

IN PRISON ABROAD?

A GUIDE TO HOW PRISONERS ABROAD CAN HELP YOU



Prisoners Abroad is a small UK-based charity dedicated to supporting British citizens imprisoned overseas.

We aim to lessen the isolation and deprivation experienced by both prisoners abroad and their families in the UK, and prevent hardship amongst Britons returning from abroad, helping them build a new life free from crime.

We make no moral judgement about the people we work with; all our services are free and confidential and we help convicted and unconvicted, guilty or innocent, solely on the basis of need.

Whether you need information, advice, or simply someone to talk to, our team is here to help you.

HELP FOR BRITISH PRISONERS OVERSEAS

Being arrested and held in prison abroad can be a confusing and lonely experience. Prisoners Abroad helps British prisoners wherever you are in the world, and whatever you have been charged with.

As a British prisoner overseas, our Prisoner and Family Support Service (PFSS) will be your main point of contact with Prisoners Abroad. We will provide a professional and confidential service and will try to respond to your questions, needs and concerns. Where possible we can talk to the prison authorities, your lawyer, the British Embassy, or any other relevant authority or organisation on your behalf. We address complaints about prison conditions and treatment and, where necessary, will contact the agencies that can help.

INFORMATION

As part of the introductory Prisoners Abroad pack, you will receive two booklets containing information about issues which may affect you during your detention. Where available we can also provide information on the criminal justice system of the country in which you are held. If you have specific requests for information, our team will try to help as best we can.

FUNDS FOR YOUR ESSENTIAL NEEDS*

If you are detained in a developing country, we can send funds to help you pay for essential items such as food, clothing, bedding, and in some countries multi-vitamins. We also have an emergency medical fund to pay for any essential medication or treatment you may need (which is not provided by the prison).

* Grant payments are only available for prisoners who receive little or no financial assistance from other sources.

STAYING IN TOUCH

We send a newsletter three times a year to everyone that we are in contact with which contains useful information and articles written by staff, prisoners and other organisations. We send newspapers and books to British prisoners all over the world, and may be able to set you up with a regular magazine subscription. You will be offered the opportunity to correspond with our pen pal volunteers or with other prisoners, and you can also use our international freepost envelopes to write to us from any country, or to forward mail to family and friends.

HELP FOR THE FAMILIES OF PRISONERS

If you know someone who has been arrested overseas, you probably have lots of questions. Talking to friends or family may be difficult – other people may not understand the range of emotions imprisonment can bring up. Prisoners Abroad provides a personal, friendly and confidential service. Whether you need information, advice, or simply someone to talk to, our team is here to help you. We also promise to listen, and to use our experience of talking to people going through similar situations. Our support workers can liaise with prison authorities and lawyers overseas. We work closely with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and are often in contact with British Consulates overseas.

INFORMATION

Where available we can give you information about the prison system in the country where your relative is detained, and we have general leaflets covering subjects such as human rights and transferring back to a British prison. Where appropriate we can respond to other specific requests for information you may have. We can't promise to have all of the answers, but we will always do our best to find out.

ASSISTANCE

We can offer practical help too. Depending on the country, we can advise you on prison visiting times, or what you can send in the post. We might even be able to book visits on your behalf; we all speak at least one other language, so we can talk to the prison staff in a language they understand.

TELEPHONE LINKING

Often, the only people who can truly understand what you're going through are people who have been through the same themselves. Just knowing that you're not the only one in this situation is often a relief and may help you feel less alone. That's why we put family members of prisoners in touch with each other.

FAMILY DAYS

We hold regular Family Days, on themes ranging from particular countries to issues such as what happens when your loved one is released. Family Days also offer a chance to meet other people in a similar situation and talk through the kind of problems you are facing.

HELP FOR EX-PRISONERS COMING TO THE UK

The end of a prison sentence is usually a reason for celebration, but for some it is a cause for concern. The routine of prison life is replaced also with the uncertainties of life on the outside: homelessness, unemployment, lack of money and support. Prisoners Abroad can help with finding somewhere to live, offer guidance through the benefits system, and provide practical advice on the many concerns you may have.

Prisoners Abroad has staff who are experienced in dealing with the issues arising for those returning from prison abroad. As well as providing practical advice on benefits and housing, our staff can also give you and your family the opportunity to talk through experiences, concerns and worries.

HELP AND ADVICE

Our specialist Resettlement Service is based at our office in London and you are welcome to contact us by telephone or to arrange an appointment to come and see us. If you are returning to another part of the country, we can advise you by telephone and assist with writing support letters and finding services in your area that may be able to help. The service we provide includes*:

- advice and assistance with finding emergency accommodation and filling in benefit forms;
- emergency grants for those with no other source of help;
- referrals to appropriate agencies offering specialist help (e.g. for help with employment and training or with medical and drug problems);
- temporary luggage storage, shower facilities and use of a computer to write CVs (résumés) or letters for jobs;
- the chance to talk through your experience with one of our team and to meet others in the same position; and
- support letters to help claim a Crisis Loan or Community Care Grant, as well as liaison with the Benefit Agency if problems arise with a claim.

* To qualify for Resettlement services, you must have been in contact with us before your release.

INFORMATION

Prisoners Abroad has produced two Resettlement booklets, one for people in prison overseas and one for their family and friends. The two booklets provide information about a number of the issues involved in coming to the UK after serving a sentence abroad. If you would like to obtain a copy of the Resettlement Handbook or the Resettlement Handbook for Families and Friends please contact us.

CONTACT US

To write to us or call us from the UK:

Please write to Prisoners Abroad
 Freepost KE7737
 London, N4 3BR

Freephone 0808 172 0098

Our freephone line is open from 10am to 4pm, Monday to Friday and is free from any UK landline and some mobile networks. The Freepost address is accessible from anywhere within the UK.

To write to us or call us from abroad:

Please write to Prisoners Abroad
 89-93 Fonthill Road
 London UK
 N4 3JH

Please dial +44 20 7561 6820

Email info@prisonersabroad.org.uk

Website www.prisonersabroad.org.uk

WHAT WE CANNOT DO

Prisoners Abroad will try to help you where possible. However, there are limits to the assistance we can provide. We cannot:

- get you out of prison;
- give legal advice about your case;
- publicise your case in the press and media;
- pay your fines or your airfare back to the UK;
- provide living expenses if you are released on bail;
- handle and/or speed up your transfer application;
- visit you in prison abroad; or
- provide resettlement assistance to ex-prisoners with whom we have not worked during their time in prison.

If you have problems with any of the above issues, contact us and explain your problem. In most cases, we will at least be able to provide some advice or tell you whom to contact for further help.

Prisoners Abroad
89-93 Fonthill Road
London N4 3JH

Office enquiries:

Tel: +44 20 7561 6820

Fax: +44 20 7561 6821