

**Nicolaos Cheropoulos**

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**22 April 2026**

**Her Excellency Maria Malmer Stenergard**

Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Sweden

Utrikesdepartementet

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**Secondary Recipients (Cc):**

- Utrikesutskottet (Committee on Foreign Affairs, Sveriges Riksdag)
- Konstitutionsutskottet (Constitutional Affairs Committee, Sveriges Riksdag)
- Sveriges barnrättsmyndighet (Office of the Children's Ombudsman, Sweden)

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**Re: FORMAL MINISTERIAL NOTIFICATION – Constructive State Abandonment of Swedish Minor Nationals – Case of Anthie and Alexandra Cheropoulou – Nine-Year Documented Failure of Sovereign Protection**

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**Your Excellency,**

I write on behalf of Anthie Cheropoulou (born 8 June 2012) and Alexandra Cheropoulou (born 1 April 2015), Swedish-Greek nationals unlawfully retained in the Republic of Belarus since April 2017, in direct contravention of a binding sole-custody judgment of the Södertörn District Court dated 10 September 2018 (Case T 6168-17, Apostille-certified, final under Swedish law). I am their father and sole legal guardian under that judgment.

This letter does not petition for sympathy or recite grievance. It sets out, on the basis of a documented record comprising **496 pages of correspondence** between this Ministry and myself (2017–2025), a formal submission to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk, and a communication to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child under the Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure (both filed April 2026), the legal obligations Sweden has incurred, the specific conduct through which this Ministry has failed to discharge those obligations, and the precise corrective actions now required as a matter of ministerial responsibility.

The record does not document good-faith effort frustrated by political obstruction. It documents a systematic institutional substitution of process management for substantive protection—conduct that international legal analysis characterizes as **constructive state abandonment** of two Swedish minor nationals.

## **I. THE BINDING LEGAL INSTRUMENT THIS MINISTRY HAS FAILED TO ENFORCE**

The Södertörn judgment of 10 September 2018 is not a diplomatic opening position. It is the conclusive sole-custody determination of the children's state of habitual residence, carrying full force under Swedish domestic law and binding upon all organs of the Swedish State, including this Ministry.

The Republic of Belarus's own Minsk City Court acknowledged, in Response No. 13083 (8 November 2018), that the Swedish custody order was automatically operative in Belarus under the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, requiring no further recognition procedure. What Belarusian authorities formally conceded in correspondence, they refused to give effect to in practice. Over the nine years that have elapsed, this Ministry has not filed a single documented formal protest in response to that contradiction.

On 13 January 2020, the Belarusian Supreme Court rejected the Hague return application on grounds that demonstrably misapply Article 13(b) of the Convention and expressly disregard the binding Swedish sole-custody order. The gravity of that ruling in international law terms cannot be overstated: it represented a deliberate repudiation by a Contracting State of its Convention obligations, directed against Swedish nationals under Swedish judicial protection. The documented institutional response of this Ministry was to continue monitoring. No formal diplomatic protest was filed. No notification was transmitted to the Permanent Bureau of the Hague Conference on Private International Law. No inter-state complaint was initiated before any multilateral body.

## **II. THE MONITORING FORMULA: LEGAL ANALYSIS OF NINE YEARS OF NON-ACTION**

The phrase «*vi fortsätter att följa och bevaka ditt ärende*» (“we continue to follow and monitor your case”) appears with near-verbatim consistency across this Ministry's responses from 2018 to 2025. The repetition of this formula is not evidence of engagement. It is evidence of the absence of engagement.

When my legal representative formally requested, in March 2021, the names of organizations, protocol numbers, and dates of any complaints or formal protests filed by Sweden regarding Belarus's Hague Convention violations, the Ministry's own Special Advisor and Head of Section for the Central Authority on Child Abduction responded that «*there is no separate compilation of the information you request*».

That response carries dispositive legal weight. In international public law, the burden of demonstrating that a State has discharged its positive treaty obligations rests with the **State**, not with the citizen. The simultaneous assertion that measures have been taken and the admission that no record of those measures exists does not satisfy that burden. It negates it. It constitutes an admission that the Ministry cannot account for the exercise of Sweden's international obligations toward two of its own nationals.

Under Article 7 of the 1980 Hague Convention, the requesting State's obligations do not terminate upon judicial rejection of a return application where the underlying deprivation of the child's rights persists. The Hague Conference Guide to Good Practice states this proposition explicitly. Nine years of correspondence in the absence of a single documented inter-state escalation mechanism invoked is not fulfilment of Article 7. It is its abandonment.

### **III. THE INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT: DOCUMENTED CONDUCT THE MINISTRY DECLINED TO ACT UPON**

From 2020 onwards, both children have been held at the Ichthys school operated by the St. Elisabeth Monastery, Minsk, under Archpriest Andrei Lemeshonok. That institution has been independently documented as promoting the ideology of the «*Russian World*», *militarizing children*, and engaging its students in activities associated with the Russo-Ukrainian war since February 2022. This information was transmitted to the Ministry with documentary evidence. The recorded ministerial response was informational acknowledgment. No escalation protocol was initiated. No demand for an independent welfare inspection was made through diplomatic channels. No formal representation was made to Belarusian authorities regarding the children's ideological environment.

In May 2024, I transmitted to this Ministry a communication titled «*Mina Bortförda Barn – Levande eller Döda?*» (“My Abducted Children: Alive or Dead?”). That question, from a father holding a final Swedish sole-custody order, addressed to a Ministry that had managed his case for seven years, should have constituted an institutional emergency requiring immediate escalatory action. The documented response was an offer to contact the Swedish Embassy in Minsk. The Embassy subsequently contacted the abducting parent. It did not contact the children. Independent consular verification of the children's welfare was not obtained.

### **IV. THE APRIL 2025 ADMINISTRATIVE CLOSURE: PROCEDURAL FORM AS SUBSTITUTE FOR SOVEREIGN DUTY**

The Ministry's handling of Article 21 of the Hague Convention exemplifies the systemic failure documented in this record. Article 21 provides a specific mechanism for securing rights of access in cases of international child abduction. This Ministry discouraged its use for seven years on the stated ground that invoking it could imply de facto recognition of the contested Belarusian custody order of 27 December 2018. When the provision was finally invoked in mid-2024, the Ministry's own characterization of it at that stage as a «*novel*» option standing in direct contradiction to its earlier position, the application was neither pursued nor adjudicated on its merits.

On 2 April 2025, Departmental Secretary Shriti Radia issued a notice of administrative closure in the following terms:

«*Då vi inte mottagit begärda handlingarna från dig som du ombetts inkomma med, avslutar vi ditt ärende hos oss.*»

*(“Since we have not received the requested documents from you as you were asked to provide, we are closing your case with us.”)*

This administrative act of closure must be assessed against the underlying circumstances it purported to resolve: two Swedish nationals, subject to sole legal custody vested in their father by final Swedish judicial order, have been institutionally confined for nine years in a foreign State with documented ideological affiliations inimical to their welfare, without independent consular contact from their State of nationality, and without a single formally recorded act of inter-state escalation on their behalf. The case was closed not because their protection had been secured, not because available remedies had been exhausted, and not because Belarus had complied with its Convention obligations, but because a documentation deadline had elapsed.

The closure notice contains no assertion that the children's welfare has been verified. It identifies no exhausted legal remedy. It records no failed escalation attempt. It documents no outcome beyond the administrative act of closure itself.

This outcome is not attributable to the conduct of a single official. Over nine years, file responsibility passed through multiple officers: Liselott Agerlid, Erica Neiglick, Elin Klockars Pontén, Wissam El Souidi, and Shriti Radia. Each operated within an institutional framework that lacked escalation benchmarks, outcome-based accountability metrics, or mechanisms for engaging political leadership in cases of acute and sustained gravity. That framework is attributable to the Ministry as an institution. Its design, or its failure of design, constitutes a matter of direct ministerial responsibility.

#### **V. LEGAL OBLIGATIONS ENGAGED AND, ON THE DOCUMENTED RECORD, UNMET**

The following treaty obligations are engaged on the facts of this case. On the documented record, none has been discharged:

**Article 7, 1980 Hague Convention** – Requires the requesting State to use “all appropriate measures” to secure the return of the child. No inter-state escalation mechanism has been formally invoked following the Belarusian Supreme Court's rejection of 13 January 2020. No mechanism is documented.

**Article 21, 1980 Hague Convention** – Provides a mechanism for the protection of rights of access. This Ministry declined to invoke it for seven years; when it was finally activated, the application was administratively closed without determination on its merits and without any access arrangement secured.

**Article 5(e), Vienna Convention on Consular Relations** – Imposes a positive obligation on the sending State to protect the interests of its nationals. The Swedish Embassy in Minsk has made contact with the abducting parent. It has not, on the documented record, secured direct and independent consular contact with the children themselves.

**Articles 9(4) and 11(2), UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** – Require Sweden, as State of nationality, to demand welfare verification and to take bilateral and multilateral measures to combat the wrongful non-return of its nationals. Neither provision has been formally invoked as the basis for inter-state action.

**ILC Articles on State Responsibility and Diplomatic Protection (2001/2006)** – All local remedies in Belarus were exhausted by May 2020 at the latest. Sweden's right, and correlative duty, to exercise diplomatic protection and claim redress at the international level has not been exercised. No inter-state complaint, no formal diplomatic protest, and no multilateral pressure action is recorded.

#### **VI. FORMAL DEMANDS FOR IMMEDIATE MINISTERIAL ACTION**

Pursuant to the obligations set out above, I formally demand that Your Excellency take the following specific and accountable steps without further delay:

1. **Order an immediate ministerial-level review** of the case of Anthie and Alexandra Cheropoulou, with direct accountability to your Office, independent of and superseding the existing case management framework within the Consular and Civil Law unit.

2. **Direct the Swedish Embassy in Minsk to demand and secure, within 30 days, direct and independent consular contact with both children.** Contact with the abducting parent is not a substitute for consular contact with the children and does not discharge Sweden's obligation under Article 5(e) of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.
3. **Commission and file a formal inter-state diplomatic protest to the Republic of Belarus** regarding its violation of the 1980 Hague Convention, specifically the Belarusian Supreme Court's ruling of 13 January 2020, and transmit formal notification of that protest to the Permanent Bureau of the Hague Conference on Private International Law pursuant to Article 7 of the Convention.
4. **Conduct a documented legal review of the April 2025 administrative closure** and provide, with full legal reasoning on record, a determination as to whether Sweden has discharged its obligations under the 1980 Hague Convention, the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and applicable principles of diplomatic protection with respect to these children.
5. **Provide me with a complete documented account of every formal action taken at the international level on behalf of Anthie and Alexandra Cheropoulou**—specifying organisations, dates, and protocol or reference numbers, or, if no such record exists, formally and explicitly acknowledge that absence in writing.

The forensic record is complete. The legal obligations are clear. The political will to fulfil them is the sole variable that remains unresolved.

Anthie is thirteen years old. Alexandra is eleven. They have spent, respectively, nine years and the entirety of their conscious lives in institutional confinement in a foreign State, in direct contravention of a Swedish court order, without independent consular contact secured by their State of nationality, and without their government having filed a single documented formal protest or initiated a single inter-state escalation mechanism on their behalf.

**That is not a consular matter. It is a matter of sovereign  
duty and ministerial accountability.**

I expect a substantive written response addressing each of the five demands set out in Section VI within 21 days of receipt of this letter.

Yours faithfully,

**Nicolaos Cheropoulos**



*Father and Sole Legal Guardian of Anthie and Alexandra Cheropoulou*

*Stockholm, April 22, 2026*

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**Communication Simultaneously Transmitted to:**

- Her Excellency Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, President, International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva

- Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Geneva (supplemental to April 2026 submission)
- UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC/OPIC), Geneva (supplemental to April 2026 communication)
- Permanent Bureau, Hague Conference on Private International Law, The Hague
- Konstitutionsutskottet (Constitutional Affairs Committee), Sveriges Riksdag, Stockholm
- Utrikesutskottet (Committee on Foreign Affairs), Sveriges Riksdag, Stockholm
- Sveriges barnrättsmyndighet (Office of the Children's Ombudsman), Stockholm
- Embassy of the Hellenic Republic, Stockholm
- Directorate for Greeks Abroad, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, Athens
- Media

**Legal Counsel of Record:**

*Martha Poni, Attorney at Law (Bar No. 6101)*

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**Enclosure:**

*Forensic Legal & Diplomatic Analysis — The Case of Nicolaos Cheropoulos v. The Kingdom of Sweden and the Republic of Belarus (April 2026, 16 pp.)*