

**CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS
AND DEFENCE RIGHTS
IN BELGIUM**

This leaflet covers:

- Information about FTI
- Definitions of key legal terms
- Criminal proceedings and defence rights in Belgium
- Useful links

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About Fair Trials International

Since 1992 Fair Trial International has worked for the better protection of fair trial rights and defended the rights of people facing criminal charges in a country other than their own. Our vision is a world where every person's right to a fair trial is respected, whatever their nationality, wherever they are accused.

Fair Trials International was established to help people arrested outside their own country to defend their right to a fair trial. Every year we help hundreds of people and their families to navigate a foreign legal system by offering practical advice, including contacts of local lawyers; guidance on key issues encountered by people arrested abroad; and basic information on different legal systems and local sources of support. As a charity, we do not charge for any of the assistance that we provide.

We believe that respect for fundamental rights and the rule of law are the hallmarks of a just society and that the right to a fair trial is at the heart of this. Sadly too many shocking cases of injustice demonstrate how, time and again, this most basic human right is being abused. We fight against injustice by lobbying for the legal reforms needed to ensure that the right to a fair trial is respected in practice. Working with our clients and international networks, we also campaign for changes to criminal justice laws which are being abused and overused.

To find out more about how FTI can assist you, please contact our legal team (contact details on the back cover).

Fair Trials International is a registered charity (No 1134586) and is registered with limited liability in England and Wales (No 7135273). We are a non-governmental organisation; as such, we are a wholly separate and independent organisation from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

If you require this leaflet in large print, please contact us at the address on the back cover.

DEFINITIONS OF KEY LEGAL TERMS

Appeal (*appel / beroep*): An opportunity to dispute a decision made at trial by asking a higher court to review it. This can result in the decision being overturned or changed.

Bail (*contrôle judiciaire / borgtocht*): The temporary release from police custody or prison of a person accused of a crime and awaiting trial.

Bar Association (*ordre des avocats or barreau / orde van advocaten or balie*): An organisation whose role is to represent lawyers and help people in their dealings with lawyers.

Charge/Indictment (*charge / tenlastelegging*): An official statement accusing a person of committing an offence.

Consulate (*consulat / consulaat*): The section of the embassy whose task is to assist its citizens.

Court of Appeal (*cour d'appel / hof van beroep*): The court that is competent to hear appeals (i.e. challenges) made to decisions of the lower courts

Court of First Instance (*tribunal de premiere instance / rechtbank von erste aanleg*): A lower court where a trial is initially heard.

Embassy (*ambassade / ambassade*): The office of a government official who resides in a foreign country and represents his/her government's interests.

European Court of Human Rights (*cour europeenne des droits de l'homme*): The Court is based in Strasbourg, France, and hears human rights cases against the 47 countries which make up the Council of Europe (which is different from the European Union).

Inquisitorial System: A system in which the judge plays an active role in conducting the investigations and seeking the truth. This system is followed in France and many other European countries (but not in the UK). Unlike in adversarial systems such as the UK and the USA, the role of the defence lawyer is to ensure that his/her client's rights are respected, but it is not to investigate the case. An important part of the trial can be based on written submissions.

Investigative Judge (*juge d'instruction* / *onderzoeksrechter*): A judge who performs an examining role and is actively involved in the conduct of investigations.

Judge (*juge* / *rechter*): A person with authority to hear and decide on cases in a court of law.

Judgment (*jugement* / *uitspraak* (general) or *vonnis* (in first instance) or *arrest* (in appeal)): A decision on a case provided by a judge or jury in a court of law.

Lawyer (*avocat* / *advocaat*): A person whose profession is to give legal advice and assistance to clients and represent them in court or in other legal matters.

Legal Aid (*aide juridique gratuite* or *pro deo* / *kosteloze rechtsbijstand* or *pro deo*): Financial assistance

provided to a person who needs a lawyer and who cannot afford to pay for one.

Plea Bargain (*plaider coupable / het bepleiten van strafvermindering in ruil voor schuldbekentis*): A procedure which allows the defendant to plead guilty in exchange for a less severe sentence.

Police Custody (*garde à vue / voorarrest*): Detention of a suspect by the police after arrest.

Pre-trial Detention (*detention provisoire / voorlopige hechtenis*): Detention in police custody or in prison during the investigations (and often during the trial itself as well), which happens before the decision on guilt or innocence is made by the court.

Public prosecutor (*Procureur / openbare aanklager*): A person (either a lawyer or a judge depending on the country) who conducts a case against a person who is accused of a crime.

Remand (*placer en detention provisoire / terugzenden in voorlopige hechtenis*): The act of sending a person, accused of a crime, into police custody or prison until the trial.

Sentence (*peine / veroordeling*): The punishment assigned to a person convicted of a crime as fixed by a court of law.

Warrant (*mandat*): A document issued by a legal or government official authorising the police to make an

arrest, search premises, or carry out some other action relating to the administration of justice.

Witness: Referred to in Belgium as *temoin*.

INFORMATION ABOUT CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS AND DEFENCE RIGHTS IN BELGIUM

We have prepared these notes with the assistance of local criminal lawyers, who tried to describe how things happen in practice, i.e. in the real world. Even within one country, however, practice can vary a lot from one place to another and it is therefore possible that your experience will sometimes differ from the descriptions below. This document does not constitute legal advice and only provides general information. If you need advice in relation to your specific case, or if you are concerned about a possible violation of your rights, you should discuss this with your local lawyer.

1. LEGAL SYSTEM

Q1. Where do the laws of Belgium apply?

Belgian law applies across the country, regardless of the nationality of the accused.

Q2. What kind of legal system is it?

The Belgian legal system is a civil law system; the criminal process is “inquisitorial”. This is very different to common law countries like England and Wales, the USA and Australia, where the trial is a contest between the prosecution and defence (who present their own version

of events) and where the judge acts as an independent referee and plays no role in investigating the case.

2. ARREST AND INVESTIGATION

I. What are my rights upon arrest?

(a) Right to information:

Q3. Will the police inform me of my rights? Will this be done orally or in writing?

The police will inform you, in writing and before the first formal interview, that you have:

- The right to remain silent;
- The right not to incriminate yourself (i.e. the right not to say anything that can work against your case);
- The right to ask for any investigation you think necessary;
- The right to provide the police with any written document which may help with your defence (e.g. your passport if it proves that you were out of the country on the day the offence was committed).

Q4. Do I have a right to be informed of the allegations/charges against me?

Yes, once the investigative judge has issued an arrest warrant (i.e. a document allowing the police to arrest

you) and the police have arrested you, they will inform you of the offence you are suspected of having committed; and of the facts or circumstances on which the warrant is based.

(b) Right to inform people:

Q5. Do I have a right for the consulate to be informed of my arrest?

Yes, in practice, you should be allowed to inform your consulate of your arrest. However, the law in Belgium does not explicitly give you this right.

Q6. Do I have a right to inform family members about the arrest?

In practice, the police will normally allow you to inform relatives of your arrest. This is not, however, a right and is at the discretion of the police.

Q7. Do I have a right to a lawyer?

If you have been arrested by a prosecutor, and have to appear before an investigative judge afterwards, you have the right to be assisted by a lawyer in your first interview. You do not have the right to have a lawyer present during the interview, if you have been asked to attend the interview, and you do so voluntarily.

You have the right to have a lawyer present during your trial. The investigative judge will ask if you have a lawyer and if you do not have one, s/he will inform the President of the Bar (*Bâtonnier/Stafhouder*) so that a legal aid lawyer can be appointed by the bar.

Q8. Do I have a right to a translator/interpreter?

Yes, you have a right to an interpreter, at no costs. S/he will be appointed by the court.

Q9. Do I have to talk to the police or can I remain silent during police interrogation? Will it work against me if I am silent?

Although you have a right to silence, if you fail to mention facts to the police that could support your defence and you later try to rely on them, it could harm your defence.

Q10. When will I get information on the case against me?

The police will give you information about the accusation against you at the time of your arrest or shortly afterwards. If you are not arrested but you receive a court document that requests your presence for a hearing, you can access your file before going to court.

As soon as you are formally accused (i.e. official charges are brought against you, and you become known as *inculpe/in verdenking gesteld*) you have the right to ask the investigative judge (*juge d'instruction / onderzoeksrechter*) to grant you access to your criminal file. If s/he refuses, his/her decision can be challenged (within two weeks) before the Court of Appeal.

Every time you appear before the council chamber (*chambre du conseil/raadkamer*), usually once every month, you should be given the right to access your file.

Q11. How long can I be kept in prison before my trial starts?

- The police can detain you for 24 hours without any authorisation from a judge.
- After this the investigative judge can allow the police to detain you for up to five days.
- After these five days, a higher court (the *Chambre du Conseil/Raadkamer*) - where a different judge sits - must either confirm that you will stay in jail until your trial or order that you must be released.
- In principle, your trial will be held after one month (for serious offences, three months). That decision can be appealed before a higher court (the *Chambre des Mises en Accusation/Kamer van Inbeschuldigingstelling*).

Be aware that there is no maximum amount of time you can spend in jail before your trial under Belgian law. However, in reality, this period of detention prior to the end of your trial usually lasts between a maximum of six months, for minor offences, to a year for serious offences.

3. LEGAL REPRESENTATION

For general information on how to appoint a lawyer, please refer to FTI's "Arrested in Another Country?" leaflet.

Q12. How can I find a lawyer?

Your consulate should be able to provide you with details of lawyers that speak your language.

Alternatively, your local bar association should also be able to assist you, as they have lists of lawyers in your area. You can get the contact details of your local bar association through the national Bar Association. See FTL's useful links for contact details of the bars

Fair Trials International may also be able to help.

Q13. What is the role of my lawyer? Will s/he investigate the case?

Your lawyer will provide you with legal advice, e.g. what information you should use in your defence, or how long you may spend in prison.

Your lawyer will then usually present your case in court, based on the evidence gathered and any testimony from the witnesses called.

S/he has no power to conduct investigations of his/her own, but can ask the investigative judge to order specific investigations (such as arranging to search given premises or asking a witness to attend court). This can be done informally, or formally in court. If a formal request is denied, it can be challenged before the Court of Appeal.

Q14. I cannot afford to pay for a private lawyer, what should I do? (Is there legal aid? How should I apply? What are the criteria to be eligible? What is covered by legal aid?)

When the investigative judge orders your arrest, s/he needs to ensure that you have a lawyer. S/he will ask you whether you have one, and if you do not, s/he will inform the President of the Bar (*Bâtonnier/Stafhouder*), who will help you to hire a lawyer.

Legal aid is almost always available to all suspects in detention, but you may be refused if it is obvious that you have enough money in your possession to pay for legal representation privately.

If you are not in jail, you can go to the office of the bar (located in each First Instance Court, *Tribunal de Premiere instance*, which is a local court) to apply for a legal aid lawyer. In large cities, the bar organises clinics where you can meet with legal aid lawyers.

Note that if you are not detained, the availability of legal aid will depend on your means (i.e. how much you and other family members living with you earn).

Q15. I am unhappy with my lawyer: How can I change my lawyer? How can I complain against my lawyer?

A good first step is to speak to your lawyer about your concerns. If that does not resolve the issue, you can complain about your lawyer (see below) and seek to have another lawyer appointed (see below about how to do this). Please refer to FTI's "Arrested in Another Country?" leaflet for general information on how to

14

appoint a lawyer, and how to get the best out of your lawyer.

It is also possible to change lawyer if you have a legal aid lawyer. You will need to inform the President of the Bar Association (*Bâtonnier/Stafhouder*) of your decision to change your legal aid lawyer.

You need to send a letter outlining your complaint to your local bar association, which will explain how to complain about your lawyer.

4. PRE-TRIAL MATTERS

4.1 Pre-trial matters: detention

The information given below is specific to Belgium. For general information and tips about how to obtain your release prior to your trial, please refer to our note on “Release pending trial”.

Q16. Will I have to stay in prison until my trial starts?

You may have to stay in prison until your trial starts. Although there is a presumption that people should be given bail (i.e. should be released pending trial), in many cases defendants, particularly when they are foreign nationals, are kept in custody.

Reasons for keeping people in custody are to prevent them from:

- (1) Failing to attend their trial (i.e. absconding);

15

- (2) Tampering evidence or interfering with witnesses;
- (3) Committing another offence ;or
- (4) Being in danger of others or themselves.

If the investigative judge has decided to order your detention before trial (pre-trial detention) you will stay in prison until the trial starts. However, the decision to keep you in pre-trial detention is reviewed by the court on a regular basis (usually every month).

Note that time served in pre-trial detention will be considered as part of your sentence.

Q17. Are there alternatives to detention pending trial?

Yes. The investigative judge can decide to release you on bail (i.e. you will be released from custody until your trial). If this happens, it is common that some conditions will be attached to your release. These are not determined by law but set in relation to individual cases.

You should be aware that it is in practice very difficult for foreigners to obtain bail in Belgium, unless they are resident in Belgium.

Q18. What conditions can be imposed?

The investigative judge will decide on the conditions to be imposed on you if you are released pending trial. These might, for example, include a prohibition on leaving Belgium, payment of a sum of money as security (*caution*), an order not to contact certain

people, prohibition from involvement in certain types of business and an obligation to inform the judge of your place of residence.

Q19. How and when can I apply for bail?

The council chamber (*chambre du conseil/raadkamer*) reviews your detention, usually every month. If you are accused of a serious crime your detention will be reviewed every three months rather than every month.

Q20. Can I go back to my home country while on bail?

Yes, unless you were asked to surrender your passport, or to stay at a given address etc. In practice, in the rare cases where bail is granted, courts often impose conditions that prevent foreign nationals from leaving Belgium.

Q21. What will happen if I breach my bail conditions?

If you fail to appear in court you will be put in jail.

Money paid as security will only be returned to you if you have respected your bail conditions **and** if you have paid all fines and court costs.

Q22. Do I need a lawyer to apply for bail?

No.

4.2 Pre-trial matters: timing

Q23. How long before my case goes to trial?

It is almost impossible to give an indication of the time it will take before your case will go to trial. This is because the length of the investigation will depend on the facts and circumstances of the case, as well as of the backlog (if any) of the relevant court.

Q24. There are persistent delays with my case; does this mean my lawyer is doing a bad job?

No. Given the backlog in the Belgian court system, it is not uncommon to have too many cases listed to be heard in one court session. At the hearing the presiding judge will decide which cases will be heard; the courts always hear cases concerning people detained in custody as a priority.

4.3 Pre-trial matters: pleading guilty

Q25. Can I plead guilty? What are the consequences of pleading guilty?

You should always seek advice from a lawyer before pleading guilty. Under Belgian law if you plead guilty, you have recognised the criminal acts the public prosecutor has alleged you have committed. As a result, the court will find you guilty, and will sentence you.

Since August 2011, plea bargaining has existed in Belgium for minor offences (i.e. if the public prosecutor does not intend to request a sentence of more than two years' imprisonment). It allows you to settle the matter by paying a sum of money (which is different to a fine).

Please note that there will be a mention of this arrangement in your criminal record.

5. THE TRIAL

Q26. What happens at the trial?

- When the trial begins, the judge in charge of the case will interrogate you.
- Then, the victim (called civil party) may plead (see below for more information about the role of the victim in the trial).
- After this the prosecutor will present his/her case.
- At the end you (and/or your lawyer) will be given the opportunity to respond to the arguments made by the civil party and/or of the prosecutor.
- The court may also call witnesses. Note that in Belgium it is not automatic to call witnesses and it often does not happen, except in the most serious cases.
- If witnesses are called, the court will question them (and if your lawyer has questions s/he should pass them on to the court).
- At the end, the court will inform you of the date when its decision will be known.

Q27. Which court will hear my case?

Criminal cases are first heard by the Court of First Instance. The more serious offences may instead be heard by the Court of Assizes (*cour d'assises/hof van assisen*).

Decisions handed down by the Court of First Instance can be appealed before the Court of Appeal. You cannot appeal decisions made by the Court of Assizes to the Court of Appeal.

Decisions handed down by the Court of Appeal can be challenged before the Supreme Court. Review by the Supreme Court is limited to points of law (i.e. the court will not review the evidence).

Q28. Do I have to be present?

No, unless the court requests your presence.

It is, however, generally in your interest to attend court hearings (although this is not a written rule, in practice judges often consider that defendants who do not appear at trial must not care about what they have done, and they may hand down more severe sentences). You should ask your lawyer for advice on your specific situation.

Q29. Can I ask for the trial to take place in my home country?

No.

Q30. Will there be a jury?

Decisions in lower criminal courts (*tribunal de police*) are made by one or several professional judge(s). Usually pre-trial matters are handled by a single judge and the trial itself is in front of a panel of three judges.

There are juries at the court that deals with the most serious crimes (*Cours d'assises/Hoven van Assise*). Juries are composed of 12 jurors, who will decide (on a majority) of your guilt or innocence. If they find you guilty, then the judge and the jury will decide together on your sentence.

Q31. Can my lawyer call and cross-examine witnesses?

Your lawyer cannot call witnesses but s/he can ask the court to call witnesses on your behalf. The decision whether or not to call them is at the discretion of the court.

If the court calls witnesses, your lawyer will, in principle, have to submit his/her questions to the court. In practice, however, the judges will sometimes allow your lawyer to address his/her questions directly to the witnesses.

This also applies to the examination of co-defendants, if there are any.

The victim can never be examined directly by your lawyer.

Q32. I don't speak the language of the court, do I have a right to an interpreter? Is it free?

21

Yes, you have a right to an interpreter. Interpretation will be free if you are on legal aid.

Q33. Will the written evidence be translated for me?

You can obtain a translation of the evidence, but this is not an automatic right and will not be free. In Belgium, court documents can only be translated into one of the three official languages (Dutch, French and German). Translation into another language must be arranged privately.

Q34. Will the interpreter also assist me if I need to talk to my lawyer?

In principle, no, this is not his/her role.

Q35. Why is the victim taking part in the trial?

Victims are often called as witnesses.

If the alleged offence has caused damages to the victim, the criminal court can order damages to be paid to the victim without the need for a separate legal case on the civil courts. For this reason, victims often decide to take an active (although limited) part in the trial, but they have no obligation to do so.

Q36. Will I be informed of the decision of the court on the day of the trial?

No. At the end of the hearing, the court will take the case into deliberation and set the date on which the decision is to be handed down. Judgments are only

handed down immediately in very straightforward cases (e.g. road traffic offences).

Q37. Can I receive a copy of the judgment in my mother tongue?

No, but you should ask your lawyer to arrange for a translation of the decision. You will have to pay for it.

Q38. I was tried in my absence and was not informed of this, what can I do?

Once you are informed of the decision, you can either appeal against it or oppose it. If you oppose the decision, your case will be heard again by the court that tried you in your absence.

You must take care to lodge your application to oppose in due time (usually 15 days after you find out about the decision made in your absence), otherwise it will be denied.

You need to take legal advice and your lawyer will tell you about the time limits to appeal (usually two weeks from the time you were first informed of the court decision).

6. APPEALS

Q39. I am not happy with the decision, can I appeal against it?

Yes, you can appeal against your conviction and sentence.

Q40. How can I make an appeal?

Always seek legal advice quickly if you intend to appeal and bear in mind that timeframes for appealing are very short.

If you were found guilty and given a sentence, then an appeal can allow you to challenge both your conviction (if you argue that you are innocent) and your sentence (if you consider that you should be given a shorter prison sentence or a lower fine).

In principle, an appeal must be filed with the registrar of the court who handed down the decision. You would usually have 15 days to lodge your appeal, starting from the day the judgment was handed down.

A mere declaration is sufficient; you do not have to indicate the reasons underlying the appeal at this stage.

Please note that different rules apply to appeals relating to pre-trial proceedings, and the latter usually must be filed within 24 hours.

Q41. Do I need to pay my lawyer more money if there is an appeal?

Since your lawyer will have to appear before the appeal judges, s/he is very likely to charge you for these additional services.

If you were granted legal aid, then your legal aid lawyer will represent you on appeal for free.

Q42. What is the time frame for the appeal to be heard by the court?

Due to the severe backlog in some appeal courts, it is impossible to give precise timeframes as it depends on both the complexity of the appeal and the work load of the court.

In theory, if you are in detention, your appeal is likely to be heard within four months, if you are free, it is likely to take at least six months.

Q43. Could things get worse as a result of the appeal?

Yes, if the prosecution or the victim appeal, then it can get worse. It can result in a longer sentence, the reversal of your acquittal and/or more damages to be paid to the victim. You cannot get a worse result by opposing a decision made in your absence.

However, a panel of judges sit on appeal and they can only impose a more severe sentence if the decision to do so is unanimous.

It will not get worse if you are the only one to appeal (i.e. if the prosecution does not appeal).

Q44. Can the prosecution appeal against a decision or an acquittal?

Yes, the prosecution can appeal, even against an acquittal (i.e. against a judgment that found you innocent).

The prosecution can also challenge the decision of the Court of Appeal. It will then apply to the Supreme Court on points of law only (i.e. the court will not consider the evidence).

7. PRISON CONDITIONS

Q45. Do I have rights as a prisoner? Where can I find out about my rights?

You have certain rights and privileges when you are in prison (e.g. the right to security and to food and water).

Your lawyer will be able to brief you on which apply to your particular case.

Q46. What can I do if my rights are violated?

If your rights are violated (e.g. you are mistreated, or denied food or water) you can complain to the director of the prison. If the abuse is severe you can also complain to the courts. Courts may issue an order that will demand that the abuse stops and/or that your jail conditions are improved. If you want to take your complaint to the courts, you will need to be represented by a lawyer.

Q47. Where can I get assistance regarding my welfare issues? Regarding abuse and mistreatment?

Your lawyer will be able to provide assistance in relation to these issues and, if required, can start court proceedings.

Some local organisations may also be able to assist. Please check FTI's useful contact pages for more information.

8. POST-TRIAL MATTERS

Q48. Can I get my sentence reduced?

You can go through the appeal methods mentioned above.

Note that time served in pre-trial detention will be considered as part of your sentence.

Q49. What would help me get an early release?

Some prisoners may be released early in order to serve the rest of their sentences outside of the prison system, provided they adhere to certain conditions (e.g. stay at a given address; avoid certain places; follow specific treatments, etc.). If these conditions are breached then you can be returned to prison.

To be eligible for an early release you must typically have served one third of your sentence; if the sentence was one of fewer than three years, you will automatically be released after serving one year.

If your sentence was more than three years then your release is not automatic but must be ordered by the court that heard your case. Before you can be released you will be expected to show, among other things, that you have accommodation upon your release and plans for employment. You have the right to be assisted by a

27

lawyer to prepare the relevant documents, and the prison's social services will also provide some help.

Q50. I have been sentenced to pay a fine, what will happen if I don't pay it?

The judge can sentence you to jail if you fail to pay the fine.

Q51. Can I ask for a transfer to my home country?

Yes, provided Belgium and your home country have a prisoner transfer agreement.

Please let Fair Trials International know if you would consider applying for a prisoner transfer, and we will send you further information.

Q52. I have exhausted all legal remedies, is it possible to get my case reviewed?

A final decision cannot be reviewed by Belgian courts. If your human rights were violated, you may be able to appeal to the European court of human rights (the deadline for submitting your application is 6 months).

Q53. I have exhausted all legal remedies; can I apply for a pardon?

Yes, the King of Belgium can grant a pardon. You need to write a letter addressed to the King but sent to the Minister of Justice. In practice, pardons are very rare and are usually granted to people who had a change in their personal circumstances (e.g. have very serious health issues).

Q54. Can I be expelled instead of serving my sentence?

No.

Q55. Is there a risk that I will be deported after serving my sentence?

Yes, this is something you should discuss with your lawyer.

USEFUL LINKS

ORGANISATION	MANDATE	CONTACT DETAILS
LAW GOVERNING BODIES		
The Dutch-speaking Bar	<u>Mandate</u> <p>The General Council of the Belgian Bar Association is competent to safeguard the integrity, the rights and the common professional interest of lawyers operating in Belgium. The General Council helps provide unity across the many bars.</p>	<u>Website:</u> <p>www.advocaat.be E: info@advocaat.be T: 0032 2 227 54 70 F: 0032 2 227 54 79 Orde van Vlaamse Balies Koningsstraat 148 1000 Brussel</p>
The French and German-speaking Bar		<u>Website:</u> <p>www.avocat.be E: info@advocats.be T: 00322 648 20 98 <u>Fax number:</u> 00322 648 11 67 O.B.F.G. Avenue de la Toison d'Or 65 B-1060 Bruxelles <u>Opening Hours</u> 9.00 am – 5.30pm</p>

ORGANISATION	MANDATE	CONTACT DETAILS
NGOs		
- HUMAN RIGHTS		
Amnesty International	<p><u>Mandate:</u></p> <p>Amnesty International is a campaigning organisation. Its aim is to protect people wherever justice, fairness, freedom and truth are denied. AI's campaigns differ from country to country. AI has two offices in Belgium, one in Brussels and one in Antwerp.</p> <p><u>Cost:</u></p> <p>Free</p> <p><u>Additional information:</u></p> <p>If you have concerns about human rights issues in any particular country, or wish to report instances of human rights abuse, you should contact the Amnesty International Secretariat</p> <p><u>Languages:</u></p> <p>French and Belgian</p>	<p><u>Website:</u></p> <p>http://www.aivl.be/</p> <p>E: amnesty@aivl.be</p> <p>T: 0032 3 271 1616</p> <p>F: +32 3 235 78 12</p> <p>Kerkstraat 156 Antwerpen 2060 Belgium Rue Berckmans, 9 1060 Bruxelles Belgium</p>

ORGANISATION	MANDATE	CONTACT DETAILS
PRISONERS' WELFARE		
Service Laique d'aide aux Justiciables & aux victims B 11 ASBL (non religious social and legal aid)	<p><u>Mandate:</u></p> <p>A non-profit organisation that provides help and psycho-legal follow-up for inmates, defendants not incarcerated, released inmates, families and children.</p> <p><u>Cost:</u></p> <p>Free</p> <p><u>Additional information:</u></p> <p><u>Languages:</u></p> <p>Website in French but English translation available.</p>	<p>E:info@aideauxdetenus.be</p> <p><u>Website:</u></p> <p>www.aideauxdetenus.be</p> <p>T: 0032 2 537 54 93</p> <p>F: 0032 2 343 78 15</p> <p>148 Avenue Ducpetiaux Belgium</p> <p><u>Opening hours:</u></p> <p>8:30 to 17:30 Monday to Friday</p>
BRITISH PRISONERS		
Prisoners Abroad	<p><u>Mandate:</u></p> <p>Prisoners Abroad is a small UK-based charity dedicated to supporting British citizens imprisoned overseas. They also provide assistance to those affected by imprisonment, and help ex-prisoners start a new life free of crime after their release.</p> <p><u>Criteria to receive assistance:</u></p> <p>The person in prison must be a British Citizen – that is they hold a full British passport – and they must not hold a passport for the country in which they are detained.</p>	<p><u>Website:</u></p> <p>www.prisonersabroad.org.uk/</p> <p>E:info@prisonersabroad.org.uk</p> <p>T: 020 7561 6820</p> <p>Helpline: 0808 172 0098 (this is free from all UK landlines)</p> <p>F: 020 7561 6821</p>

ORGANISATION	MANDATE	CONTACT DETAILS
	<p><u>Cost:</u></p> <p>Free</p> <p><u>Additional information:</u></p> <p>For prisoners, PA can make grant payments for food and other essentials, depending on where they are held and what other support they receive. PA can send magazines and newspapers, information about prison and their rights, and PA may be able to help if they need medical treatment in prison.</p> <p><u>Languages:</u></p> <p>English</p>	<p>Prisoners Abroad 89-93 Fonthill Road Finsbury Park London N4 3JH</p> <p><u>Opening hours:</u></p> <p>10am-4pm, Monday to Friday</p>

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If you think that an important question is not covered in this fact sheet, please let us know.

FAIR TRIALS INTERNATIONAL

**Working for a world where every person's right to a
fair trial is respected, whatever their nationality,
wherever they are accused**

THANK YOU

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