

Hague Abduction Convention (HAC) Wheel

Violence that manifests as physical assault, sexualised assault, or non-state torture

Using Intimidation and Threats

- Threats of using HAC to take the children
- Threats related to immigration status
- Abusers leveraging nationality and power
- Deliberately sabotaging the relationship between mother and child after separation

Use of Legal Proceedings

- Not knowing language, laws, or support systems in the country they are forced to stay in
- Ensuring criminal conviction (abduction) to continue separation of mother from children
- Failure to consider domestic abuse as 'severe harm'
- Denying how HAC rulings violate children's and women's fundamental rights

Cultural & Community Identity

- International laws supposedly protect children's right to their cultural identity, but courts ignore this
- Loss of cultural heritage
- Loss of maternal family connections
- Racial and colonial bias affects court decisions

Using Emotional Abuse

- Court and perpetrator-induced trauma (CPIT)
- Abusers manipulate mothers into a false sense of security before launching HAC proceedings. They gaslight, mock, and degrade them through the legal process. Mothers are left emotionally exhausted, forced to prove they are 'good enough' despite being the primary carers.

Institutional Coercive Control

Mothers are abused by perpetrators, legal systems, and state authorities

Using Isolation

- Social shame: Society blames the mother for losing her children
- After the return, the mom is labelled an 'abductor' which is isolating, shaming
- Isolation is intensified through language and cultural barriers, lack of social support, other intersectional disadvantages and system navigation

Using Children

- Removing the mother's agency and forcing them into a reactive position
- Long-term trauma
- Mothers are threatened with total loss of custody unless they comply, yet compliance often leads to the same outcome

Using Male Privilege

- Women are punished for leaving, while men are rewarded for 'seeking custody.'
- Male privilege is upheld in judicial systems through unequal standards
- In order to protect their children, mothers are forced to act against social norm - to separate the children from the father

Using Economic Abuse

- Mothers are financially disempowered while the left-behind parent's legal fees are paid by the state
- Preventing access to work because of visa restrictions and/ or lack of local work history
- Homelessness after return and non-ability to access social services in country where lack citizenship/ residency rights

Patriarchal International Systems and Institutions

