

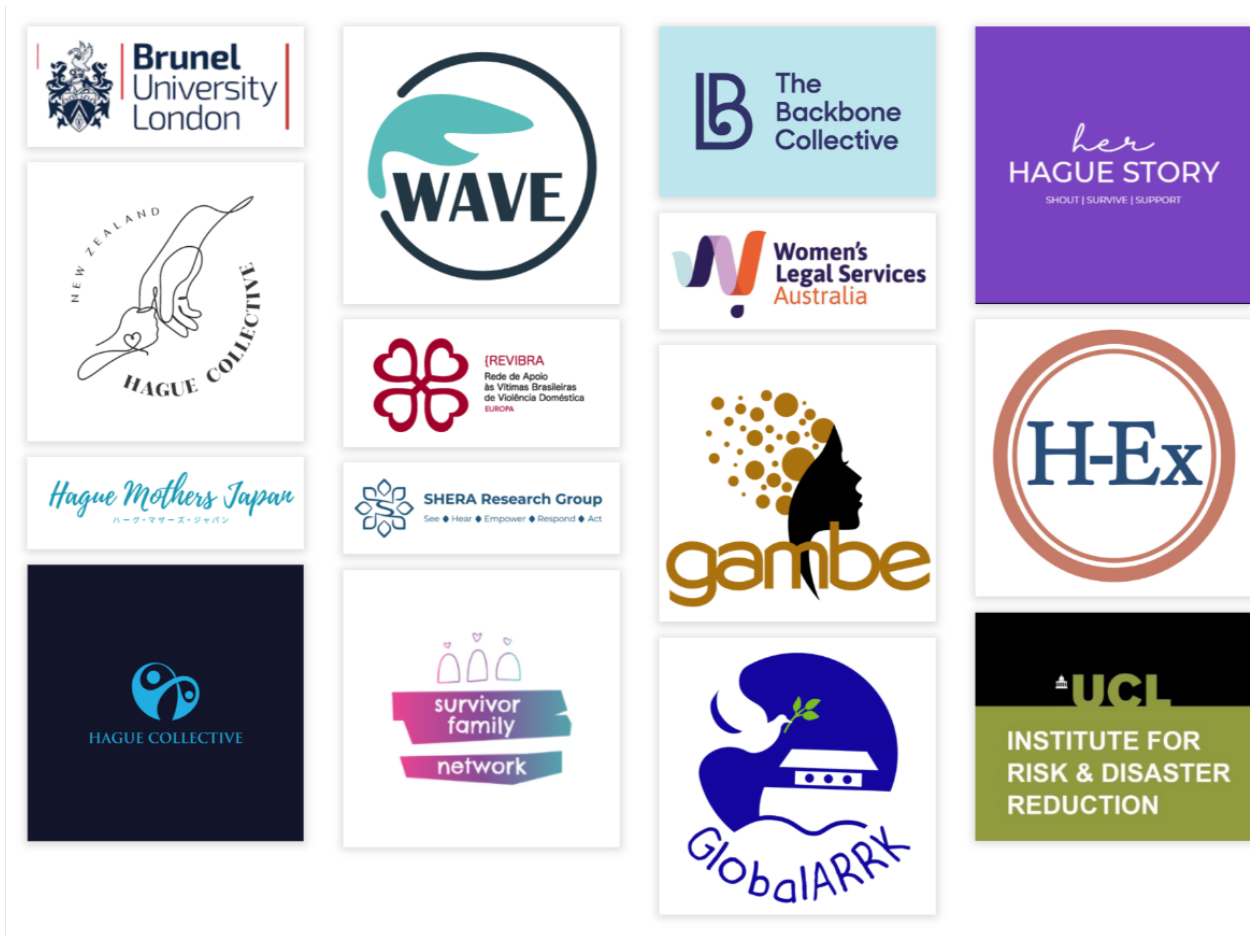


Hague Mothers Newsletter February 2024

Dear <<First Name>> ,

The HM Newsletter is shorter than usual this month but there's plenty happening behind the scenes! We hope to be able to tell you more in the next issue.

Spotlight on our partnerships...



One of our aims for 2024 is to expand and strengthen connections with grassroots groups and NGOs. Our fabulous partners currently include: Backbone Collective (NZ), Brunel University London, Global Lives Research Centre; Gambe; GlobalARRK; Hague Collective (US); Hague Explained CIC; Her Hague Story; Hague Mothers Japan; New Zealand Hague Collective; Revibra Europe; SHERA Research Group; Survivor Family Network; University College London Institute for Risk & Disaster Reduction; Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE Network); Women’s Legal Services Australia.

Those relationships are already enabling us to advocate more effectively, and to connect survivor mothers up with legal and practical support. Special thanks to Hague Collective (US), Sanctuary for Families, Her Hague Story, and Womens’ Legal Services Victoria in that regard.

We’ve two partner podcasts coming up – one with Revibra, one with WAVE – and more to follow.



And meanwhile, we couldn’t be more proud to be associated with Lydia and Sammie, co-founders of the New Zealand Hague Collective, a survivor-led charity which helps

protective mothers who are caught up in the Hague Convention. They tell their stories in this powerful [Breaking the Silence](#) documentary. They are women of extraordinary courage.

UK: violence against women is ‘a national threat’.

UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls Reem Alsalem has declared violence against women a ‘national threat’ in the UK. That includes the ‘institutional violence’ of the courts. In a [statement](#) at the end of a ten-day visit to the country she goes on to say:

‘Entrenched patriarchy at almost every level of society, combined with a rise in misogyny that permeates the physical and online world, is denying thousands of women and girls across the UK the right to live in safety, free from fear and violence.’

Our submission to her UK consultation – [‘The Hague Abduction Convention and the enabling of abuse’](#) – included stories from two mothers who are now trapped in their abuser’s country by the Hague, isolated from family and support networks and unable to take the children to visit grandparents or cousins without permission from the father. Permission which is rarely, if ever, given.

‘I fear that freedom from his abuse may never come. If there are children involved, abusers know that they can still manipulate and control our lives through the legal system, finances and the children themselves.’

Among other things, we called on the UK Government to establish an automatic right to legal aid for the ‘taking’ parent, mandated training in domestic abuse for judges and lawyers dealing with Hague cases, and changes to the implementation of the Convention in the UK to ensure that the Child Abduction and Custody Act 1985 is compatible with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (including the definition of domestic abuse and the recognition that children living with domestic abuse are victims in their own right).

Mothers' Voices

We hear from protective mothers every day. Some have just learned of the Hague Convention and are in a state of terror at the implications for their safety and that of their children; some are in the middle of a court hearing and desperately searching for help; some are post-Hague and have been forced to return to the country they fled, and to continuing abuse; some have lost custody of their children.

We have created a section of the website where mothers can, if it is safe to do so, share their stories. Here are two.

Over eight years of loss Anita Gera, co-founder of Hague Explained, tells of her experience with the Hague which has resulted in her being separated from her two children for over eight years.

Forced to return her children to an abusive father Constanza's story, as told to Lou Godbold for Culturico magazine.



From the website...

Family Courts can seriously damage your health A new study by Dr Elizabeth Dalgarno, Dr Sonja Ayeb-Karlsson, Dr Adrienne Barnett and others has highlighted serious physical and mental harms resulting from exposure to the trauma of the family court.

We believe that precisely the same harms result from involvement in Hague courts.

The Hague Convention on Child Abduction has a domestic violence problem *The Leaflet* editor Sarrah Singapurwala argues that, because the Convention 'doesn't recognise the difference between abduction and mothers escaping with children from domestic violence, it leaves a gaping hole for injustice to be committed'.

Thanks to our members and supporters across the world – working together to change the Convention and protect survivor mothers and their children.

If you'd like to help us, please do get in touch with Ruth at Hague@FiLiA.org.uk.

Ruth & Sally

#SolidarityWithHagueMothers #HagueMothers



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