

Interview Salomé van der Wende:

## "Information on terminating pregnancy is one-sided and incomplete"



This article was written by Danielle van Wallinga and published in the alternative Dutch newspaper '[De Andere Krant](#)', on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 2023. Connect with me on [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#) or my website [rebelution4life.com](#).

***The Week of Life, initiated by opponents of abortion, takes place from 4 to 11 November. According to human rights organization Abortusinformatie.nl, the information women receive about abortion is incomplete and one-sided. "It is not about removing cells, but about killing new life," argues founder Salomé van der Wende, who had a traumatic abortion experience herself.***

Salomé van der Wende was raped in her 20s and became pregnant. She decided to have her baby removed "without knowledge of what abortion means at its deepest level, the emotional consequences and the development of unborn life. For three days I cried when I realized what I had done". Abortion is not just the removal of cells, but essentially the killing of a baby, is her belief now. "New precious life, which has unique DNA from day one," she says. The subject is very sensitive. To raise awareness about abortion, Van der Wende founded the [Abortusinformatie.nl Foundation](#) in 2011, together with other women who feel they were incompletely informed when faced with the choice. "People should be able to form their own opinions based on relevant information," Van der Wende stresses. "Without judgement, because I stood in their shoes.

Abortusinformatie.nl clearly shows the downsides of abortion. For instance, the number of complications doubled since 2011, such as blood loss (more than half a litre), infections or injury to the uterus. In addition, abortion increases the risk of preterm birth in a next pregnancy, according to

research by Amsterdam Medical Centre in 2015, among others. This happens especially with the commonly used method curettage: the removal of an unborn baby up to 13 weeks through a tube, after that period additionally using instruments.

Information about possible complications of the abortion pill is also inaccurate, Van der Wende believes. 'The pill' - actually two tablets - is used in about a third of abortion cases up to nine weeks in the Netherlands and will also be available through GPs from 2024. According to sexuality expertise centre Rutgers, it is a safe, effective, accessible and cheap way of terminating a pregnancy. While abdominal cramps, blood loss, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea are listed as possible side effects, several studies\* describe "severe pain" after a medicated abortion. On the site [Liveaction.org](https://www.liveaction.org), several women testify about their painful, fearful experience.

Van der Wende also points out the mental impact. "By taking an abortion pill, you bring the abortion clinic into your own home. The mother becomes the abortionist. I myself no longer wanted to go near the clinic where my abortion took place. I looked away from it, due to the painful memories of my abortion. When taking an abortion pill, the woman even lives in the place where the trauma occurred." Van der Wende cannot emphasize enough that [Abortusinformatie.nl](https://www.abortusinformatie.nl) "listens to women without judgement and with compassion, from a neutral, honest point of view". She wants to "show the reality of abortion and the development of a baby".

There are also organizations in the Netherlands that explicitly profile themselves as prolife. For example, [Stirezo](https://www.stirezo.nl), a campaign of the Civitas Christiana foundation, stands up for the right to life of unborn children through petitions, protests, articles and vigils at abortion clinics. Association [Choose Life](https://www.chooselife.nl), another Christian organization, advocates that conversations on the choice of abortion should take place outside clinics, on neutral ground. "The starting point should be the possibility to keep the baby and take care of it," coordinator Kees van Helden argues. "The government should then vouch for that choice and offer support." These prolife organizations are regularly negatively framed, but they argue that women seeking help after having an abortion are welcome too. They draw attention to their message from 4 to 11 November in the 'Week of Life', concluded with the annual March for Life.

Choose Life set up a memorial site in the 'Special Forest' in The Netherlands in April 2023, where people can plant trees and place memorial plaques in memory of a meaningful moment. At the symbolic 'Jar of Tears' in the forest -based on Psalm 56 from the Bible- women and their loved ones can give recognition to the baby. "Acknowledgement of the pain for the baby that wasn't allowed to be born," Van Helden said.

Erica, who does not want her real name mentioned, placed the first sign as a tribute to her baby who died in 1985. She committed abortion at the age of 15, under the pressure of her family after a violent rape. After the abortion, the traumatic experience was "covered up", says Erica, now a 53-year-old woman. "It was not talked about, especially in the large family I come from. Only years later did all my grief come out and I did a course to process the event through [Cry for Life](https://www.cryforlife.nl) (a Christian organization dedicated to a hopeful future for mother and child, ed.). As a result, there was healing of my wounds and forgiveness for everyone, except my rapist."

She too stresses the need to bring the underexposed side of abortion to light. "It starts with the development of a baby in the womb. That deserves more attention. How it grows, how a heartbeat begins to develop as early as three weeks after conception. Things that I have all been able to

experience very consciously with my five children." But above all, there needs to be help for women who had abortions. "The mental impact of it is huge. I experienced mental problems, stomach and headaches. For aftercare, I was left to my fate."

Rape as a justification for all abortions, although it happened to her herself, "cannot be justified" according to Erica. "The baby didn't have a choice. 'Boss in your own belly', is a frequently heard slogan. But what about the baby, who has no voice and has never been able to become its own boss?"

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<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Pain-during-medical-abortion%3A-a-multicenter-study-Saurel-Cubizolles-Opatowski/d30e7751c3fb241cef2f18d2e0a01a7d305a00e3>

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13625187.2017.1315092?journalCode=iejc20>

[https://www.contraceptionjournal.org/article/S0010-7824\(22\)00440-1/fulltext](https://www.contraceptionjournal.org/article/S0010-7824(22)00440-1/fulltext)

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### **Abortion as an instrument of birth control**

Every year, an estimated 44 million women worldwide terminate their unwanted pregnancies. In the Netherlands, it has been around 30 thousand abortions since 2011, rising to over 35 thousand by 2022. Abortion is a 'human right', 'healthcare' and a 'right to self-determination'. These are common arguments in the abortion debate, instigated by a large number of organizations worldwide. In the Netherlands, abortion is allowed up to the 24<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy. The mandatory reflection period of five days was abolished in January 2023, replaced by a voluntary flexible reflection period. The United Nations has included access to abortion in the Sustainable Development Goals. It would promote gender equality and 'empower' women. Van der Wende has definitely not experienced it that way. She finds it misleading to use such terms in relation to abortion.

Abortion is also promoted to slow down or reduce population growth. At the very first World Population Conference in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1927, the 'problem of human overpopulation' was already being discussed in relation to food supply, fertility, migration and health. With financial support from the Rockefeller Foundation, this conference was organized by the League of Nations - the precursor of the United Nations - and Margaret Sanger, the American nurse and contraception advocate who founded Planned Parenthood. This organization focuses on 'reproductive and sexual health care' and receives donations from the Dutch government, the United Nations Population Fund and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Curbing population growth is also the original premise of Expertise Centre for Sexuality Rutgers, which is a member of Planned Parenthood. Founder Johannes Rutgers was an active member of the New Malthusian League, founded in 1881 with the aim of "undoing the negative effects of overpopulation through birth control". Access to contraception would give people a grip on their own nature, Rutgers believed, who also advocated the legalization of abortion. Van der Wende considers overpopulation as a "persistent myth", because it can be shown with simple calculation that there is more than enough space on earth for everyone.