

You are in charge of your life

Are you at risk of *forced marriage* or *abandonment* in a foreign country? This leaflet explains what you can do to prevent it and what you can do if it has already happened.

What is forced marriage?

Marriage is a big step in your life. You should always be free to choose who you marry. Some teenagers and young adults are not given the freedom to choose their own partner. Their parents and other family may select a candidate and force them to marry that person – sometimes using only words, other times through threats, blackmail and violence. This is called *forced marriage*, which is illegal.

What is forced abandonment?

Suppose you travel abroad for a holiday or to visit relatives and suddenly you are not allowed to return to the Netherlands, or you are put on a plane in the Netherlands and forced to break all contact with people in the Netherlands. Your parents, relatives or your spouse may think it is better that you stay abroad, under the supervision of family or at a strict boarding school. Your passport, residence permit, phone and bank card are taken from you. You are heavily pressured to cooperate. This is called *forced abandonment* and falls under domestic abuse.

Be alert. Recognise the signs on time

There are often signs of plans being made for a forced marriage or abandonment. Your parents, spouse or family may suddenly become stricter, for example. You may no longer be allowed to do certain things (go out, work, socialise with friends) and you have to do other things (stay at home, wear “proper” clothing or a headscarf).

There may suddenly be tension or problems in the family. You may suddenly need to go along on vacation or a visit abroad. You may also be threatened with abandonment or forced marriage. Take these signs seriously. If you suspect something might be going on, get help.

What can you do while you are still in the Netherlands?

Safety » If you take action and contact social workers, do so at a time when you are sure no one else is listening. Do not take unnecessary risks.

Talk about it » Talk to a good friend or someone you trust in your environment and talk about your concerns.

Note: In case of acute distress or danger always call 112!

This could also be your general practitioner, a teacher, a trainer or community worker. You can also call Veilig Thuis anonymously (0800-2000) or chat with them at www.veiligthuis.nl. You can also chat in confidence with Fier at chatmet.fier.nl or Sterk Huis www.sterkhuis.nl/contact.

Do not leave the Netherlands » Try to stay in the Netherlands. If you believe you are at risk, find help in the Netherlands before you leave.

Ensure your return » If the trip abroad is unavoidable, take measures in the weeks before departure to enable your return to the Netherlands.

- Save the telephone numbers of support services and someone you trust in your mobile phone. Also save the numbers in the cloud, email them to a secret email address or write them down, in case your phone is taken away.
- You can also hide a second phone or a prepaid card with sufficient balance in your luggage to contact the Netherlands.
- Download the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' *ReisApp*, which provides contact information for Dutch embassies.
- Scan or photograph your passport and residence permit and email them to yourself. Also bring a printed copy. If your passport is taken from you, you will still have all the necessary information. This will make it easier for the embassy to create new travel documents for you.
- Email other details to yourself, such as addresses, flight details, a recent passport photo and your citizen service number (BSN).
- Bring some money with you and hide it well.

Talk to someone you trust before you leave. Tell them about your concerns and give them as much information as possible about your flight,

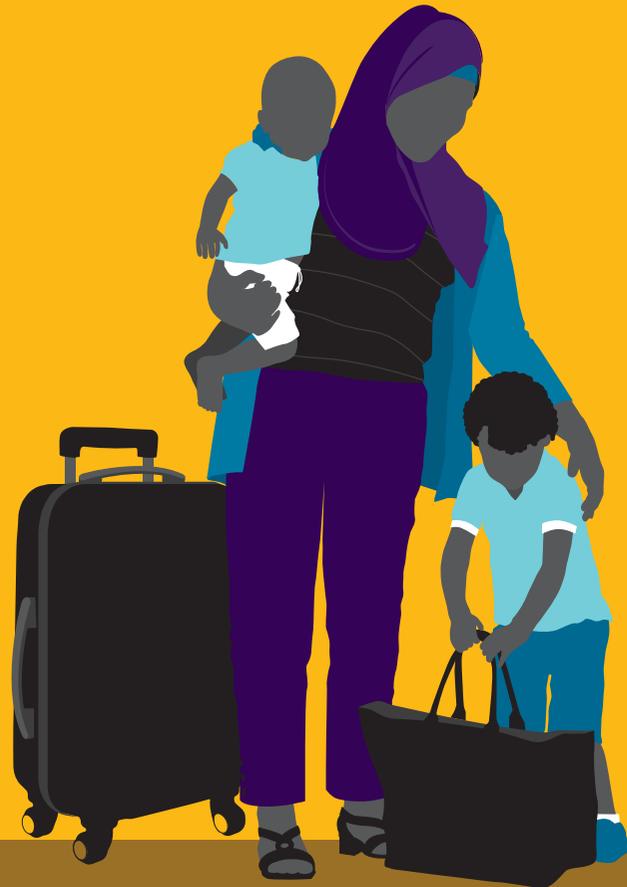
ARE YOU BEING FORCED INTO A MARRIAGE, ABANDONED IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY, OR AFRAID IT MIGHT HAPPEN?

Landelijk Knooppunt
**HUWELIJKSDWANG
EN ACHTERLATING**



accommodation and the planned return flight. This will allow them to check whether you have returned to the Netherlands. Make agreements with them on what to do if you do not return. This could include contacting the Dutch Centre of Forced Marriage and Abandonment (Landelijk Knooppunt Huwelijksdwang en Achterlating, LKHA).

The LKHA is the central organisation in the Netherlands for help if you are forced into marriage or have been abandoned abroad. The social workers are experts with a lot of experience.



Know a victim? » If you believe a family member, friend or acquaintance may be or become a victim of forced marriage or abandonment, contact the LKHA for help.

What can you do once you are abroad?

Safety first

Pay attention to your safety; only contact the embassy or social workers in the Netherlands when you are sure no one else is listening. Do not take unnecessary risks.

Dutch embassy

Contact the Dutch embassy in the country you are being forced to stay in. Visit www.nederlandwereldwijd.nl and enter the name of the country to find the contact information for an embassy or consulate.

The ReisApp also provides contact details for all Dutch embassies. You can download the ReisApp in the Apple App Store or Google Play Store.

When contacting the embassy, state clearly what is going on and that you are dealing with forced marriage or abandonment. This will enable the embassy to provide the right help. Always call or send an email to make an appointment first, to ensure that the embassy is open when you arrive.

If you cannot get to the embassy or would rather call in the evening or during the weekend, call the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs' 24/7 hotline (+31 247 247 247) or contact the 24/7 WhatsApp hotline: +31 682 837 796. Please note: you cannot call or text this number. If there is no Dutch embassy in the country you are in, contact the 24/7 hotline.

Social workers in the Netherlands

You can also contact the LKHA directly on +31 70 345 43 19 or LKHA@veiligthuis Haaglanden.nl.

What does the embassy do?

Before reporting forced marriage or abandonment to the LKHA, the embassy will check whether you are a Dutch national or have a valid residence permit. Nothing will happen without your consent. The further procedure depends on the situation. For example, the embassy may try to arrange temporary shelter and create new travel documents for your return to the Netherlands.

What does the LKHA do after receiving a report?

A social worker from the LKHA will contact you to establish what is going on. If you are being forced into marriage or abandoned, the LKHA will work with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to help you to return to the Netherlands.



Each situation is different and will require thorough investigation to determine the best and safest plan for your return. Be careful and do not just leave as that could complicate matters further. The LKHA and the embassy are experienced in dealing with forced marriage and abandonment. It is best to follow their instructions.

After your return

After helping you return to the Netherlands, the LKHA will provide temporary shelter. They will transfer your case to social workers in your new place of residence. The LKHA will still monitor you for another year and a half to see whether the threat has passed definitively and ensure that you get the help you need.

LKHA: expert assistance and advice

The Dutch Centre of Forced Marriage and Abandonment (LKHA) is the central organisation in the Netherlands for help if you are forced into marriage or have been abandoned abroad. LKHA social workers are experts with extensive experience. If you are in a foreign country against your will, the LKHA will help you arrange your return.

Right of residence in the Netherlands

The LKHA can help you return to the Netherlands if you have Dutch nationality or a valid residence permit. You can also contact the embassy or the LKHA if you have a partner-dependent residence permit. Do not be afraid to tell them you have been abandoned. Your residence permit will not be revoked for no reason. Once you are back in the Netherlands, you can apply for an independent permit and, depending on the circumstances, you may be eligible for one.

Help in the Netherlands

- Veilig Thuis: 0800 2000
- In case of emergency (in the Netherlands): 112

Help abroad

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs 24/7 (call): +31 247 247 247
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs 24/7 (WhatsApp): +316 8283 7796
- Dutch Centre of forced marriage and abandonment: +31 70 345 43 19

