



Escape from your home

Have you been locked in your home? Have you been beaten? Are you not allowed out? Have you not been given enough to eat? Are you constantly being checked up on? Are you scared of retaliating?

Yes?

Then you are what is referred to as a **'hidden woman'** in the Netherlands..

The most important thing for you to know is that this isn't normal! You are entitled to not be a **'hidden woman'**. It's your right to live in dignity and freedom. Women and children are therefore not allowed to be locked up at home in the Netherlands.

Are your husband or in-laws doing this? This is actually a punishable offense. So don't be scared to take action.

This leaflet will provide you with tips which can help you with this.



Femmes for Freedom

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ESCAPE FROM YOUR HOME



Be well prepared

If you want to escape from your home, make sure you think about how you want to tackle this very carefully. Your safety is of paramount importance. So you need to decide what you're going to do and how you want to get away.

TIPS

1. Make sure you can always take your passport or identity card, your residence permit, visa, wedding certificate and health insurance card with you. Is that not possible? Then take some copies or photos instead.
2. Do you have children? Make sure you take photos or copies of their passports too.
3. Always try to save some money or gold in case you may need this. Never give it to your husband or in-laws for safekeeping.
4. You will be able to look after yourself much better if you can speak and write Dutch. Try to learn the language via television, books, magazines or your mobile – you could, for example, look for 'learn Dutch' apps.
5. Take a bag with all the most important things along with you, such as clothing, money, documents and medication.
6. Also bring along the most important clothing for your children: shoes, coats and a backpack with some underwear, socks and vests, etc.
7. Take photos and videos of any abuse and injuries. Tell any care providers that you have these. It will be much easier to apply for your own residence permit if you can prove you are a victim of domestic abuse; you will then no longer be dependent on your partner.



Find someone you can trust

It's very nice not to have to face everything on your own. Find someone you trust and try to get in touch with that person.

TIPS

1. Look for the right moments to talk to someone. Maybe agree to meet at a certain time, or drop a note in this person's letterbox.
2. If someone you trust is coming to visit, then try to establish contact – perhaps via a text message or a note.
3. Try to maintain good contact with your neighbours.
4. Dare to ask for help and accept this too when it's offered.
5. You don't need to be ashamed of what's happening to you. It's not your fault.
6. Don't you speak Dutch, but your children do? Then be sure to make use of this!
7. Don't be scared to share your experiences. Sometimes it's a great relief to be able to tell your story.
8. If you're planning on escaping from your home, make sure you tell your trusted person, so he or she knows what you're doing and can help you.
9. Ask your trusted person to find information about your rights or your residential status.
10. Your trusted person could keep your passports and other important items safe for you.

Go to the police

Don't believe everything your husband or in-laws are telling you about the Netherlands. You can trust the Dutch police. They are not corrupt and will not contact your in-laws. They won't sexually abuse you either.

TIPS

1. Go to the police to make a statement if you are being beaten or abused.
2. Making a statement is not the same as reporting someone to the police, but it will ensure the police knows what's going on. This will allow them to build up a case file. This will put you in a stronger position once you are ready to report someone at a later stage.
3. You can also ask your trusted person to make a statement or report someone on your behalf, in order to get help for you sorted out.



Use the internet and your mobile

You can search for important information via the internet and your mobile. Plus it will also allow you to stay in touch with your trusted person.

TIPS

1. You can acquire a better insight and more information about your rights and residential status via the internet. Make use of this.
2. Make sure you are safe on the internet. Don't let anyone know your passwords, not even your DigiD.
3. Are your mobile or computer being checked? Then make sure you delete your internet history every time.
4. You can also use your mobile's incognito or privacy option to search for information online.
5. Don't you speak the language? Some internet browsers can translate websites into a language you understand, or use [translate.google.nl](https://www.google.nl/translate).
6. Use your mobile to talk to your trusted person via email, Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, WhatsApp, Viber, Telegram or Skype.
7. Remember telephone numbers of people who can help you or who you trust, or write them down. Then you won't lose the numbers if your mobile is taken off you.
8. Are you calling a trusted person? Then delete the conversation immediately afterwards.



ESCAPE FROM YOUR HOME

Women's shelter

You won't suddenly find yourself out on the street once you have managed to escape, as the Dutch government is obliged to arrange your safety. In most cases you would be offered a place in a women's shelter. You don't need to worry about being separated from your children, as they also offer shelter to mothers with children.

TIPS

1. The women's shelter is a safe place for women and children.
2. There are no 'prostitutes' in the women's shelter. You will therefore not be a 'prostitute' when you go to stay in one!
3. You don't need to be ashamed of staying in a women's shelter. These are full of women who have all gone through something terrible. So they'll know exactly how you feel. The care you'll receive there will help you on your way to an independent life.
4. Don't worry about money. You can apply for benefits in the Netherlands, or look for a job or study and find work afterwards.
5. Are you scared of your husband or your in-laws coming after you? Then tell the police and your care providers.
6. You can ask for an alarm system in the women's shelter if you still don't feel safe. You can carry this with you in case of emergencies!
7. For more information regarding this subject, please refer to femmesforfreedom.com/themas/gedwongen-achterlating

Assistance

There are various different organisations in the Netherlands which you can ask for help.

TIPS

1. Trust the care providers. They are there to help you.
2. Don't be afraid that your children are going to be taken off you. Your husband, in-laws or authorities can never do this without a good reason.
3. Make sure you don't go to a medical appointment, like your GP or a gynaecologist, with your sister-in-law, mother-in-law or husband. Go alone.
4. Are not able to go alone? Then try to leave a note for the doctor or his/her assistant, saying you would like an appointment on your own.
5. Do you have a child who attends school? You can tell the school's social worker or the teachers that you are being locked up at home.
6. Look for help online. Know how to get in touch with those who can provide you with help and be sure to make use of this.
7. Clearly and precisely tell your care provider what you need help with. Say: 'I am a hidden woman. I want to escape from my home.'
8. Talk to the care providers as calmly as possible. It's important to stay calm and not panic. Be patient.
9. Accept the help the care providers can offer you. Make sure you take all the time you need. You will decide the pace at which everything happens.
10. Keep the care providers informed of everything that's happening to you. They can tell you how you can get yourself out of a situation.
11. Would you like to escape from your home, but you don't know where to go? Then tell your care provider this. He or she can help you with the next steps.
12. Do you only want to talk and ask for advice? This is something a care provider can help you with too.
13. Clearly state if you're dissatisfied about any aspect of the care or assistance you are receiving. Sometimes a different care provider may be better suited to your needs, for example if you want to arrange for residential status or a divorce.
14. Are you receiving help from a psychologist or the GGZ? **That doesn't mean you've gone mad!**



Forced abandonment

Many hidden women are abandoned in their country of origin by their husband or in-laws.

TIPS

1. Do you suspect this could happen to you too? Then tell someone immediately. Preferably the Police, the Dutch Centre for Forced Marriage and Abandonment or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
2. Is this not possible? Then try to approach someone in your own environment to do this on your behalf.
3. It's extra important for you to have your passport – and those of any children – with you if you have been abandoned.
4. Has your husband stolen your passport? Then make sure you report this.
5. Be prepared: find out the address details of the Dutch embassy in your birth country and write this down.
6. Have you been abandoned? Then instantly report this to the Dutch embassy.
7. Apply for a new passport from the local authorities and a return visa from the Dutch embassy or consulate. You can request a temporary passport there if your Dutch passport has been stolen – this is referred to as a 'laissez-passer'.
8. Do you still have your passport and residence permit yourself? Then you can travel back to the Netherlands.
9. If you have a different nationality, but you do have a valid residence permit, it may still be possible for you to obtain a visa for the Netherlands. Once you are back in the Netherlands, you will need to submit an independent residence permit with the IND immediately upon arrival.
10. Is your residence permit no longer valid? Then you have the option of submitting an application for an authorisation for temporary stay (mvv) with the purpose of residence as 'humanitarian non-temporary'.
11. It's very important for you to be able to prove everything. You must have made declarations or reports of your abandonment and abuse in order to support and strengthen your story.
12. For more information regarding this subject, please refer to femmesforfreedom.com/themas/gedwongen-achterlating



Leading your own life



Hopefully these tips will help you to escape from your home. After all, your life is yours! No one has the right to lock you up.

Following are details of a number of care providers. You always have the option of contacting them if you're not sure where to go for help. Ask them who can assist you.

WHAT CAN THEY HELP YOU WITH?	CONTACT
POLICE	
In the event of danger and emergencies.	112 (only in case of emergencies)
To make a declaration or report.	0900 - 8844 (non-emergency) politie.nl
VEILIG THUIS (Safe at Home)	
If you are being beaten and/or abused.	0800 - 2000 veiligthuis.nl
HET JURIDISCH LOKET (Legal Aid)	
Provides information and will answer all your questions about your legal rights.	0900 - 8020 juridischloket.nl
IMMIGRATIE – EN NATURALISATIEDIENST (IND) (Immigration & Naturalisation Service)	
The IND can provide you with an update regarding your residential status.	088 - 043 0430 ind.nl
LANDELIJK KNOOPPUNT HUWELIJKSDWANG EN ACHTERLATING (LKHA) (Dutch Centre for Forced Marriage & Abandonment)	
Are you afraid that your partner or in-laws are going to send you back to your country of origin? Or has it already happened? Then you can contact the LKHA.	070 - 345 43 19 huwelijksdwangenachterlating.nl
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS	
If you find yourself in an emergency situation anywhere in the world, you always have the option of contacting the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Perhaps if you have been abandoned somewhere.	0031 - 247 247 247 rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ministerie-van-buitenlandse-zaken
FEMMES FOR FREEDOM	
Have you been locked up? Do you want someone to help you come up with a solution? Or do you think another care provider isn't providing you with enough assistance? Then you always have the option of contacting Femmes For Freedom.	070 - 362 65 06 femmesforfreedom.com



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