



British Embassy
Doha

Information Pack for British Prisoners in the State of Qatar

July 2018

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Introduction

Who can help?

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO):

The FCO is represented overseas by its Embassies and Consulates (High Commissions in Commonwealth Countries). Both employ Consular officers, whose duty it is to provide help and advice to any British national who gets into difficulty in a foreign country.

About the Embassy

We are impartial; we are not here to judge you. We aim to make sure that you are treated properly and in accordance with local regulations, and that you are treated no less favourably than other prisoners.

We can answer questions about your welfare and about prison regulations but you must ask your lawyer or the court about legal matters. The attached list of lawyers is provided by the British Embassy for your convenience, but neither Her Majesty's Government, nor any official of the Embassy, take any responsibility for the competence or probity of any firm/advocate on the list or for the consequence of any legal action initiated or advice given.

We cannot get you out of prison, pay fines or stand bail or interfere with local judicial procedures to get you out of prison, neither can we secure you an earlier trial date; we cannot investigate a crime.

We have tried to make sure that the information in this booklet is accurate and up to date, but the British Embassy cannot accept legal responsibility for any errors or omissions in the information. If in doubt contact a lawyer.

Contact Information

British Embassy +974 4496 2000
PO Box 3 (select option for Consular services)
Doha
Qatar Consular.DOHAA@fco.gov.uk

Office Hours:

Sunday to Wednesday, 08:00 to 15:30 (local)

Thursday 8:00 to 13:10 (local)

To speak to a Consular officer outside of office hours in an emergency, call +974 4496 2000 and choose the relevant option. This number is available 24/7.

This booklet has been prepared by the British Embassy, Doha. Whilst every effort is made to ensure the booklet remains current and up to date, through an annual review, the British Embassy is not accountable for the information provided in this booklet as local proceedings are subject to change at any time and on times without notice.

First Steps

Who will know I have been detained?

When a British citizen is arrested and detained in Qatar, the authorities should let the detainee contact the British Embassy as soon as possible. **It is your right to do so.** However, we may be informed much more quickly by friends or relatives. We will do all we properly can to make contact with you within 24 hours of being told that you have been detained.

What will my family be told?

For reasons of confidentiality, we are not permitted to tell anyone that you have been detained or what the charges are **without your permission**. The Embassy must have your consent to discuss your case or to confirm your detention with anyone.

What will the Embassy do?

As soon as we have been notified of the arrest we will attempt to make contact with you within 24 hours. We will ask the authorities for permission to speak with you, either at the police station or at the prison, and if necessary arrange to visit you. Consular visits are subject to permission being granted by the authorities (see page 5).

Consular staff can:

- Provide a list of local English-speaking lawyers;
- With your permission, contact family or friends to inform them of your arrest and provide updates on your well-being;
- Check on your health and welfare and ensure you receive adequate medical attention where necessary;
- Take note of any complaints and raise them with the appropriate authorities;
- In case they wish to transfer any money to you, we can tell your next-of-kin how to do so through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London.
- Put you and your family in touch with organisations who may be able to assist you.

Consular staff cannot:

- Get you out of prison, prevent the local authorities from deporting you after your prison sentence or interfere in criminal or civil court proceedings;
- Give you legal advice, represent you in court or investigate crimes, although we can give you details of people who may be able to help you in these cases, such as English-speaking lawyers;
- Get better treatment in prison for you because you are British;
- Stand as guarantor for bail or issue a letter to secure bail;
- Pay any legal bills or give you money.

If you have dual nationality and are imprisoned in the country of your other nationality the British Embassy cannot assist you formally, under international law. However, Consular staff will provide whatever informal assistance the local authorities will allow. Your relatives and friends can contact the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London for advice.

Will I have a criminal record in the UK?

You should be aware that if you have been convicted for certain serious offences, such as sexual assault or drugs trafficking, we are obliged to inform the UK police. It is therefore possible that information about this offence may appear if a Criminal Records Bureau check were carried out by a prospective employer.

Visits

How do my family and friends arrange a visit?

Prison regulations state that only family members can visit inmates in prison. However, visit orders may be issued to non-family members in certain cases; you should raise this with the prison authorities. Conjugal visits may be allowed if married. Unmarried partners may be denied visiting rights.

When are visits allowed?

Visiting days and times can be quite specific depending on which facility, or indeed which section of a facility you are being held at. They are likely to change with no notice, so you or your family should find out this information from the prison directly.

Consular visits

Consular staff from the Embassy in Doha will keep in regular contact with prisoners, either by visiting personally or by telephone. The frequency of visits will depend on local conditions and the individual prisoner's circumstances. Consular visits at most facilities are only allowed to take place on Mondays.

What can visitors bring?

Visitors may bring reading material for prisoners, however censorship is strict (avoid material with political or religious content, magazines and pictures). Certain comfort items such as toiletries, clean clothing and foodstuffs are *occasionally* permitted, however all items will be examined by prison authorities on arrival and may be refused. Please check with the prison all items you wish to take in before your visit.

Prison conditions/services

Arrival at police station

When you arrive at the police station all your personal goods (money, jewellery and other valuables) will be removed and held with the police until you are released. They will be kept in a box for safe keeping and all items will be documented and signed for. All medicines and toiletries should also be declared and handed to the authorities. If you require medication or medical treatment, make sure the officers are aware of this.

You will normally be allowed use of a telephone in order to contact your lawyer, your family or the British Embassy. After this initial call your access to telephone facilities may be limited. At the time of arrest you are legally entitled to request that the British Embassy be notified. If you are not able to speak to the Embassy yourself, you may wish to ask a friend or family member to do so on your behalf.

Your statement will be taken by the police and you may be asked to sign. All investigations will be conducted in Arabic. Translators should be available to interpret and are provided free of charge, however in practice this may not always be the case. You are expected to supply your own translator if you wish to have an independent one.

Arrival at prison

If you are transported from the police station to the courts or to Central Prison you may be shackled in handcuffs and leg chains. If you leave Central Prison for any reason, such as for a court appearance or hospital visit, you may also be transported in shackles. This method may also be used when, if sentenced to deportation, you are taken to the airport to leave the country. Female detainees may be required to wear an Abaya for court appearances.

General prison conditions

The main prison in Doha is Central Prison. If you are remanded in custody while the Public Prosecutor makes further investigations into your case or are given a jail sentence it is highly likely that you will serve this time in Central Prison.

Upon arrival at Central Prison you will be subjected to an intimate body search and your head may be shaved (males only). All of your possessions will be taken away and stored securely. However, if you wish you can arrange for someone to collect them on your behalf at a later date. You may be issued with a uniform. All other items of clothing, such as flip flops, t-shirts, etc. can need to be purchased from the prison shop (see below).

How can I receive money?

Please note that the Embassy cannot provide financial support to British nationals in prison abroad.

It is often possible to receive money from family or friends directly through the prison, or through your lawyer. If your family can't support you financially, Prisoners Abroad may be able to assist for small essentials (see page 13).

If your family or friends are in the UK, they may be able to transfer money to the Foreign & Commonwealth Office account. This money can then be deposited by Consular staff into your prison account or sent via postal order (see pages 14-16).

Money received from the UK will be converted into local currency and held on your behalf by the Embassy. Consular staff will then pass the funds directly to you or to prison authorities. Please note that our Consular staff cannot be responsible for the loss of funds by the prison authorities.

For further instructions on how money can be transferred are given below. We would always ask that any family members or friends, wishing to transfer money, contact the Foreign & Commonwealth Office first, so that we are aware of any incoming payments. A fee is payable for this service for amounts over a certain value.

Can I work or study in prison?

Depending on where you are held, study and/or library facilities may be available. Access to distance learning may also be available. Central Prison has a library which detainees may access, however this is considered a privilege and is not an automatic right. There is also a workshop where detainees can practice woodwork and craft activities.

Can I receive medical and dental treatment?

Medical and dental treatment is provided free of charge, any patient with ongoing medical problems should be provided with the necessary treatment either in the prison or if required they will be transferred to a hospital. You should raise any concerns with Consular staff at the earliest opportunity.

Food and Diet

Three meals a day are provided and special dietary requirements will usually be met. Detainees can buy food and personal supplies from the prison shop and are occasionally able to order food for and other comfort items for delivery. During Ramadan, non-Muslim detainees will not normally be required to fast, however mealtimes may be adjusted.

Mail/Parcels

Prisoners are allowed to receive letters and to send letters out of the prison. You can have letters sent directly to Central Prison at the following address:

(Name of prisoner and ward/block no)
Central Prison
Salwa Road
Al Rayan
Doha
State of Qatar

There are rules about what you can and can't receive. All letters and reading material are censored. This procedure means that it may be some time before they are actually given to you. Pornographic material is strictly forbidden.

If you are being held at another facility, it may not be possible to send/receive post directly. You should speak to Consular staff who may be able to assist.

Can I make telephone calls?

Detainees may be allowed a certain number of outgoing calls a week as a privilege. The number of calls allowed can vary depending on the facility. Telephone cards may be

purchased in the prison or brought in by friends and family. It is also possible for families to call in to speak to detainees, please speak to the Prison Authorities direct as to which day(s) calls can be made as these are subject to change.

Leisure and entertainment

Detainees should be able to exercise every day, outdoors and indoors. Access to gym facilities may also be allowed, if granted by the prison doctor.

How can I make a complaint about mistreatment?

If you feel you are being mistreated by prison authorities or by other inmates whilst you are detained, it is possible to make a complaint. You can write a letter to the Ministry of Interior and you can also write a statement and open a case which you can present to Public Prosecution. You should consider seeking legal advice on the latter.

The British Government takes all allegations of mistreatment of British citizens very seriously and will follow up as appropriate. If you have been mistreated, you should notify Consular staff immediately. Consular staff will ensure you are able to speak with them openly and in total confidence. Should you wish, they can then address any allegations, as appropriate, or put you or your family in touch with organisations that can assist.

The Qatari Judicial System

Is the system the same as the UK?

Whether travelling or living in Qatar, it is important to remember that anyone who breaks the law is subject to prosecution under the Qatari legal system, regardless of nationality.

Qatari law can be vastly different from our own, both in terms of what is considered a criminal offence and the punishments handed out. You should be aware of this and familiarise yourself with local laws and customs.

The judicial system in Qatar is divided into two main divisions, the Sharia (Islamic law) Courts and the Civil Law system (Adlea).

Judicial authority is vested in Courts of Law in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and court judgments are pronounced in the name of the Emir. There is no doctrine of binding precedent under Qatari law, however in practice lower courts usually follow decisions of the Courts of Appeal when the same point of law is considered.

The Sharia Courts administer Islamic Laws. Their role is generally limited to the adjudication of disputes relating to personal status matters (such as marriages, divorce, inheritance, custody cases and child support), but they are also competent in certain criminal cases.

The Civil system is divided into two divisions, the Civil Courts and the Criminal Courts. The Criminal Courts try capital offences against state security, property, criminal breach of trust, financial offences such as forgery, fraud, counterfeiting or cheating, and offences against the person. There are three levels of criminal court: the Court of First Instance, Court of Appeal, and Court of Cassation. The Court of First Instance hears all cases initially and passes judgement.

The Civil Courts have jurisdiction over all disputes not heard by the Sharia Courts or the Criminal Courts, in particular, commercial and labour cases. In employment disputes the Work Relations Department of the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs will look at the case first and try to assist both parties to reach a compromise. If no compromise is reached the case will be referred to the Courts.

What should happen when I am arrested?

After a person is arrested the police have the power to detain him/her for up to 24 hours before referring the case to the Public Prosecutor. The offices of the Public Prosecutor are open 7 days a week.

The Prosecutor may order the suspect to be released, remanded in custody to await trial, held in pre-trial detention pending investigation, or released on bail.

Note that the state security service can arrest and detain suspects for up to 30 days without referring them to the Public Prosecutor.

For how long can I be remanded in custody?

If the Public Prosecutor finds sufficient evidence for further investigation, authorities can detain a suspect for up to 15 days with the approval of a judge, renewable for similar periods not to

exceed 45 days, before charges must be filed in the courts. Judges may also extend pre-trial detention for one month, renewable for one-month periods not to exceed half of the maximum punishment for the accused crime.

What happens when I am charged?

If the Public Prosecutor decides to send the case to court a date will be set for the first hearing. There is no time limit within which the case must be heard, however most detainees generally go to trial within one month of arrest. A judge will then consider the case. It may take longer for a decision to be made in serious or complicated cases. During Ramadan and Eid holidays, hearings may be less frequent. Similarly, between July and September only a limited number of cases will be considered due to the extended summer break.

What provision is there for bail?

The Public Prosecutor may release suspects on bail, with or without conditions, while the investigation is ongoing. There is no automatic right to bail. It is not standard practice for passports to be retained but a travel ban may be put in place until the investigations are concluded.

What kind of legal assistance is available?

Detainees are generally entitled to legal representation throughout the pre-trial and trial process. There are provisions for state-funded legal counsel in criminal cases for those who cannot afford a lawyer. Investigations will be conducted in Arabic. An interpreter should be provided to assist in the investigation involving a non-Arabic speaker; however, in most cases it is advisable to have legal representation.

Legal fees can be high; they vary in accordance with the case and the lawyer's experience. Lawyers usually require an advance payment before accepting a case. In cases involving money the lawyer may ask for a percentage of the final settlement if the case is successful. Lawyers will usually submit a written defence statement for the judge to consider. Lawyers can discuss cases with the Public Prosecutor before they reach court and are provided access to the relevant government-held evidence.

Consular staff cannot give legal advice, but they can provide you with a list of English-speaking lawyers.

What happens at the trial?

In hearing criminal cases, the Courts employ practices and procedures similar to those employed in Common and Civil Law Courts. A Public Prosecutor presents the case on behalf of the state, the accused is allowed legal representation throughout the pre-trial and trial process and the accused is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

Trials are held in open court, but the presiding judge can close the courtroom to the public if the case is deemed sensitive. Lawyers prepare litigants and speak for them during the hearing. Non-Arabic speakers are generally provided with interpreters by the Court.

How can appeals be made?

An appeal against a sentence can be made to the Court of Appeal within 15 days, if the defendant was present in court. If they were not present, appeals can be made within 15 days of the publication of the judgement. In certain cases a further appeal can be made to the Court of Cassation within 60 days of the official notification of the Court of Appeal's judgement.

What provision is there for clemency or pardon?

During Ramadan and around National Day, pardons may be granted by H.H. the Emir. Decisions on Amiri Pardons are taken on a case-by-case basis - there are no hard and fast rules for success and few are granted.

All pleas should be addressed to H.H. the Amir. You should consult your legal representative to discuss the content. We have listed below some ideas on how you may make the best of your application. It may be helpful to submit your application with supporting letters. The most important will be from family members. Others should be from friends, plus perhaps another letter from a professional person who will support your case, e.g. your MP or lawyer. If appropriate you may also request support from Prisoners Abroad (see page 13).

What should I say?

The actual content of your letter of application and the supporting ones will depend upon the circumstances of your case and should be discussed with your lawyer. However, you may wish to make clear that you:

- understand the seriousness of your offence;
- repent your past conduct;
- long for reunion with your family, homeland and culture;
- wish to lead a socially useful life in future;
- will never do wrong again.

Priority may be given if there are strong medical grounds for an early release, but you should never criticise prison conditions, even if they are making your health worse. Equally, you should avoid any criticism of the judicial system and never claim innocence (even if you believe yourself to be innocent), as that implies fault with the system that convicted you.

You may send your application to the Amiri Diwan through prison channels or your lawyer.

Is transfer to another prison within Qatar possible?

This is unlikely. Whilst there are various detention facilities in Qatar, most prisoners once convicted will serve their sentences at Central Prison.

Is transfer to the UK a possibility?

No. The United Kingdom does not have an agreement to operate bilateral prisoner transfer with the State of Qatar.

What are the procedures for release and deportation?

If a sentence of imprisonment followed by deportation is passed the prisoner will be deported back to their home country once the prison sentence has been served. This is known as judicial deportation. Prisoners will generally be expected to finance their own deportation and will be kept in prison until an airfare is paid for. If nobody can pay for the airfare, the prisoner will remain in prison while the prison authorities arrange the deportation at their own expense. This may take some time.

Even if the court did not order deportation your case may be referred to the Diwan's office after your sentence has been completed. The Diwan's office will then consider whether or not

to administratively deport someone. Again, the prisoner will be responsible for paying the cost of the airfare.

If you are to be deported you should arrange for your ticket to be given to the prison authorities in advance of your release. On the day of your flight (provided that is the day of your release date) you should be collected from your cell and given your valuables and passport. You will then be transferred to the custody of the Immigration Police, who will escort you to the aircraft.

Prisoners Abroad

Since 1978 the charity Prisoners Abroad has offered practical support and advice to British citizens imprisoned overseas. It is the only UK charity providing this service and it is available to all, whether guilty or innocent, convicted or on remand. Prisoners Abroad is concerned with your health and welfare, both during your imprisonment and also on your return to the UK, through their resettlement service (if you have registered whilst in prison). They can also provide support and advice to your family during your imprisonment. In order to access any services, prisoners must first register with Prisoners Abroad by signing and returning their authorisation form.

Once you seek help from Prisoners Abroad, the Prisoner & Family Support Service will be your point of contact for advice and information. The type of assistance they can offer will vary from country to country, but generally they can provide you with information, in English, on:

- your rights as a prisoner and issues that may affect you such as health or transfer to the UK;
- obtaining magazines, newspapers, books and the regular Prisoners Abroad newsletter;
- writing to a pen pal;
- learning the language of your country of imprisonment;
- translation of documents;
- grants for food if you are in a developing country and don't have funds from other sources;
- grants for essential medicines and toiletries if you don't have funds from other sources;
- preparing for release;
- help for your loved ones, including information, family support groups and assistance with the cost of visiting.

Prisoners Abroad
89 – 93 Fonthill Road
Finsbury Park
London
N4 3JH

Telephone: +44 (0) 20 7561 6820 or, in the UK, Freephone 0808 172 0098
(Mondays to Fridays 9:30 to 16:30, UK time)

Email: info@prisonersabroad.org.uk

Website: www.prisonersabroad.org.uk

Options to transfer funds to British Nationals Overseas via the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office operates a service which allows you to pay funds to us in the UK which we will pay out in local currency to the above overseas. The various ways you can pay us are detailed in the attached sheet.

Under the Consular Fees Order of 2013/2014, we are obliged to charge for this service. The fee is dependent on the amount that you wish to transfer as follows:

Amount being sent	Fee
One monthly payment up to £100	Free
Each additional payment or amount of £0.01 - £99.99	£10
Each additional payment or amount of £100 - £499.99	£25
Each additional payment or amount of £500 and above	£50

When forwarding funds, you should add the above fee to the amount that you wish to transfer. For example, if you want the recipient to receive £150, you will need to send us £160 (£150 to forward plus £10 fee). If other friends and family also plan to transfer funds in the same month, you should consider coordinating payments so you know what FCO fees to expect. We retain the right to further deduct any local overseas charges we may incur in passing the fees to the recipient.

Should we be unable to pay the funds locally to the recipient, our policy is to refund amounts above £5 to the depositor by bank transfer. In this case, we would contact you for your bank details. Refunds may take several weeks as our internal processes can only start once all relevant costs have been cleared with local authorities.

Please note that we can only advance funds to the person overseas once your payment has cleared in our account.

1. Electronic Bank transfers

Payment by electronic/internet bank transfer can be made either using online or telephone banking, or at your local bank or building society.

For all bank transfers, you will need to include the following details:

Bank: National Westminster Bank
Account Name: FCO Multi Vote
Sort Code: 60-70-80
Account Number: 10012362
Reference: FCO **case reference number, surname and first name of the person** you are sending the funds for, plus country name if possible,
e.g. 11-THB-123456 SMITH JOE - THAILAND or
CON-1234 SMITH JOE – THAILAND

IBAN GB56NWBK60708010012362
SWIFT/BIC NWBKGB2L

You may also need our bank address which is:

National Westminster Bank, Government Banking, CST PO Box 2027, Parkland, De Havilland Way, Howich, Bolton, BL6 4YU

2. By Post

Payments by **Postal Order, Bankers Draft, Building Society Cheque or personal cheque** should be crossed and made payable to "The Foreign and Commonwealth Office". They should be sent to:

Accounts Receivable
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Corporate Service Centre
PO Box 6108
Milton Keynes
MK10 1PX

We recommend that you use Special Delivery.

Please ensure that you include a note briefly explaining who the money is for, why you are sending these funds and quoting the FCO case reference number. You may wish to use the payment slip on the next page.

If you would like a receipt, please include a stamped addressed envelope.

Please note that it can take approximately 15 days for personal cheques to clear and for payment to be received. Please write the cheque guarantee number and expiry date, and the FCO case reference number, on the back of the cheque.

We are unable to receive payment by credit or debit card, or by cash.

Payment Slip

To: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

FCO case reference number:

Date:

Please find enclosed funds for:

Full Name:

Country/place the above is in:

Amount enclosed:

Fee to be deducted:

Payment method:

My name is:

My address is:

Glossary of Terms

Key Phrases – English into Arabic

<u>English</u>	<u>Arabic</u>
Amnesty / Pardon	Afou
Appeal	Istinaf
Application form	Talab
Bathroom	Hammaam
Blanket	Battaniya
Blood test	Fahs dam
Book	Kitab
Case	Kadiya
Case number	Rakam al Kadiya
Central Prison	Al Sejin Al Markazi
Clinic	Eyada
Complaint	Shakwa
Court	Mahkama
Deportation	Ibaad
Deposit	Amanat
Doctor	Tabeeb
Embassy	Safara
Federal Supreme court	Al Mahkama Al Itihadiya
Food	Taam
Guilty	Mouznib
Hearing session	Jalsat Istimaa
Indictment	Al Touhma
Innocent	Barei
Interpreter	Moutarjem
Jail	Sejin
Judgement	Mouhakama
Lawyer	Mouhami
Library	Maktaba
Money	Feloos
No Problem	Ma fi Moushkila
Notary	Kateb Adel
Plaintiff	Al Moudaii
Police	Shurta
Power of attorney	Wakala
Prison Director	Mudir Al Sejin
Prison rules	Kanoun Al Sejin
Problem	Mushkila
Prosecutor	Niyaba
Release	Efracj
Security	Amn
Sentence	Oukouba
Sentence	Al Hokom
Sharia Court	Al Mahkama Al Shariaa

Sick	Mareed
Soap	Saboon
Telephone call	Moukalamat telephone
The Accused	Al Mutaham
To buy	Ashtary
Tomorrow	Boukra
Visit	Zieyara
Ward number	Rakam Al Anbar
Water	Maa
Witness	Shahed

Annexes

[Annex 1: List of English-Speaking Lawyers](#)

[Annex 2: List of Private Translators/Interpreters](#)

[Annex 3: FCO leaflet: *In prison abroad*](#)

[Annex 4: Prisoners Abroad Information Pack](#)

Disclaimer

This booklet was compiled by the British Embassy Doha. It is reviewed on an annual basis.

If any of the information contained in this booklet is incorrect, please draw inaccuracies to our attention so that we can make the necessary amendments.

The British Embassy Doha is not accountable for the information provided in this booklet. Local proceedings are subject to change at any time.

Thank you.

British Embassy Doha,
July 2018