

**They need to
escape their
abuser.**

**You need to
know about
the law that
might drag
them back.**

**HAGUE
Mothers**



Information for DV professionals

Under the Hague Abduction Convention, a mother seeking to escape domestic violence and safeguard her children by taking them across international borders, is at extreme risk. She can be charged with abduction, obliged to return to the abuser's country*, and, potentially, lose custody of her children. Some mothers even end up in jail.

What are the problems with the Convention?

The Convention was intended to deal with fathers who abduct their children across international borders without the mother's permission. Its focus is on returning the child as quickly as possible since they are assumed to be in serious danger.

However, 75% of Hague petitions are now brought against mothers by fathers who use the Convention to compel children, and therefore mothers, to return to the country they have fled.

Most mothers are unaware of the Convention until they find themselves facing a court hearing – usually with no time to prepare a defence or to find a lawyer with Hague expertise. And generally with no access to legal aid.

Urgent specialist intervention is needed in these cases. Time is of the essence. Courts pride themselves on ensuring the rapid return of the child to the 'left-behind' parent, rather than on an in-depth consideration of the circumstances. And domestic violence is not a defence against return.

**Although 'return orders' made by the Court only apply to children, the mother, as their primary carer and protector, will invariably return too.*

How can you help?

If a mother has taken her child or children across an international border without explicit permission from the father, she is at risk of having a Hague case brought against her.

Signpost her urgently to:

UK & international: GlobalARRK globalarrk.org

Australia: Women's Legal Services Australia
www.wlsa.org.au
Ark of Hope www.shiloharkofhope.com

New Zealand: NZ Hague Collective
www.haguecollective.co.nz
Backbone Collective www.backbone.org.nz

USA: NY Sanctuary for Families
www.sanctuaryforfamilies.org
DV LEAP www.nvrdc.org/dv-leap
Hague Collective US www.haguecollective.org
Hague Domestic Violence Project (for legal
representatives) [www.americanbar.org/groups/
domestic_violence/our-projects/hague-
dvproject/](http://www.americanbar.org/groups/domestic_violence/our-projects/hague-dvproject/)

Europe: WAVE www.wave-network.org
ENoMW www.migrantwomennetwork.org

Brazil: Gambe www.gambe.org
Revibra www.revibra.org

Or contact Hague Mothers for more
information: Hague@FiLiA.org.uk



HAGUE Mothers

FiLiA Legacy Project

**‘My crime is
being a victim
of domestic
violence in a
foreign country’**

The Hague Mothers' international campaign aims to end the injustices caused by the Hague Abduction Convention, specifically for mothers and children who are attempting to escape domestic violence or coercive control.

The Convention has been signed by over 100 countries. It was originally designed to deal with fathers who take their children across international borders without the mothers' permission.

It has been weaponised. In 75% of cases it is now used by fathers against mothers. Most are victims of domestic abuse. Yet, through the simple act of crossing an international border to safeguard themselves and their children, the mother becomes a criminal, an abductor. Many mothers lose custody. Some are given jail sentences.

The Hague is a feminist issue, a human rights issue, and a children's rights issue.

Reem Alsalem, UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls puts it succinctly:

'Within the context of child custody cases, there exists multi-layered violence that has yet to enter the collective conscience of the international community as a human rights issue.'

We are working with the international sisterhood - lawyers, domestic violence and children's rights experts, women's groups, and Hague victims, to ensure that:

- the significance of domestic violence and coercive control - for mothers and their children - is fully addressed in the implementation of the Convention
- the rights of the child and their genuine best interests are central to Hague Court judgments
- there is equity before the law for mothers facing Hague petitions.

Further Information

To find out more, or for practical or academic resources, please visit the Hague Mothers website:

www.hague-mothers.org.uk

You can sign up to receive monthly updates about our campaign:

[www.hague-mothers.org.uk/
contact](http://www.hague-mothers.org.uk/contact)

or follow us on Twitter:

@FiLiAHagueMums

Our campaign is run on an entirely voluntary basis. If you have skills, knowledge or expertise to offer, please contact Ruth, our international coordinator to find out more: Hague@FiLiA.org.uk