders of Russian children. The litigation strategy sought to prove that the children had allegedly suffered from fetal alcohol syndrome or, because of their deprived childhood in an orphanage, had developed a mental disorder known as "attachment disorder." In this context, the "experts" consistently pursued a policy of justifying adoptive parents by portraying Russian children as the ones to blame.¹¹

Ranch for Kids foster house for adopted children

The Ranch for Kids foster care facility in Eureka (Montana) shut down in 2019 served as a sort of "treatment centre" for Russian orphans. The institution, which operated without license to run foster care programs and used the legal status of a local parish unit (and was therefore exempt from taxes and inspections), received from American foster parents "difficult" children from Russia, former USSR and other states. In 1999, Joyce Sterkel, founder of the foster house, "took in" a Russian child who had twice changed foster families earlier in Colorado. American families that became aware of this practice began to send to Mrs. Sterkel their "problem" adopted children, and thus eventually the Ranch for Kids came into existence.

The cost of children's stay at the facility was about USD 3,500 per month. According to the list provided by J. Sterkel to the Russian side in 2012, about 130 adopted children from Russia (75 per cent of them under 18) and three children from Ukraine had gone through the foster house in 2004–2012. The disciplinary techniques used to 'treat' 'problem' minors had repeatedly come into the media spotlight. There were reports of Russian children running away

¹¹ The Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1997/09/19/controversial-disorder-raised-as-defense-in-boys-death/179c0625-902f-4931-9144-6798130ff1d0/>

from the centre as well as engaging in promiscuous sexual relations, including with local population.

In 2012, there were 25 to 30 children and teenagers in the orphanage, 18 of them adopted from Russia. After 2013, the Ranch for Kids administration refused to provide any information on the fate of Russian children and prohibited Russian consular officials from visiting the facility. The US Department of State, despite the direct violation of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, failed to render due assistance, and the further plight of the foster children from Russia remained unknown. Following numerous complaints and testimony from former foster children who had reported terrible living conditions (physical and psychological abuse, beatings, deprivation of food), the ranch was officially closed by the Montana State Court ruling in 2019. Social workers removed 27 children (most of them from Russia) from the facility.¹²

¹² USA Today. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2019/07/26/montana-ranch-kids-has-27-children-removed-over-abuse-allegation/1835675001/>

Specificities of the U.S. domestic adoption system

In keeping with the federal structure and the principles governing family relations, adoption in the U.S. legal system falls almost entirely under state and local government jurisdiction. Dozens of diverging legal regimes for adoption of minors and monitoring of the observance of their rights by foster families are therefore in place throughout the USA. The Obama administration failed to adopt a framework federal law (model law) in this area.

The worst situation in terms of control over the welfare of adoptees has been reported in states that stick to the so-called "free adoption" system (California, Alaska, Arizona, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Missouri, and others), where, in the actual absence of government control, the central role in placing children in new families belongs to adoptive parents and intermediaries – legal entities and physical persons that provide adoption services for remuneration from interested parties.¹³

According to the U.S. federal government,¹⁴ in 2021, 203,770 minors remained within the U.S. foster care system, showing the rate of 3 children per 1000 (this entry rate for the foster care system has plateaued at 3-4 children per 1000 over the past two decades). Children aged 1 to 5 years old account for the larger share of those in care (29 per cent in 2021).

According to the statistics, American Indian and Alaska Native children are overrepresented in public foster care: in 2021 they accounted for 1 per cent of the US juvenile population, but 2.8 per cent of those in public care.¹⁵

¹³ US Department of State: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/News/Intercountry-Adoption-News.html>.

¹⁴ US Children's Bureau (US Federal Agency): <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research/afcars>. An illustrative analysis of statistical data has been provided by the American Annie E. Casey Foundation: <https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/6269-children-entering-foster-care#detailed/2/2-53/true/2048/any/13036>

¹⁵ US Children's Bureau (US Federal Agency): <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research/afcars>. An illustrative analysis of statistical data has been provided by the US National Center for Juvenile Justice: http://www.ncjj.org/AFCARS/Disproportionality_Dashboard.asp?selDisplay=4

In 2022, about 117 thousand children were awaiting adoption in the U.S.¹⁶ Statistically, only one out of two finds a new family. The vast majority of adoptions are intra-state adoptions. Due to a considerable number of legal impediments, adoption of minors from other U.S. states may cost USD 50 – 60 thousand more than within the same state.

Adopting a child from Russia was regarded as a cheap way of adoption in the U.S. This was the primary reason why the Americans were interested in adopting minors from the Russian Federation to the disadvantage of dozens of thousands of orphans from their own country.

Discrimination on the part of the U.S. judicial system remains among the reasons of the poor legal protection of adopted children from Russia. A review of the U.S. judicial practice shows that in a number of cases, courts (at the county and state levels) have imposed unjustifiably lenient sentences on US citizens guilty of the death and abuse of children adopted in Russia. None of those found guilty of the deaths of 20 Russian-born children have been sentenced to capital punishment or life imprisonment, which is the usual practice in the U.S. in the case of a murder of a minor. The average prison sentence for American killers of Russian children is 8.5 years. For those guilty of the deaths of American children, the average sentence is longer: 13.5 years (excluding those sentenced for life imprisonment). Many adoptive parents of Russian children even manage to secure release on parole or avoid punishment altogether.

The illness of a child abused is an aggravating circumstance for the offenders. However, there have been attempts to explain unlawful decisions by children's diseases that they had allegedly acquired before being adopted in the United States. To justify such opinions, pseudo-experts are being hired. The latter diagnose children, whom they have never seen or treated, in a way that

¹⁶ U.S. Children's Bureau (U.S. Federal Agency): <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research/afcars>

diminishes the guilt of the adoptive parents and lays part of the responsibility for the tragic incidents on the minors.

The State Department, which was the executive body on the bilateral adoption agreement between Russia and the United States, cited a lack of powers and refused to challenge the unlawful decisions of U.S. courts.

No legal mechanisms to ensure the equality of all children before American law and effective protection of their rights have been identified. The Ministry of Justice of the United States, which oversees the uniform application of law across the country and the implementation of constitutional rights of citizens regardless of their age and social background, has failed to take adequate steps in relation to the adopted children.

The principle of humanism and best interests of the child does not allow for a "statistical" approach to violations of the rights of minors. Even one inadequate verdict favouring offenders sets a dangerous precedent that should be prevented from taking root in the judicial practice.

Over the past decade, to safeguard the civil rights and the legitimate interests of children the United States has adopted legislation providing the federal authorities with broad powers to fight domestic abuse, protect children from sexual exploitation, etc. In addition to the supervisory powers of the Ministry of Justice, this set of laws provides a legal framework to intervene in and correct unlawful actions by local and regional authorities.

Taking into account objective difficulties of Russian orphans and children adopted from other countries in adapting to a new lifestyle, competent U.S. bodies might have refused to apply the affirmative action principle that ensures legal and social protection of this category of American citizens.

Same-sex couples raising adopted children

Social Science Research, an authoritative scientific journal, published the findings of a two-year study by Mark Regnerus, Professor of Sociology at the

University of Texas, titled "*How different are the adult children of parents who have same-sex relationships?*"¹⁷ The detailed survey taken among 3,000 respondents, whose mothers and fathers were gay and lesbian people, found that those who grew up in such 'partnerships' fell significantly behind their peers from 'traditional' families on a number of indicators.

According to the research paper, 25 per cent of children raised by homosexual parents have had or have sexually transmitted diseases (the number of peers from heterosexual families who have STDs is less than 8 per cent). The high rate of disease is linked to the 'specificity' of the upbringing by homosexual parents, who tend to have a more lenient attitude towards marital infidelity (40 per cent against 13 per cent of those who grew up in normal families).

Furthermore, the researcher has identified serious psychological problems. Up to 24 per cent of adolescent children from same-sex "families" have thought about suicide (average level being 5 per cent). The children of homosexual parents require psychotherapeutic help more often than their peers from regular families (19 per cent against 8 per cent accordingly). Such children are prone to have sexual identity disorder (60 to 70 per cent have no clear male or female behaviour pattern).

Violations of the physical integrity of children have also been identified: 31 per cent of those who grew up with a lesbian mother and 25 per cent of those who have had a homosexual father have been forced to have sex, including by their parents (8 per cent on average across the nation).

Children raised by homosexual couples have been found to struggle economically and socially. Approximately 28 per cent of those raised by a lesbian mother have no stable job. Moreover, the homosexual couples

¹⁷ Regnerus, Mark. "How different are the adult children of parents who have same-sex relationships? Findings from the New Family Structures Study." *Social Science Research* (2012). 752 – 770. 6 Oct. 2012: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/96719068/Regnerus-Study>

themselves in many instances rely on the support of local social services and receive state benefits (69 per cent of those who have a lesbian mother and 57 per cent of those raised by gay couples).

The author and his findings came under attack by gay rights organizations in the U.S., even though the scientific credibility of the study had been confirmed by many experts. Reason – the findings undermine the myth about favourable conditions for child-rearing in same-sex partnerships promoted by homosexuals.

NGOs estimate that there are between 270,000 and 2 million underage Americans currently living in same-sex families. It is difficult to establish the exact number in view of the ban on same-sex marriages in 30 states and on the adoption of children by same-sex partners in 39 states. Furthermore, when gay and lesbian couples adopt children they do not, as a rule, inform judicial and social authorities about being in a same-sex relationship.

Mechanisms and facts of systemic violations of the rights of children adopted in the United States

A journalistic investigation by Reuter (*Reuter Investigates – The Child Exchange*, 9 September 2013¹⁸) revealed an illegal network of middlemen and sellers of minors. An over a year-long investigation into the activities of secret communities on social networks found out that hundreds of biological and adoptive parents had offered their children for sale online. In some cases they gave their children away to pedophiles, who used them in pornography. According to Reuters, 261 children were offered for exchange or sale. An overwhelming majority of the children (70 per cent) disowned by their parents had been brought to the United States from other countries. No less than 26 orphans were adopted from Russia. Apparently, these violations are not isolated incidents but a serious systemic problem that demonstrates inadequate protection of children's rights in the United States.

The illegal child exchange system allows Americans to evade both social and financial obligations to their adopted children and avoid prosecution for child abuse. Private orphanages for adoptees that are not controlled by the social welfare authorities have sprung up from the practice of transferring children to other families.

An investigation published on 16 October 2020 by USA Today¹⁹ reveals shocking data on the malfunctioning of the system of adoption and guardianship in the state of Florida. According to the journalists, about 170 minors were placed in the custody of people who were known to have committed acts of physical or sexual abuse of children or other criminal offenses. The Florida Department of Children and Families estimates that each year since 2015, approximately 700 to 800 minors in foster care have experienced some form of

¹⁸ Americans use the Internet to abandon children adopted from overseas. Reuter. 09.09.2013. <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/adoption/#article/part1>.

¹⁹ 13 Foster kids lived with molesters. No one told their parents. USA Today. 03.09.2016. <https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/news/investigations/2020/10/15/no-one-checks-on-kids-who-previously-lived-with-abusive-foster-parents/5896724002/>

abuse at the hands of their foster parents. National Coalition for Child Protection Reform believes the official statistics are underreported. In fact, due to the absence of a legal requirement to inform biological parents about incidents of abuse against their child in foster care, victims of such an abuse often go unidentified and unheard, while their abusers receive no deserved punishment.

The situation that occurred in Haiti following a devastating earthquake on 12 January 2010 is a conspicuous example of the State Department's intervention to cover up illegal adoption of foreign children by American citizens. Back then, ten American adoptive parents, missionaries from Idaho, were arrested by Haitian authorities for attempting to kidnap and transport 33 minors to the Dominican Republic. The charges against these Americans were brought by a local court. However, all the Americans were released and returned to the United States between February and May 2010 as a result of pressure from Washington on Port-au-Prince, in particular appeals of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.²⁰

There have also been cases, in violation of international law and the 1964 bilateral U.S.S.R. – U.S. Consular Convention,²¹ of American authorities concealing forensic medical documents related to the cases of abused Russian children, denying consular access to minors who were victims of physical and sexual abuse, and of American adoptive parents deceiving Russian courts by concealing the same-sex nature of their relations when adopting children from Russia. The American authorities have repeatedly ignored the requests of relevant Russian authorities, including the Prosecutor General and the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation and systematically reduced the extent of liability of American adoptive parents. According to the Russian

²⁰ Haiti judge frees convicted missionary. Christian Today. 18.05.2010.

<https://www.christiantoday.com/article/haiti.judge.frees.convicted.missionary/25923.htm>

²¹ Consular Convention between the government of the United States of America and the government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics // Vedomosti of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of 17.07.1968, № 29.

Ministry of Education and Science, in the years 2010-2012 alone, American adoptive parents failed to submit 1,136 reports on the living and upbringing conditions of 653 Russian children.

Remarkably, the number of foreign adoptions to the United States was in a steady decline each year after it had peaked in 2009 at 12,753 adoptions due to the deterioration of children's living conditions and violations of their rights in the country: 11,059 children in 2010; 9,320 in 2011; 8,668 in 2012; 7,094 in 2013, 6,441 in 2014; 5,648 in 2015; 5,372 in 2016; 4,714 in 2017, 4,059 in 2018; 2,970 in 2019; 1,922 in 2020, and 1, 785 children in 2021.

Countries that have banned adoption to the United States of America, besides the Russian Federation (1 January 2013), also include Kenya (27 November 2014), Ethiopia (14 February 2018), and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (15 January 2016).

Conclusion

Despite the attempts of the United States to present itself internationally as the ultimate champion of children's rights, Washington has nothing to brag about to that effect. America's claims are not supported either by relevant domestic legal framework, or by the law enforcement practice. The system established in the United States to protect children's rights fails to meet the challenges of the time. For example, in the United States, especially in traditional conservative religious communities, there still is a view that the rights of parents prevail. Pressure from conservative organizations, such as the Christian Coalition of America and the Family Research Council, is one of the main reasons for Washington's refusal to ratify the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The main legal challenge to ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is that the United States is one of the countries that sentences juveniles to life in prison without the possibility of parole, according to Jo Becker,

advocacy director of the children's rights division at Human Rights Watch.²² There is a concern that lawsuits seeking damages from the government could result from the social and economic rights established in the Convention. Although America has laws against child abuse, a third of states allow corporal punishment in schools and none bans it at home.²³

Apparently, the dramatic events in the lives of Russian and other children adopted by Americans from abroad are far from being isolated cases. These stories represent systemic deficiencies attesting to insufficient protection of children's rights in the United States as a whole. Parents, the American legal system, or NGOs in the United States are unable to ensure the protection of children's rights and interests at a level that would meet international standards.

²² US: Ratify Children's Treaty. Human Rights Watch. 18.11.2009. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2009/11/18/us-ratify-childrens-treaty>.

²³ Why won't America ratify the UN convention on children's rights? The Economist. 07.10.2013. <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2013/10/06/why-wont-america-ratify-the-un-convention-on-childrens-rights>

Annex No. 1

**STATE DEPARTMENT STATISTICS ON RUSSIAN CHILDREN
ADOPTED BY U.S. CITIZENS**

(IR-3 and IR-4 visas issued by U.S. consulates in Russia)

<u>Financial year</u> (1 October – 30 September)	<u>IR-3 visas</u> (for those adopted by decision of Russian courts)	<u>IR-4 visas</u> (for those taken to the U.S. for the purpose of subsq. adoption)	Total
1992	226	98	324
1993	552	194	746
1994	1,189	341	1,530
1995	1,386	510	1,896
1996	2,245	510	2,755
1997	3,536	280	3,816
1998	4,335	156	4,491
1999	4,327	21	4,348
2000	4,254	15	4,269
2001	4,247	32	4,279
2002	4,917	22	4,939
2003	5,204	5	5,209
2004	5,845	20	5,865
2005	4,628	11	4,639
2006	3,698	8	3,706
2007	2,305	5	2,310
2008	1,849	12	1,861
2009	1,583	5	1,588
2010	1,078	4	1,082
2011	965	5	970
2012	749	2	751
2013 ²⁴	250	1	251
TOTAL	59,368	2,257	61,625

²⁴ Visas issued before the ban on American adoptions of Russian citizens was introduced (from 1 October to 31 December 2012)

Annex No. 2

**DATA ON THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN REGISTERED
WITH RUSSIAN CONSULAR OFFICES IN THE UNITED STATES
AND ADOPTED BY AMERICAN CITIZENS**

S/N	Russian Consular Mission Abroad	Consular registration as of 1 July 2013
1	Consular Section of the Russian Embassy in the United States	19,642
2	Consulate General of Russia in New York	7,910
3	Consulate General of Russia in San Francisco	3,671
4	Consulate General of Russia in Seattle	4,096
5	Consulate General of Russia in Houston	2,270
	TOTAL:	37,589

Annex No. 3

SUMMARY TABLE OF DEATHS BETWEEN 1996 AND 2013 OF
RUSSIAN CHILDREN ADOPTED BY U.S. CITIZENS²⁵

	Date of death	Child's name and age	Year of adoption	Data on adoptive parents (surname, first name)	Country, state, city	Nature of incident, measures taken
1	9 February 1996	Konstantin Sh., 2 years old, born in 1993	1995	Polreis Renee	United States, Colorado, Greeley	Death through the fault of the adoptive mother: the child was bitten to death with a kitchen spoon by the adoptive mother. In 1997, the adoptive mother was sentenced to 22 years in prison (in 2000, the term was reduced to 18 years). In 2005, she was released on parole.
2	25 November 1998	Anna P., 3 years old, born in 1995	1998	Higginbotham Laura	United States, Vermont, Shelburne	Death through the fault of the adoptive parents: died of traumatic brain injury. In 2004, the adoptive mother was sentenced to 1 year in prison for manslaughter. The sentence is suspended until her other adopted daughter reaches the age of majority.
3	31 October 2000	Viktor T., 7 years old, born in 1993	2000	Matthey Brenda and Robert	United States, New Jersey, Hunterdon, Union Township	Death through the fault of the adoptive parents: beaten by the adoptive parents with a baseball bat, belt, whips, then locked in a cold room overnight. Died of cardiac arrest caused by hypothermia. The adoptive parents were sentenced in 2004 to 10 years' imprisonment. Both adoptive parents were released from prison in 2008.
4	14 December 2001	Piotr Ch., 5 years old, born in 1996	2001	Lindorff Heather and James	United States, New Jersey, Newfield, Franklin	Death through the fault of the adoptive parents: died of blunt head trauma and cerebral haemorrhage. Burns, haemorrhage in the eye and bruises were found on the child's body. Heather Lindorff was sentenced to 6 years' imprisonment. James Lindorff sentenced to 4 years' suspended sentence (2004). In 2005, the Court of Appeal acquitted the adoptive parents.
5	30 November 2001	Sergey N., 1 year old, born in 2000	2001	Evans Natalie Fabian and Steven Michael	United States, Indiana, Lowell	Charged with: the boy died of traumatic brain injury and Shaken Baby Syndrome. He was extremely emaciated. The trial took place on 27 November 2005. The adoptive mother was acquitted.
6	20 October 2002	Yana G., born in 1990	1997	Jenia Kolenda, Richard Kolenda	United States, Massachusetts	Death through the fault of the adoptive father: the adoptive father stabbed his wife and two adopted children to death,

²⁵ According to the Department of State Policy for the Protection of Children's Rights of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, 2013.

7		Anatoly F., born in 1991				and then shot himself.
8	23 October 2002	Anastasia P., 2 years old	2001	Bennett Susan Jane	United States , Ohio, Lancaster	Death through the fault of the adoptive mother: traumatic brain injury. In 2003, the adoptive mother was sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment (manslaughter).
9	15 August 2002	Nikita Kh., 2 years old, born in 2000	2001	Higier Natasha and Louis	United States , Massachusetts, Boston (Braintree)	Death through the fault of the adoptive mother: died of traumatic brain injury. The adoptive mother later admitted she had thrown the child into the air, causing Nikita to hit his head on the table. In 2004, Natasha Higier was sentenced to 2.5 years in prison (with 1.5-year suspended sentence and 4-year probation period), manslaughter.
10	16 October 2003 .	Dmitry I., 3 years old, born in 2000	2003	Tompson Amy and Gary	United States , Ohio, Columbus	Death through the fault of the adoptive parents: 5 days before his death, the adoptive father put Dima in a bathtub with boiling water. The child got 2nd and 3rd degree burns. Neither parent offered him adequate medical care. In 2003, Gary Tompson was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment. In 2004, Amy Tompson was sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment.
11	18 December 2003	Aleksey G., 6 years old, born in 1997	2003	Pavlis Irma and Dino	United States , Illinois, Chicago (Schaumburg)	Death through the fault of the adoptive mother: died of blunt force trauma to the head. There were 32 bruises, scars and cuts found on his body. In 2005, adoptive mother, Irma Pavlis, was sentenced to 12-year imprisonment.
12	11 August 2003	Albina Ch., 2 years old, born in 2001	2002	Hagmann Patrice and Glenn Robert	United States , Virginia, Montclair	Death through the fault of the adoptive mother: the girl died of asphyxiation. The adoptive mother killed her "by negligence", allegedly trying to stop a fit of anger using a method from the book "Holding Time". The girl's entire body was bruised and battered. In 2004, Patrice Hagmann received 10 years of suspended sentence.
13	14 August 2005	Ilya K., born in 2003	2005	Dykstra Lisa Christine and Brian Dale	United States , Iowa	The child died of traumatic brain injury. Adoptive father, Brian Dykstra, said that the boy had fallen down the stairs and hit his head. Verdict of acquittal.

14	2 July 2005	Viktoria B., 2 years old, born in 2002	2004	Hilt Peggy Sue and Christopher Scott	United States , North Carolina, Wake Forest	The girl died of blows to the abdomen. Death through the fault of the adoptive mother (indicted). Peggy Hilt was sentenced to 25 years' imprisonment (2006).
15	22 January 2005	Denis U., 8 years old, born in 1996	2000	Merryman Donna and Samuel	United States , Maryland, Flintville	Death through the fault of the adoptive parents: died of cardiac arrest as a result of exhaustion (weighing less than at adoption). Charged with manslaughter, mother and father sentenced to 22 years in prison.
16	7 March 2008	Nikolay Sh., 2 years old, born in 2006	2008	Fiodor Dmitriyevich Yemelyantsev and Yemelyantseva Kimberly Kay	United States , Utah	Death through the fault of the adoptive mother: the child died of a skull fracture as a result of a blow, with numerous bruises on his body. The adoptive mother pleaded guilty and was sentenced to indefinite imprisonment ranging from 1 year to 15 years.
17	8 July 2008	Dmitry Y., born in 2006	2008	Harrison Chase Dmitry Exmann-Harrison Carol Lynn	United States , Virginia	Death through the fault of the adoptive father: the boy died of heat stroke (the adoptive father "left him behind" in the car for 9 hours in the heat of the sun). In December 2008, the adoptive father was found not guilty.
18	25 August 2009	Ivan S., born in 2002	2003	Craver Nanette and Michael	United States , Pennsylvania, New York	Death through the fault of the adoptive parents: the boy died of traumatic brain injury, with over 80 wounds and injuries found on his body. In 2011, the Cravers were sentenced to 16 months' imprisonment for negligent homicide, and released in the courtroom (they served 19 months during the investigation phase).
19	10 June 2010	Kirill K., 2 years old, born in 2002	2003	Craig and Monique Attuso	United States , Louisiana	On 10 June in Francisville, Louisiana, United States, while cycling in a park with his mother and a twin brother, the child had been stabbed to death by 16-year-old Trevor Reese, who made a confession in 2013. Sentencing was postponed pending changes to Louisiana's criminal law. The teenager was facing a sentence of life imprisonment.

20	21 January 2013	Maksim K., 3 years old, born in 2010	2012	Shatto Alan Harry and Shatto Laura Lee Ann	United States , Texas	Death of the child was caused by an accident. The boy died of a ruptured abdominal mesentery, while playing on a playground in the yard of a house. Over 30 wounds of "varying healing rates" were found on the body. The adoptive parents were never charged.
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SELECTED CASES OF ABUSE
OF ADOPTED RUSSIANS IN AMERICAN FAMILIES²⁶

2000

Ilya K.

He was adopted in May 2000 when he was one-and-a-half-year-old. On August 14 of the same year, he died. Brian Dykstra, adoptive father, was charged with murder but was immediately released on bail. In November 2011 B. Dykstra convinced a jury that injuries on the child's body, including a broken head, were due to an accidental fall from a ladder. The American was acquitted without spending a single day in prison.

Victor T.

In October, seven-year-old Victor T. died in New Jersey. He was adopted in December 1999 by the spouses Robert and Brenda Matey. An autopsy revealed that he died of hypothermia (the immediate cause of death was cardiac arrhythmia). Numerous wounds were found on the boy's body. The adoptive parents were charged with premeditated murder and child abuse. In 2004, the Supreme Court in New Jersey sentenced the Mateys to ten years in prison.

2001

Petr C. (Jacob L.)

Five-year-old Jacob L., adopted by the spouses Heather and James Lindorff in 2001 along with six brothers, died in Pennsylvania on 14 December 2001. A wound was found on his body. His adoptive parents were tried in 2003. Heather Lindorff was charged with aggravated manslaughter, aggravated assault and endangering the life of a child. Her husband James was

²⁶ From the statement on the website of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Commissioner for Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law K. Dolgov of 26 December 2013.

charged with child abuse. The Lindorffs were acquitted because the brothers of the dead boy testified that none of the couple's adopted children had been abused, and the wound found on Jacob's body had been inflicted in Russia.

2002

Nikita H.

In August 2002, two-year-old Nikita H. died in a Boston hospital of head injuries. He was adopted by the Higier spouses in December 2001. That same month, Natalya Higier, a naturalised U.S. citizen, was detained on charges of premeditated murder of a child. In 2004, Natalia Higier pleaded guilty. She said she played with the child by tossing him in the air, which resulted in him hitting his head. She was sentenced on the charge of causing death by negligence to one year in prison and four years' probation on her release.

2003

Alexey, Anastasia and Svetlana K.

They were adopted in 2003 by the American family of Deckert (Texas). Their adoptive parents systematically subjected them to physical and psychological abuse. They were beaten, deprived of food, locked in a room with a bucket for bowel movement. Their adoptive mother, Penny Deckert, knocked Alexey's teeth out and threatened to shoot the boy. This forced him to run away from home and hide until he came of age.

Four-year-old girl (no name given)

She was adopted in Russia in 2002 by the American family of Hagmann. She was strangled on August 11, 2003, at the age of 2 years and 7 months by her adoptive mother, allegedly while trying to stop the child's hysterical attack. The adoptive mother was charged with child abuse and manslaughter. She was sentenced to probation and two five-year suspended sentences.

Four-year-old girl (no name given), adopted in Russia by the American family, was regularly sexually abused by a non-native underage older brother.

Alexey G.

On 18 December 2003, six-year-old Alexey G., adopted by the Pavlis spouses in 2003, was admitted to a hospital in suburban Chicago, Illinois. He passed away the next day. An examination revealed a cerebral haematoma and cerebral haemorrhage. The investigation found that his adoptive mother, Irma Pavlis, had beaten him for wetting the bed and being "very naughty". In May 2005, Irma Pavlis was found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to 12 years in prison.

2005

Denis W.

In January 2005, eight-year-old Denis W., adopted by the spouses Samuel and Donna Maryman in 2000, died of exhaustion in Maryland. The adoptive parents were charged with premeditated murder. According to the investigation, they simply prevented the child from eating. Spouses Samuel and Donna Maryman were sentenced to 22 years in prison.

Victoria B.

In July 2005, two-and-a-half-year-old Victoria B. died in Virginia. She was beaten to death by her adoptive mother Peggy Sue Hilt. An autopsy showed the girl died from blows to the abdomen. Hilt told the police she was "enraged and angered" by her daughter's behaviour. According to the case file, Hilt first shook Victoria B., then threw her to the floor and punched her in the abdomen. She then picked the girl up, put her in bed and continued to beat her on her stomach and back with her fist. In May 2006, Peggy Sue Hilt was sentenced to 25 years in prison for the murder of her adopted daughter and an additional

10 years if her behaviour after release (after 25 years) is not consistent with the rules for such cases.

2006

Two children (no names given)

In January 2006, the Hansen spouses were convicted in Utah of beating and starving two adopted children (**no names given**) from Russia (born 1998 and 1999). The couple was found guilty of leaving the children in danger. Teresa Hansen was sentenced to two years' suspended imprisonment and a \$5,000 fine, which she must pay if she breaks the law while on probation. Her husband Reed Hansen was sentenced to six months suspended imprisonment and a \$2,000 fine under the same conditions. The children were handed over to other adoptive parents.

Kuzma

In June 2006, the court convicted Jane and Timothy Cochran of abusing their four-year-old adopted son **Kuzma** (born 1999) in 2004. Jane Cochran was found guilty of causing serious physical injuries to the child by means of weapons and dangerous objects. She was sentenced to four months in jail, three months of home supervision, five years' probation and 100 hours of community service. Timothy Cochran was found guilty of failing to report the abuse of his adopted son to the authorities. He was sentenced to two months in jail and three years' probation. The investigation found that one of the motives for the child's abuse was that he allegedly could not recite prayers in English. The guardianship authorities matched the boy with other adoptive parents.

Maria Y.

She was adopted by an American, M. Mankuso, in 1998 in the city of Novoshahtinsk. Over the course of five years the child has been regularly

subjected to sexual violence by her father, appeared in scenes of pornographic films.

2008

Nikolai

On 7 March 2008, 14-month-old Kolya, adopted son of Russian citizen Fedor Yemelyantsev and U.S. citizen Kimberly Yemelyantseva, died in Tooele (state of Utah). As concluded by the specialists, the cause of child's death was craniocerebral trauma in the wake of a strike. Additionally, numerous bruises on child's head and legs have been recorded. Adoptive mother pleaded guilty to the murder. In October 2008, Kimberly Yemelyantseva was sentenced to the-so-called indefinite imprisonment – from 1 to 15 years in prison (with a possibility to get parole after a year).

Dima Y.

In July 2008, two-year-old Dima Y., adopted from Russia, died in the city of Herndon in the vicinity of Washington. His adoptive father Miles Harrison left the child for a whole day in a locked car. The air conditioner was switched off so the temperature in the car reached 50 degrees. The boy died of the heat. Miles Harrison told the investigators that he was to bring the child to nursery but hurried to work so much that he forgot to do so. In December 2008, Miles Harrison was acquitted in court.

2009

Daria

On 23 February 2009, three-year-old Daria, adopted by Theresa McNulty from state of Pennsylvania, was brought to hospital with second-degree burn of 10% of the body and numerous bruises, scars and abrasions on the head. During the investigation it was established that T.McNulty subjected Daria to systematic beating and torment. On 3 February 2012 the court of state of

Pennsylvania passed an unreasonably lenient sentence to Theresa McNaulty who violently abused the adopted girl. Despite that the facts of conducted violence were proved in court and the adoptive mother herself did not repent, she was ultimately sentenced to 23 months of prison with a possibility to be released after 8 months. Meanwhile, according to Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pennsylvania's legislation provides for imprisonment from 5 to 10 years for similar offences.

Ivan S.

On 24 August 2010, in York County (state of Pennsylvania) seven-year-old Ivan S died in hospital of craniocerebral trauma and a whole range of other injuries. American couple Nanette and Michael Craver adopted Ivan together with his twin sister in 2003. The doctors who performed the autopsy have found over 80 visible wounds and injuries on the boy's body with 20 of them being on the head. According to experts' conclusion, the child was severely exhausted, a tumour was found in his brain. On 18 November 2011, the court in the city of York in state of Pennsylvania sentenced the Cravers to 16 months of imprisonment for unintentional child murder. However, the Cravers were released in the court hall on the basis that they spent over a year and a half in prison. The death of Ivan S and court verdict caused public resonance in both Russia and the United States. The investigation of the previously initiated criminal case was intensified, an international arrest warrant was issued against the Cravers and the motions for their absentee arrest were submitted to the court. On 21 December 2011, the Moscow City Court recognized the refuse to sanction the absentee arrest of the Carvers', U.S. citizens, on the charge of murder of their adopted son Ivan S as legal.

2010

Artem S.

In early April 2020 Artem, born in 2002, was sent by plane from Washington to Moscow. He only had a note which read that U.S. citizen Torry Ann Hansen, who had adopted him in 2009, abandoned the boy on the basis that he was mentally unstable. The boy spent only half a year in the family in America. Artem S arrived to Russia being psychologically stressed. No physical injury was revealed. Ann Torry Hansen said she tried to find legal ways to return the child. World Association for Children and Parents (WACAP) which helped the woman from the United States in adopting Artem S. filed a lawsuit against the Hansen family to the Badford County court, demanding to oblige Ann Torry, who legally remained the adoptive mother for Artem S., to pay 27% of her salary as child support. In May 2012 the court ruled that Torry Ann Hansen must pay the funds to support Artem S.

Kirill K.

On 10 June 2010 Kirill, born in 2002, adopted by Attuso family in 2003, was killed in Louisiana. The boy went to the park with his mother and one of the brothers to ride a bike. The adults have lost sight of the boy. Several hours later they have found his body off a trail. Child's throat was slit, his body showed several stab wounds. Trevor Reese, born in 1993, was charged with murder.

Three girls (names unknown)

In August 2010, it became known that in Larimer County, state of Colorado a legal proceeding was underway on the case of **Edelvina and Steven Leshinsky**, who were charged with abusing their three adopted 12, 13 and 14-year-old daughters from Russia (**names not provided**). The girls were adopted in 2005. The investigation commenced in 2010, after one of the sisters

came to school with a black eye. In girl's words, her adoptive mother threw a boot at her. A doctor found serious injuries on another sister's left hand. The children also reported multiple acts of compulsion to intense physical activity (long distance running, push-ups etc.). The married couple was arrested. The Leshinskys pleaded guilty and made a plea agreement. On 1 July 2012 Larimer County Court in state of Colorado sentenced Steven and Evelina Leshinsky to four years of probation. In accordance with the court's decision, the Leshinskys were to spend 400 hours of public works and were forbidden to leave the state without authorities' permission. Besides, they were ordered to sign up for special parental classes and pass a psychological test. They may not be guardians for children under the age of 15. The custody over the children was handed over to Steven Leshinsky's aunt and her husband. Russian side's intervention in this matter has literally saved the youngest sister's life.

2011

Ksenia A.

In June 2011, information about another case of abuse of adopted children from Russia was made public in the United States. It became known that the police of the state of Georgia is investigating a criminal case of sexual abuse by a U.S. citizen of the adopted Russian girl Ksenia A. from the city of Kemerovo. The girl was brought to the U.S. in 2001, her adoptive mother abandoned her in 2009, and Ksenia A. was re-adopted. The new adoptive father Michael Gizmor began to rape her. In 2010, a criminal case was opened on this fact, and the rapist stepfather was arrested. But only in June 2011, the U.S. State Department informed the Russian consulate. Gizmor denies his guilt and claims that everything happened by reciprocity. The Kemerovo Regional Department of the Federal Migration Service reported that the girl was not 16 years old at the time of her adoptive father's arrest.

A child (**name unknown**) from Russia aged 5 days was bought from a Russian surrogate mother in 2005 by a homosexual couple from Australia (Mark Newton and Peter Truong). M. Newton, reportedly the child's biological father, also held U.S. citizenship. The child was sexually abused by both foster parents and third persons, used in filming scenes for pornographic movies. At the age of 6 in 2011, the minor was removed from the family by U.S. authorities. M. Newton was sentenced in the United States to 40 years in prison and to pay the child \$400,000 as compensation for moral damage.

Daniil and Oleg B.

In November 2011, Alaskan resident Jessica Bigley appeared on a U.S. television show where she revealed that she made one of her adopted children rinse his mouth with hot sauce and douse him with cold water as an educational measure. The Bigley couple, who have four children of their own, adopted twin boys Daniil and Oleg B. from Russia. A female viewer sent a link to the story to Pavel Astakhov, the Children's Rights Commissioner in the Russian Federation, who demanded that the U.S. authorities check the legality of the twins' adoption and begin criminal prosecution of the Bigleys. In January 2011, the U.S. Attorney's Office formally charged Jessica Bigley with child abuse. The children remained living with the Bigley family. On August 30, 2011, the court of the municipality of Anchorage (Alaska, USA) sentenced Jessica Bigley, previously found guilty by a jury of abuse of an adopted child from Russia, to a suspended sentence of six months' imprisonment and a fine of \$1,500.

2012

Elena, Sergey, Christina and Leonid Zh.

They were adopted by an American couple, Martin and Kathleen O'Brien, in 2004. One day they came to the police in the state of Wisconsin and reported that they had been beaten and otherwise abused by their American adoptive

parents for several years. They had been tied up, caned, kicked in the groin, strangled, tear-gassed, and left naked in the cold for any offense. In the foster family they were not allowed to go to school and were not provided with clothes and food. Following an investigation by the Walworth County (Wisconsin) Prosecutor's Office, the O'Brien couple was formally charged in May 2012 with 17 counts, including wilful injury to minors. Tellingly, the sadistic adoptive parents were released on bail afterward. In October 2013, after two years of bickering in court, Martin and Kathleen O'Brien relinquished their parental rights to the children from Russia. The former adoptive parents tried to block the criminal charges against them through procedural tricks, including an appeal to the state Supreme Court to dismiss the case due to the "unreliability" of the children's testimony.

Daniil K.

In July 2012, Virginia couple Amy and Matthew Sweeney were arrested on suspicion of battery against their adopted son from Russia. Eight-year-old Daniil K., adopted by the Americans in 2006, had long been severely beaten by his adoptive parents. In July 2012, the boy ran away from them to his neighbours and asked for help. The police found multiple bruises and signs of beatings. The boy was handed over to U.S. social services.

Maksim B.

In September 2012, Russian diplomats demanded from the American side exhaustive explanations and the speedy establishment of the whereabouts of six-year-old Russian citizen Maksim B. in order to organize a consular meeting with him. The boy was adopted by spouses Shed and Christy Traylor. In 2011, the adoptive parents were arrested in Brevard County, Florida, on suspicion of child abuse. A court in the U.S. sentenced them to probation for beating and sexually abusing the child. The boy was handed over to temporary guardians.

The Florida District Court decided to deny the Russian side visitation of the child. In January 2013, the Russian Foreign Ministry again appealed to the U.S. authorities to intervene in the case of the Traylor couple and provide consular access to the Russian foster child, Maksim B.

2013

Maksim K.

In January 2013, three-year-old Maxim K., adopted in Russia, died. Upon examination, the child's body showed multiple injuries to the head and legs. During the autopsy, pathologists found damage to the abdomen and internal organs, which could have been caused by a severe blow. However, the Texas authorities decided to stop investigating his death and fully release the American foster parents, the Shatto spouses, from criminal and civil liability. The Pskov Regional Court decided to cancel the adoption by the Shatto couple of his younger brother, Kirill K., who is still living in an American foster family.

In late January 2013, a three-year-old child from Russia (**no name indicated**) was killed by his foster mother in the state of Texas. The Russian Embassy became aware of this despite the absence of a response from the U.S. Department of State. The boy died without waiting for an ambulance called by the foster mother. According to the conclusion of pathologists, the baby has multiple injuries. According to the information of Pavel Astakhov, the Children's Rights Commissioner in the Russian Federation, the baby's foster mother fed him strong psychotropic drugs and beat him before his death.

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