

FiLiA Hague Mothers is a global campaign which aims to end the injustices caused by the Hague Abduction Convention, specifically in relation to mothers fleeing domestic violence and coercive control. We are women-led, women-centered, and volunteer-run; an international group of lawyers, academics, domestic abuse professionals, child psychologists, human rights and children's rights activists, trauma specialists, and Hague mothers themselves.

The Problem

- The Hague Abduction Convention was created to protect children from abduction by abusive fathers who take them across international borders after the breakdown of a relationship and without permission from the mother.
- Assuming that the child is in danger, the Convention requires courts to return children to their 'habitual residence' within six weeks.
- However, since its conception in 1980, the Convention has been weaponised. Now, in around 75% of cases it is used against mothers fleeing abuse with their children. Most are primary caregivers.
- The motive for taking the child is not considered relevant and domestic abuse against mothers is not accepted as a justification for leaving without permission.

Through the Convention, mothers are criminalised for protecting themselves and their children, some are jailed as kidnappers. Children are forced back to unsafe environments, and often into the custody of the abusive father. Mothers have to choose between their own safety, should they return with their child, or the loss of contact and thus of their ability to keep their child safe. Most chose to return, which puts them in an even more vulnerable situation, facing poverty, homelessness, and further abuse, often via the family courts.

FiLiA Hague Mothers aims to end this brutal injustice.

Together, we:

- advocate for legal and systemic change
- raise international awareness of the problem - and the solutions
- provide training for professionals
- amplify the voices of the women who are further abused as a result of decisions made under the Convention

How you can support us:

- **Learn** – invite us to deliver a training or workshop
- **Share** – use your networks to share our resources
- **Collaborate** – partner with us for advocacy and research
- **Donate** – support our volunteer-led work —————→



Living abroad with your children?

Needing to relocate to escape domestic violence or coercive control?



Then you need to know about the Hague Abduction Convention...

The Convention, signed by over 100 countries, was intended to stop fathers abducting children across borders. It assumed that children needed to be returned quickly to be safe. But this assumption has created opportunities for abusive fathers who use the Convention to prevent protective mothers from seeking safety in their home country.

What are your options?

If you are living abroad with your children:

- Be aware: without the father's permission, it may be a criminal offence to leave with your children.
- This applies regardless of marriage or relationship status, and even if you are a victim of domestic abuse.
- Some countries allow you to apply for a relocation or 'leave to remove' order. However, this is expensive, can take years and is not easy to obtain.

If you have already left without permission:

- The father may file a Hague petition accusing you of abduction and you will then face a court case.
- Courts usually decide that the child must be returned. Decisions are made quickly - generally within six weeks.
- There are some defences against return. Victim-survivors of domestic abuse most often use Article 13(1)(b), which argues that returning would expose the child to a grave risk of harm. However, the risk must be to the child, not to the mother.
- You will need to act quickly: get legal advice, collect evidence of abuse, and seek support.

Who can help?

Further information and contact details for support organisations can be found on our website:

- www.hague-mothers.org.uk
- or contact us : AdminHague@FiLiA.org.uk

*Please help us raise awareness
by sharing this information.
Doing so could help prevent a
protective mother from losing
custody of her child.
Or could even save her life.*

