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Netherlands Suspends “Safe Country” List Ahead of EU Reform — A Critical Shift in Asylum Policy

The Dutch government has announced the **temporary suspension of its national “safe country of origin” list**, a key framework used to fast-track and reject asylum applications from designated “safe” countries.

This decision follows a **series of rulings by the European Court of Justice (ECJ)**, which found that member states can no longer automatically designate entire countries as “safe” if specific groups or individuals within those countries face a credible risk of persecution.

In a letter dated **September 23, 2025**, Dutch Minister for Asylum and Migration **D.M. van Weel** informed Parliament that maintaining the current national list was “no longer appropriate” given these rulings and the forthcoming **European Commission proposal for an EU-wide list of safe countries**, expected to come into force in **June 2026**.

Until that time, asylum applications from individuals previously deemed to be from “safe” countries will now be processed under the **general asylum procedure**, rather than the accelerated one — a change that could significantly affect both the **speed** and **fairness** of asylum claims.

“This marks an important turning point,” said Charlotte Richards, founder of Help Me Leave. “The ‘safe country’ system has long been used to deny asylum seekers fair hearings — particularly people from marginalized communities who face persecution in countries still labeled as ‘safe.’ Suspending this list acknowledges that safety cannot be applied by nationality alone.”

The suspension reflects a **broader EU shift** toward harmonized asylum standards under the **EU Asylum and Migration Pact**, which aims to replace national variations with a single European list.

Help Me Leave welcomes this move and urges other EU member states to **reassess their national lists** and ensure protection for those at risk until the new EU framework takes effect.



Background

- The “safe country of origin” concept allows EU states to accelerate or reject asylum claims from applicants deemed unlikely to face persecution based on nationality.
- The ECJ rulings (October 2024 and August 2025) restricted this practice, emphasizing that **each claim must consider the applicant’s specific circumstances.**
- The Netherlands’ suspension will remain in place until **June 2026**, when the EU’s unified list is expected to be implemented

About Help Me Leave

Help Me Leave! is a volunteer-run, not-for-profit platform helping people find safe pathways out of countries where their rights are under threat. We provide practical visa and relocation information, connect people with legal and community support, and advocate for fairer global migration systems.

For press inquiries or expert comment, visit [**www.helpmeleave.us**](https://www.helpmeleave.us)