

Officials in Netherlands stop adoptions after abuses uncovered

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Members of the Royal Netherlands Air Force carry off 106 children from a Dutch relief flight arriving in the Netherlands from Port-au-Prince, in Eindhoven, January 21, 2010. (Photo: Jerry Lampen/Reuters]

Amsterdam, February 9 (RHC)-- The Netherlands is freezing international adoptions after a government commission found some children had been stolen or bought from their birth parents in cases going back to the 1960s.

The commission was set up under pressure from increasing numbers of grown-up adopted children who began to research their roots and often found that their birth documents had been forged or lost, or that their adoption had been illegal.

It looked at adoptions from Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Indonesia and Sri Lanka from 1967 to 1998. Dutch parents adopted about 40,000 children from 80 countries in the previous half century. The practice has declined in recent years, with just 145 children adopted in 2019.

In some of the most difficult cases, children adopted via intermediaries were found to have been stolen or bought under duress from their birth parents.

Rights Minister Sander Dekker said on Monday that despite recent reforms “too much remains out of our sight” in some foreign countries. “I understand that this will be painful for some people, but let us not forget the reason for this decision: by suspending adoptions we are protecting children and their biological parents,” he said.

In a letter announcing the halt, Dekker apologised to the adopted children, adoptive parents and birth parents who were harmed in varying degrees by the practice. “The positive sentiment around adoption in the previous century – with the leading idea that we were doing good by adoption – may be an explanation, but it is not a justification,” Dekker said.

He said it would be up to the next government to decide whether any foreign adoption system could be designed that would not be vulnerable to such abuses.

Prime Minister Mark Rutte’s government resigned last month over a tax scandal and is acting in a caretaker capacity until an election due in March.

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