



U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* STATE  
Resource Guide  
for Families of  
Wrongful Detainees





# **U.S. Department of State**

## **Resource Guide for Families of Wrongful Detainees**



**Updated: July 26, 2021**

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## Introduction

You are in an unexpected and extraordinarily stressful situation. You are trying to understand the circumstances of your loved one's wrongful detention, identify people and institutions who can help, and understand possible actions you and your advocates can take to resolve this crisis. You want to have confidence you and your government are doing everything possible to secure your loved one's release and safe return home.

To guide your actions as you work with the U.S. government to secure the release of your loved one, it may be helpful for you to understand what options are available. It is important you ask all the questions you need to ask and get clear and timely answers whenever possible.

The U.S. government is your partner in the effort to reunite you with your loved one. U.S. officials responding to your loved one's wrongful detention will be as open and straightforward about the situation as possible. This resource guide is a key part of that communication. This guide is a starting point both to help you understand what is involved in responding to your loved one's wrongful detention and to prepare you for some of the challenges that may lie ahead.

Because each wrongful detention is different and each family has unique needs and individual concerns that require a tailored approach, this guide provides information for a broad range of individuals and families. The information in this guide is especially relevant for long-term detention situations, with a focus on the importance of considering and implementing different approaches at different points in time. This guide also contains information that may be useful in helping you and your family cope with some of the aspects of the ordeal.

We designed this guide to make it easy for you to organize important information and to add new information along the way. There are pages at the end for you to make notes and record contact information for the U.S. government employees who will be your primary points of contact.

In writing this guide, we have consulted with families who have walked this path before you and sought input from third party intermediaries and organizations that work with wrongful detainees and their families. Although the guide is not intended to address every possible situation, we hope the incorporation of a wide range of observations and insights will make it a valuable resource as your family navigates this process.

## Your U.S. Government Team

The goal of the U.S. government is to obtain the release and safe return of your wrongfully detained loved one. Multiple agencies with different but complementary missions, powers, and capabilities will work in a coordinated effort to achieve this result. The U.S. government is also committed to ensuring families receive timely and ongoing communication, support, and access to available assistance and resources.

### **The Department of State**

The U.S. Department of State is the federal cabinet agency responsible for U.S. foreign policy. Among the Department of State's highest priorities is the protection of U.S. citizens overseas. The Department of State is headquartered in Washington, DC, but also administers and staffs U.S. embassies and consulates in almost every country in the world. When a U.S. person is wrongfully detained, Department of State officers in Washington work closely with their co-workers at U.S. embassies and consulates overseas and with partners from other U.S. agencies to both care for and seek the release of your loved one.

### Department of State Offices

#### **The Family Engagement Team (SPEHA + Consular Affairs)**

When a U.S. national is wrongfully detained, the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs (SPEHA) has responsibility for the case, working closely with the Bureau of Consular Affairs' Hostage Affairs Unit (HAU) to make up your Family Engagement Team. The specific members of your Family Engagement Team will be:

- Your SPEHA officer (who manages diplomatic engagement; that is, conversations with the country holding your loved one and sometimes other countries or organizations to secure their release).
- Your HAU officer (who works with consular officers at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate overseas to make sure your loved one's current needs while in detention are met and that their rights under the Vienna Convention, described below, are upheld).
- The SPEHA Family Engagement Coordinator (who manages communication among the various U.S. government team members described above and family members to keep everyone on the same page).

Your SPEHA officer and HAU officer are your primary points of contact and should be the first people you reach out to if you have any questions or updates to share. This team can help arrange any and all contact between your family and other representatives from the Department of State or other U.S. government offices.

## **Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs (SPEHA)**

The Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs is a dedicated senior diplomat with the rank of Ambassador who is appointed by the President and reports to the Secretary of State. The Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs (collectively referred to as SPEHA) coordinates all diplomatic engagements for detentions the U.S. government regards as wrongful.

SPEHA also coordinates all diplomatic engagements in support of hostage recovery efforts in collaboration with the Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell (HRFC). The HRFC will remain aware of wrongful detentions and may offer expertise, as appropriate.

Your SPEHA team includes SPEHA leadership, a SPEHA action officer, and SPEHA's Family Engagement Coordinator (FEC). The SPEHA team works closely with the consular officers in the HAU, officials from the relevant U.S. embassy or consulate in the country where your loved one is wrongfully detained, and the officers in the regional bureau that specialize in that country as well as the official who handles regional issues at the National Security Council (NSC).

## **U.S. Embassies and Consulates**

The United States has a diplomatic presence represented by the ambassador and diplomatic personnel working at U.S. embassies and consulates in most countries around the world. Embassies and consulates are typically staffed by a range of employees from different parts of the Department of State and wider U.S. government. The ambassador is the highest-ranking U.S. official in the foreign country and is a personal representative of the President of the United States. The ambassador, as the chief of mission, leads coordination with the host country on all issues. Other individuals at the embassy or consulate you may work with include consular staff, the regional security office, the public affairs office, and the political/economic officer. Your SPEHA and HAU team also communicate with contacts at the embassy or consulate in order to answer your questions.

## **Bureau of Consular Affairs, Hostage Affairs Unit (HAU)**

The Bureau of Consular Affairs protects U.S. citizens and their interests abroad. The Hostage Affairs Unit (HAU) is a team of consular officers in Washington, DC, charged with resolving and monitoring wrongful detentions and hostage takings abroad. The team is comprised of officers with a wide breadth of regional knowledge and consular experience. The HAU will be your direct contact with consular officials at a U.S. embassy or consulate overseas and can provide guidance on a variety of consular related issues. Consular officials overseas will seek access to your loved one, visit them in prison, arrange for food and dietary assistance as needed, help you send money and personal items as permitted, and provide passport documentation and repatriation assistance when they are released. The Bureau of Consular Affairs generally does not have authority to provide assistance to non-U.S. citizens.

## **Regional Bureaus and Desk Officers (“The Desk”)**

Regional bureaus in the Department of State manage regional and bilateral policy issues for their designated country or area. Regional bureaus employ desk officers who work in Washington, DC. Much like the HAU officer serves as your conduit to the embassy or consulate in the country where your loved one is detained, the desk officer can explain the political or economic context in that country and provide political insights on the potential impact of actions that you and your U.S. government team are considering. We rely on the desk officer for important geopolitical updates, regional briefings or information that pertains to the political climate of the country where your loved one is detained.

## **U.S. Government Entities Outside the Department of State**

Each wrongful detention is different and can involve any number of governmental and non-governmental entities. This guide is meant to serve as a starting point to help you understand who some of the common players are, and how they might be involved. Please speak with your Family Engagement Team about any questions you might have regarding entities involved, or seeking to become involved, in your loved one’s wrongful detention.

## **Congressional Representatives**

Members of Congress who represent you in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate may also be great allies in the efforts to secure your loved one’s release. Congressional members may pass laws and resolutions that work to advance your loved one’s release, and they may also use their influence and resources to help in other ways. You can find more information in the “Working with Congress” chapter, and you can also contact your Family Engagement Team to discuss ways to engage your Congressional representatives.

## **Department of the Treasury**

Treasury’s lead sanctions agency is the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), and they may be involved in the discussions on your specific loved one. Your Family Engagement Team might also be able to put you in contact with Internal Revenue Service colleagues who will understand the specific concerns of a family whose loved one is detained wrongfully overseas. If you have any questions, please contact your Family Engagement Team.

## **Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell (HRFC)**

The Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell is the U.S. government’s interagency team that coordinates efforts dedicated to recovering U.S. nationals held hostage abroad. Staffed by hostage recovery professionals from the Department of Defense, Department of State, Department of Justice, the Department of the Treasury, the FBI, and the intelligence community, the fusion cell aims to improve how the government develops hostage recovery plans, tracks developments in specific

cases, shares information with families, and provides information to Congress and the media. Although individuals held by a foreign government are not generally regarded as hostages, the Department of State can consult with the HRFC on certain matters through SPEHA and the HAU, who can coordinate with the HRFC.

# U.S. Government Response to Wrongful Detention

## First Steps

### **Confirming the Detention and Access to Your Loved One**

The first U.S. government official to reach out to your loved one overseas will likely be a consular official from the U.S. embassy or consulate representing the consular district where your loved one was arrested. Consular staff have the primary responsibility for the protection of U.S. nationals abroad.

The immediate consular priority overseas is to ensure that detained U.S. nationals have access to a consular official and are treated in accordance with the law, including human rights law. If possible, consular staff will also ask your loved one to sign a Privacy Act Waiver (PAW), which provides his/her preferences on how the U.S. government can share information with friends, family, Congress, the media, and others. A signed PAW can allow U.S. government officials to share information about your loved one but is not necessarily required in all circumstances.

Once a consular officer has confirmed the detention and location of your loved one, consular staff will make every effort possible to conduct in-person consular visits. Where in-person visits are not possible, they will seek to check in via telephone or video conference. Officials from the embassy/consulate, when conditions permit, may also attend any public hearings and help provide information to the detainee regarding legal resources in country. For more information about what consular officers can and cannot do for detained U.S. nationals overseas, please visit. <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/emergencies/arrest-detention.html>.

### **Wrongful Detention Determination**

If the circumstances of your loved one's detention suggest that he or she was arrested on discriminatory or arbitrary grounds, the Department may determine that the detention is "wrongful." This discretionary determination is an assessment of the totality of the circumstances. Though every assessment will be different, the Department will consider the relevant criteria outlined in the Robert Levinson Hostage Recovery and Hostage-Taking Accountability Act when making a determination.

Family members can be key sources of information for these determinations, as they may have details about purpose of travel, itinerary, background, or other issues that will help these officials make this determination. If you have any questions about how this determination is made, please contact your Family Engagement Team.

When the Secretary determines an individual has been wrongfully detained, various offices throughout the Department of State and other U.S. government agencies will work

collaboratively with colleagues inside and outside the government to develop a strategy to secure their release.

Part of the strategy will include whether or not to message the wrongful detention determination either publicly or privately in diplomatic engagements, so it is always a good idea to discuss your social media, public statement plans and media engagement with the Family Engagement Team.

### **Initial Call with SPEHA and HAU**

As soon as the detention is determined to be wrongful, SPEHA and the HAU will arrange a conference call with your family. During this call, we may provide any known information about the situation, and try to answer any of your immediate questions. We may ask for details including the status of your loved one's health, travel plans, relationships, and other potentially useful information.

### **Informational Family Briefing**

Shortly after your initial call, SPEHA will arrange a follow up briefing either in-person or via conference call with the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs to provide more information to you. The informational family briefing will cover:

- What is currently known about the situation, if permitted by the Privacy Act
- Background information on the country where your loved one is wrongfully detained
- The whole of government response, including the SPEHA office, the HAU, and regional desk offices, as well as the roles and responsibilities of any other key federal agencies
- An overview of wrongful detentions, resources and options for resolution and return, and U.S. policy
- How we in the U.S. government plan to collaborate with your family and other advocates to safely secure the release of your loved one
- Support services and resources available to your family
- Your preferences for how you want us in the U.S. government to communicate with you

You may have feelings of shock, anxiety, dread, and helplessness when you discuss that your loved one is wrongfully detained abroad. You may feel overwhelmed by the many things to do, people to interact with, and information to absorb. This is a normal reaction to an abnormal situation. If you do not understand, or if you forget the information people are providing you, ask for clarification. Continue asking questions until you have answers that make sense to you.

## Continuing U.S. Government Actions

The U.S. government is committed to maintaining contact with you through continued informational briefings, either by conference call or in-person, until the wrongful detention ends. You may also decide that you prefer limited or no contact. Every wrongful detention is different, and there is no one pre-determined way to secure the safe release of a person who has been wrongfully detained overseas. With this in mind, you and your U.S. government team will review and consider a range of options over the course of the detention. While we cannot know beforehand what series of events will lead to your loved one's release, please know that the U.S. government will work tirelessly towards the goal of reuniting you with your family member.

### **Actions the U.S. Government May Possibly Take to Support Your Loved One**

Possible actions that the U.S. government may take throughout the detention include, but are not limited to:

- *Pursuing and seeking to maintain consular access* – While other efforts are ongoing to secure the release, consular staff at the nearest embassy or consulate will continue to monitor your loved one's conditions in detention through regular visits when possible (either in-person or virtually). This can be difficult where the detention is in a hostile state or location where the United States has a limited presence. If allowed by the authorities, consular staff can deliver money through an Overseas Citizens Services Trust. Consular officials will also ensure to the best of their ability that your loved one has regular access to their legal counsel, communication with the outside (including family members in the United States, if possible), contact with clergy, and all needed medical attention.
- *Engaging the host nation government* – The Department of State may continue to raise the unacceptable nature of your loved one's wrongful detention, as appropriate, with that country's government. Department of State officials can also protest inhumane treatment and press for appropriate care while in detention.
- *Exerting media pressure* – When it is not detrimental to negotiations to secure your loved one's release, your U.S. government team may use the resource of its public affairs professionals to keep up the media pressure to release your loved one. You and your U.S. government team can work in tandem on this media strategy. See the Working with the Media chapter for more information.
- *Applying international pressure* – We will apply pressure in order to secure the release of those wrongfully detained. This can include working with international organizations and other tools of diplomacy to increase support for the release of your loved one.
- *Building diplomatic coalitions* – Other countries may have their own unique diplomacy tools at their disposal that we can use to help secure your loved one's release. The Department of State will continue to work with other countries however necessary in order to secure the release of your loved one. This may include outreach to, and

collaboration with, foreign governments that:

- Share U.S. views on the practice of wrongful detentions
  - Have volunteered to serve as an intermediary between the United States and the country wrongfully detaining your loved one
  - Serve as a protecting power or otherwise represent U.S. interests in countries where the United States does not have an operating Embassy
  - Are involved due to the detainee possessing citizenship of another country in addition to U.S. nationality
  - Face similar issues with their own nationals in the country where your loved one is wrongfully detained
- *Monitoring intelligence* – Intelligence is information gathered inside or outside the United States that involves threats to our nation and its people, or any other matter bearing on U.S. national security. Intelligence can provide insights not available elsewhere that warn of potential threats or opportunities. Understanding these conditions can help inform our options for securing the release of your loved one. Your U.S. government team likely will not be able to share all intelligence with you, but they will be as open and straightforward with you as possible and appropriate.
  - *Leading high-level meetings* – The Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, as a direct representative of the President of the United States, has the ability to hold high-level meetings both domestically and overseas. The SPEHA can use the meetings to raise the profile of your loved one and, where possible, negotiate a release. These meetings highlight the importance of the release of wrongful detainees as a policy priority, and the U.S. government interest in seeing that happen.
  - *Sharing information* – The U.S. government and your family are a team, and the better the information sharing, the more effective the team. We encourage as much openness and information-sharing as fits your comfort level, while also recognizing that we ourselves may not be able to share everything with you. If you are in direct contact with your loved one while they are in detention, your updates will be extremely helpful to the efforts of the broader team working to secure your loved one's release.

We, as your U.S. government team, will likely be working on several lines of effort at the same time, and we will change course as conditions change if that increases the likelihood of securing your loved one's release. Throughout the detention we will be in frequent contact, and we encourage you to ask any and all questions that you have.

### **Actions the U.S. Government May Not Be Able to Take**

Typically, when a U.S. national is detained overseas, Department of State staff have specific boundaries within which they must work. We cannot represent a detainee in court overseas, for instance, but we can provide a list of attorneys in that country who may be able to assist. Department staff usually cannot serve as official interpreters or translators, but your U.S. government team can work with you to help understand options for getting official translations

of foreign court documents, if needed. Another area where the Department is limited is the ability to pay legal or medical fees for those detained. Please note, however, that your U.S. government team recognizes the unique nature of these wrongful detentions, and even if we cannot find ways to defray the costs to your family, we are committed to helping explore all possible financial resources. Please see the “Legal and Financial Considerations” chapter and the “Additional Resources” chapter for more information.

### **Your Partnership Is Key**

While we have expertise in the country where your loved one is detained, wrongful detentions, and other issues, you are the expert on your loved one. The efforts to secure your loved one’s release are strongest when everyone is working together. When the Family Engagement Team has a preferred course of action at a particular time, we will be as open and straightforward in explaining why we are pursuing that particular course of action. Again, please ask all the questions you need and raise your concerns if you are not sure how to proceed.

Once the wrongful detention determination has been made, your Family Engagement Team will speak with you about a communication and support plan. This is a tool to help document what your communication preferences are – whether you’d like ongoing contact, just contact when there are updates to share, how you’d prefer to communicate, and any other concerns you might have. In this time of turmoil and anguish, we want to be as accommodating as possible to you. Hopefully this tool can help make our communication effective and respectful of your needs.

Whether you prefer to work with us or not, we will continue to work towards securing your loved one’s release. There may be days when you are able to focus on your loved one’s situation and other days where you need to focus on self-care or other issues. Regardless of how active on your loved one’s detention you are able to be on a given day, know that we are working on securing your loved one’s release.

### **Information Ebbs and Flows**

Wrongful detentions can take a long time to resolve. There may be times when there are so many updates it feels difficult to keep up with everything. There may be other times when there seems to be no progress, no information, and no movement in your loved one’s situation. You may feel like your loved one is not a priority or that you are not being told all of the information available. Please communicate your concerns to your Family Engagement Team, and they will help explain the situation as clearly as possible, even if they cannot share all of the details.

There are a number of potential factors that impact the pace of a wrongful detention. There are times when there is little or no new information to provide, and then other times when contradictory information arises that requires closer review to determine the true situation. It may be difficult to obtain timely or accurate information about events occurring in a country marked by chaos, corruption, opacity, or conflict. If the United States does not have an operating embassy or consulate in the country where your loved one is being held, information and intelligence gathering can be more difficult. You may also see rumors or misinformation from different media sources, and this can further confuse efforts to clarify our understanding of the

actual conditions on the ground. Stay in contact with your Family Engagement Team for the latest information about what efforts are under way, the information needs and challenges, as well as any questions you might have.

### **Opposition from the Host Nation Government**

The government of the country wrongfully detaining your loved one may be as committed to wrongfully detaining your loved one as the U.S. government is to securing their release. There will be ups and downs throughout your loved one's detention. U.S. government engagement with the detaining government and with your loved one will comply with multilateral and/or bilateral treaties, as well as internal U.S. government policy. Despite the challenges, we remain committed to doing everything we can to bring your loved one home.

### **U.S. Government Policy in Wrongful Detentions**

While the U.S. government offices involved in wrongful detention cases have their own individual policies and procedures, there are two key documents that drive and inform the U.S. government's hostage policy.

### **Robert Levinson Hostage Recovery and Hostage-Taking Accountability Act (Levinson Act)**

The Levinson Act (P.L. 116-260, enacted December 27, 2020) codifies entities created by Executive Order 13698 and Presidential Policy Directive 30 (see below), namely the HFRC, SPEHA, and the Hostage Response Group to direct policy, and expands these entities' areas of focus to include wrongful detentions. It also mandates annual reporting to Congress on wrongful detentions, the creation of a resource guidance for families, and authorizes discretionary sanctions against those responsible for or complicit in wrongful detention.

### **Executive Order (EO) 13698 and Presidential Policy Directive 30 (PPD-30)**

EO 13698 and PPD-30 focus primarily on hostage-taking. Issued in June 2015, EO 13698 and PPD-30 reaffirm the U.S. government's commitment to the safe and rapid recovery of U.S. nationals held hostages overseas and directs executive branch agencies to coordinate their efforts to leverage "all instruments of national power" to safely recover U.S. nationals held hostage. PPD-30 expands on the long-standing "no concessions" policy (which seeks to deny the benefit of concessions to hostage-takers) by clarifying that this policy does not prevent the government from communicating, directly or indirectly, with hostage-takers. PPD-30 maintains that hostage-taking is a violation of federal law and that the U.S. government will prosecute and punish hostage-takers overseas. Lastly, PPD-30 states the U.S. government's aim to coordinate and work closely with the families of hostages, to share as much information with families as possible, and to provide families with assistance and support services through the ordeal.

## Coping as an Individual and as a Family

Taking care of yourself will put you in the best position to advocate for your loved one and receive them upon their release. It is important to maintain as much normalcy and routine as possible, and to pay attention to your physical and emotional needs while your loved one is detained. Surround yourself with people who are good for you and avoid those who are not. Find someone you trust to listen when you need to talk things over.

If you have the opportunity to speak with or send a message to your loved one, focus on reassuring him or her of your love and support, and that he or she does not need to worry about what is going on at home.

### Common Reactions

It is normal to experience a wide range of powerful feelings that may feel abnormal to you. Feelings can include sadness, anxiety, depression, anger, frustration, grief, guilt, loneliness, and isolation. These feelings can also affect your sleep patterns and overall health. Emotions may rapidly cycle from one to another, and you can experience peaks or drops when you receive news about your loved one.

Individual family members have their own unique ways of coping with stress and loss. Family members may experience different emotions at different times. There will be times when family members may have disagreements and trouble understanding each other's emotional reactions. Some individuals find relief in talking about their feelings and fears, but others may not. Some family members throw themselves into activities to help get the detainee released, while others may need to step away from the situation in order to stay resilient. Some individuals remain very optimistic while others feel the need to prepare for the worst. It is important to try to allow each family member to have their own individual emotional reactions. Detainees and their families tend to adapt to their situations and do whatever is necessary to survive during the detention period.

With the absence of your loved one from the family, other family members may take on roles and responsibilities previously filled by him or her. Some family members may feel guilty for living as normal a life as possible while a loved one is gone. Some family members may withdraw from the family and the situation.

The experience of having a loved one wrongfully detained places enormous stress on both the family as a whole and on its individual members. This guide is not intended to be a substitute for the role of professionals with expertise in counseling victims and their families.

### Drawing on Your Strengths

Coping includes thinking about other difficult and stressful times in your life and recalling how you were able to manage. Think about who and what may have been helpful and whether it is

appropriate or possible to use those same resources. Most people find a combination of internal and external resources to be helpful. Internal resources may be spiritual faith, optimism, and good health. External resources may include a support system of trusted friends or family, consultation with a therapist, and support from a member of the local social and religious communities.

## Maintaining a Routine

It is important to try to maintain some sense of a normal routine. You may or may not know the length of a wrongful detention at the beginning. It is also unpredictable as it can depend on the legal and judicial processes of the government that is detaining your loved one, as well as that government's motivation for detaining them. It is important to try to pace yourself and prepare for a sustained period. Try to spend time each day doing something you enjoy. Child family members will need predictability and routine in order to cope.

Families of wrongful detainees sometimes maintain a record of things that occurred while their loved one was detained for him or her to read when they come home. As part of your routine, you may wish to consider documenting your progress toward achieving your loved one's release for your loved one to read later. It can help them to understand what happened while they were away, and it can also help them realize the extent of their family's efforts to secure their release. A written document allows your loved one to read it at their own pace.

## Taking Care of Your Health

It is very important to maintain the daily routines and activities that support your health. Stress can take a serious toll on physical and emotional health. Rest when you can. Even a brief walk can help cope with stress. Make sure you see your doctor and let him or her know that you are experiencing unusual levels of stress. If you find the stress is interfering with your ability to function at levels you are accustomed to, it may be time to talk to a doctor or mental health professional about any stress, anxiety, or depression. Medical professionals must maintain the confidentiality of patient records and communications. Get in touch with your doctor if you experience loss of appetite, trouble sleeping, or trouble with daily functioning.

## Sharing Information with Family and Friends

Start gathering your trusted support system around you. This may include extended family, trusted friends, clergy, and others who are able to keep information in confidence and follow your lead. Consider having someone help you notify the people who most need to know. You may also need to notify your loved one's employer, your employer, the employers of your family members who may need time off or support, and your children's schools. If you do not choose to tell them about the detention, you may still need or want to let them know you have a family emergency.

Families need the support and comfort of people they are close to and trust, but you will need to carefully consider how broadly you want to share information about the wrongful detention. The safety of your loved one is paramount. Many types of information about the detainee, your family, or actions being taken to locate and secure the release of your loved one can become available to those detaining your loved one; it could be used to their advantage against your family or loved one.

- Consider your privacy and the status of your loved one. Bear in mind, as more people know information and details of the wrongful detention, the chance increases that information could be made public and potentially impact the safety of your loved one.
- Let friends and family know they should not pass information to anyone else, including the media, or post information online and through social media without your permission.
- Keep a list of offers of help from people, such as childcare, driving, meals, grocery shopping, pet care, and other practical needs. It may be helpful to ask someone else to coordinate the requests so you are not overwhelmed.

## Coping in the Workplace

The grief and severe stress and that come with a profound crisis involving a loved one may affect productivity in the workplace. It may be harder to focus on work. You may find yourself overcome by emotion resulting from an innocent comment or question and have to take breaks to collect yourself. You may also need to take time off from work to deal with matters directly related to the wrongful detention. For those who work in a supportive environment, the workday routine can be beneficial. For those who work in a less than supportive environment, the additional stress associated with the job can complicate an already stressful situation. People may be more understanding of your needs if they know there is a reason behind them, but it is not always possible to share information about your situation if the detention is not widely known. You may be able to have a confidential discussion about your situation with your immediate supervisor. Their support can be a critical means of support in your workplace. If you need to request any special accommodations from your employer to help you manage your loved one's situation, it may be helpful to consider your employer's perspective as you develop proposed solutions.

## Managing Special Days

Holidays and anniversaries may be challenging. Families often celebrate holidays in certain ways. Some holidays may be important to your missing loved one, and his or her absence can make these days particularly painful. It is important to recognize the additional emotion of the day. Holidays will feel different, and that is normal. Celebrating a holiday without your loved one does not mean you have forgotten him or her, or that you are betraying them by enjoying yourself.

It is an individual choice whether to celebrate the holiday or not. It is helpful to think ahead as holidays or anniversaries approach. Decide how you want to spend the day and also allow yourself the opportunity to change your mind as the day approaches. Explain to friends and family what you need from them to help you get through the holiday. Give yourself an opportunity to take a step back if you need one.

## Dealing with Insensitive People

Many people will want to support and help you, but not everyone will be sensitive to your situation. The downside of public and social media attention to the wrongful detention is many people express views that are distasteful and even cruel. Some people may not be sympathetic and may even blame your loved one or your family for your situation. These comments can be hurtful for families, and especially for children. It may be possible to gently educate friends and coworkers who say insensitive things. If not, find other people to lean on. It is important, however, not to isolate yourself from social contact, as it can lead to depression and other complications.

You may find that most people in your life do not know how to react to your situation because it is so unusual. This may add to your feelings of isolation. It may help to realize they still care for you, but don't know how to respond or help you.

## Considerations for Children

It is important to be aware of the impact of a wrongful detention on children, including nieces, nephews, and grandchildren. What and how much you tell a child should depend on age and emotional maturity. The situation may bring about changes in routine if they are accustomed to regular contact with your loved one. Children will likely be aware when investigative and family support team members visit you, or when the media comes to your home.

It is important to know what your child understands about what is happening. Children are aware of emotional stress affecting the adults in the home and may imagine a completely different scenario in their mind. It is also important if your loved one's wrongful detention has been made public to talk to your child as they may hear about it from other children, teachers, and other parents. It will be necessary to discuss privacy and discretion with your children if there are other sensitivities about the situation.

## Helping Your Child Deal with Emotions

Children may have the same emotional reactions as adults to include being scared, confused, worried, angry, helpless, and sad. Children will also experience grief over the absence of a loved one. Even young children will experience reactions to the changes brought about by the absence of a close family member. They may not be able to verbalize their feelings but may react with sadness, fretfulness, and behavioral changes.

It is important to give children an opportunity to discuss their feelings and to understand there are no right or wrong feelings. It may be helpful to give children an outlet to express their emotions. Depending on the child's age this could involve drawing, keeping a journal, or talking to you or another trusted adult. Play therapy with a mental health professional may also be helpful for young children.

Your child may try to protect you from their emotions, not wanting to add to your burden. Your child may direct his or her anger regarding the wrongful detention at you. They may be frustrated if they feel they are forgotten or you are not available. The situation brings challenges that require you to take care of yourself and also be there for your child.

Children benefit from routine and stability, especially when the worlds of the adults in their lives have been turned upside down. Providing as much routine and stability as possible may require assistance from friends and family or engagement with your U.S. government team.

### **Working with Your Child's School or Daycare**

Young children may react to stress in the home and the absence of your loved one. If you trust your day care providers and are comfortable sharing information with them, it may help to make them aware of the situation so they can monitor your child's emotional state and any unusual behavior. Similarly, for elementary age children, it may be helpful to inform your child's teachers and guidance counselors of the situation. This could give your child a support system to rely on during the school day. It may also help the teacher understand any behavioral changes your child may have during the length of your loved one's detention. Your child may feel like other children are talking about them or looking at them in a different way. Other children may be inquisitive and ask questions of your child. The school staff may help your child determine the best way to manage what goes on during the school day.

Older children and teenagers will also experience the impact of the situation. It is important to consider including your teenager in the decision to inform anyone at their school or employer. Help your teen understand the intent is to make sure they have the support they need and are not isolated by their situation. They can ask for permission for a break if they need one during the day.

## Legal and Financial Considerations

The wrongful detention of a loved one can have a significant impact on the legal and financial situation of a family, especially if the detainee provides the primary source of income or is an adult child who has their own financial obligations. Families of unmarried detainees may be concerned about protecting the assets and covering the financial liabilities of the detainee. There are a variety of issues to consider, but there are also sources of information and support to help you cope.

### General Considerations

- The U.S. government does not charge for its services to secure the release of your loved one from a wrongful detention.
- You may want to designate one member of your family to act as a primary point of contact for interactions with the government and others working on the release of your loved one. This can be any family member, but it is commonly the detainee's next of kin.
- You may want to keep a phone log to make a record of calls.
- Determine whether your loved one left instructions for handling his or her finances and other important matters while away or in the event that he or she is not able to manage their affairs for a length of time. More information can be found later in this chapter.
- Pace yourself. It is unknown how long your loved one could be detained.

### Protecting Virtual Identity

It is commonplace today to use the internet and cloud storage as well as cell phones and other devices to facilitate nearly every aspect of life. This includes communicating through social media sites; taking, storing, and sharing pictures; using search engines; shopping; and managing finances. As a result, tremendous amounts of information are stored online to include on social media sites and on our phones and other devices. Access to this data is sought for both good and nefarious reasons. Actors seeking this information can include those wrongfully detaining your loved one, identity thieves, and even well-intentioned members of the media.

You may need to consider the following:

- What types of devices (phones, laptops, tablets, hard drives, thumb drives, global positioning system [GPS] devices, etc.) does your loved one have?
- What are their email addresses, social media sites or handles, and digital storage sites?
- Who are their internet and cell phone providers?
- Do they have any on-line banking or credit card accounts?

Those wrongfully detaining your loved one may try to exploit devices and the information stored on them. Social media profiles may contain information that could be harmful to the detainee, such as past military service, religious affiliation, or personal commentary that could be misinterpreted or exploited by their captors.

Families of detainees want to protect their loved one's on-line identity and information. It may be difficult for families to reset privacy settings on their loved one's social media sites unless you have contact with them, they left information on their accounts and passwords, or they otherwise designated another individual to manage their devices and social media sites. Family members may want to consider closing or restricting access to their own social media sites as these sites may also contain information that could be exploited by those detaining your loved one and unscrupulous individuals who may seek to exploit your family's situation. Families have also been the victims of cyber harassment. Let your Family Engagement Team know if this happens to you.

It is natural for families to seek information on the Internet and social media for any news about the detainee and the circumstances of their arrest, trials, and imprisonment. Oftentimes this information is inaccurate, misleading, and/or distressing. It may help to limit your time on the Internet and social media and give yourself a break.

## Power of Attorney

A primary consideration will be whether or not your loved one provided a power of attorney. A power of attorney is a legal document that gives another person authority to act as their legal representative and to make binding legal and financial decisions on their behalf when they are unable to manage their own affairs due to illness or absence. There are different types of power of attorney. A limited power of attorney is temporary and is used most often when an individual is leaving the country for an extended period of time and wants to give his or her spouse or some other person authority to sign documents on their behalf while they are away. Please be aware some financial institutions or government entities (e.g., the IRS) have particular requirements for a power of attorney.

With or without a power of attorney, you may need legal advice. If you do not have access to an attorney, non-profit organizations that support families of hostages, law societies, and bar associations can advise you on where to look for low-cost or free legal assistance. If you are having trouble, please contact your Family Engagement Team, and we will try to provide you with information about additional resources.

## Conservatorship

If there are situations where you think it is necessary to have access to his or her assets and information, and your loved one did not leave a power or attorney prior to being imprisoned, you may need to consult with an attorney to discuss conservatorship. A conservator receives court-ordered and supervised ability to manage your loved one's affairs while they are unable to do so.

The conservatorship process will vary by state, and you may wish to consult a local attorney for further information.

All court proceedings are a matter of public record and could include publication of your loved one's financial assets. Publishing information about your loved one's assets could be detrimental to efforts to obtain his or her release. You may need to provide the judge with information about your loved one's inability to manage their affairs from detention. Your Family Engagement Team can provide documentation to you for that purpose.

## Employer Considerations

If your loved one was employed at the time of their detention, you need to know if your loved one will continue to get paid. If yes, for how long? If you are the spouse and entitled to health insurance, does that continue, and for how long?

The answers to these questions will help you be aware and manage your finances throughout the event, so you may need to consider reaching out to your loved one's employer. If you are employed, you may need time away from work to deal with emotional stress or to work with your U.S. government team regarding your loved one's safe return home. If you decide that you are comfortable sharing information with your employer, your Family Engagement Team can provide documentation noting that you are assisting with U.S. government efforts. We are flexible and we will try to accommodate your work schedule to the greatest extent possible.

## Creditor Considerations

If information on your loved one's bank accounts, creditors, and sources of income is available, it is important to gather it together so you can act to protect your loved one's assets and creditworthiness. Some creditors are willing to freeze the accounts, therefore preventing interest fees, late fees, and the account holder being sent to the collection process. If these companies require proof, your Family Engagement Team can provide documentation of your loved one's wrongful detention.

## Financial Planning

Whether you are concerned about protecting your loved one's finances or about managing your own during this crisis, you may find it helpful to seek advice from a certified financial planner or accountant in your area. Some individuals and firms are willing to provide services on a *pro bono* or adjustable fee basis. Some non-governmental organizations can also connect you to these services. Most states have associations of certified financial planners and can provide referrals to individuals or offices in your area. If you are unsuccessful locating someone our Family Engagement Team may be able to assist you in identifying other potential resources.

## Tax Issues

Your Family Engagement Team can help you identify some ways to engage with the IRS during this time. They may refer you to others who can assist and provide documentation to help the IRS and other financial entities understand your loved one's unique situation.

## Avoidance of Fraud and Exploitation

Wrongful detainees and their families may be at higher risk for identity theft and exploitation because of their public profile. Immediately inform your Family Engagement Team if you suspect that someone is trying to steal or fraudulently use you or your loved one's information. It may also be helpful to sign up with a company that specializes in monitoring personal and financial information, as they will alert you if they find something suspicious.

The following resources may be helpful to you:

- Federal Trade Commission Identity Theft Hotline: 1-877-438-4338 or [www.consumer.gov/idtheft](http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft)
- Social Security Administration Fraud Hotline (to report theft or fraudulent use of your Social Security Number): 1-800-269-0271, website: [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)
- U.S. Postal Inspection Service (for identity theft that involves the US mail): 1-800-275-8777
- National Credit Reporting – Reporting credit card theft or fraudulent misuse:
  - Equifax 1-800-525-6285 [www.equifax.com](http://www.equifax.com),
  - Experian 1-888-397-3742 [www.experian.com](http://www.experian.com),
  - Trans Union 1-800-680-7289 [www.transunion.com](http://www.transunion.com)
- National Crime Victim Bar Association (For information regarding filing civil lawsuits against a perpetrator or other responsible party, and help locating attorneys specializing in victim related litigation): 1-202-467-8753 or [www.victimbar.org](http://www.victimbar.org)

## Financial Checklist

It is helpful to locate information about your loved one's financial accounts and to whom they make payments. In general, this includes banking and credit card accounts, investments, loans, insurance policies, employment documents, and tax records. It is important to include any accounts originating in foreign countries. Please see the Actions to Consider section at the end of the document for a more detailed list.

## Important Documents

What important documents and records does your loved one have? Where do they keep them? There are some documents that might seem unimportant but can be critical in a time of crisis. These include identity records, civil records, birth and marriage certificates, legal records, wills, powers of attorney, licenses, or military and employment records. Please see the "Actions to Consider" section for a more detailed list.

Financial stressors are serious concerns for families of those wrongfully detained. Please see our Resources section for more information on potential support and services to help your family.

## Working with Congress

Your congressional representatives can be great allies in the effort to secure your loved one's release. They may support your loved one through advocating with government agencies, passing laws and resolutions which may advance your loved one's case, issuing media statements, reaching out to their contacts both in the United States and overseas, and using their influence and resources. Below is more information regarding congressional engagement.

### Your Members of Congress

If you are wondering where to begin, remember that you already have a congressional team representing you in Congress. Persons living in the United States have a member or delegate in the U.S. House of Representatives, and state residents have two senators. If your loved one and family members are residents of different states and/or congressional districts, you may have an even larger team in Congress, since you can also reach out to the representatives and senators of your loved one and those representing any of your family members.

All members of Congress have local offices in their congressional districts and main offices in Washington, DC. Congressional staffers are the first line of communication and will bring your issue to the representative or senator. Several family members of wrongful detainees recommend families reach out to the main office in Washington, DC, because the staffers there may be more knowledgeable about international issues. Contact your Family Engagement Team if you need assistance identifying your representatives, getting contact information for their offices, or want to discuss ways to engage your Congressional representatives.

### U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate Committees

In addition to the state delegations listed above, the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate have standing committees with permanent, or professional, staff (separate from the staff of the members of the committee). The following committees have historically engaged in wrongful detention issues, and their members and staff can be helpful in the overall effort to secure the release of your loved one.

**House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC)** - The HFAC is responsible for oversight and legislation related to a number of different foreign policy issues, including foreign assistance, promotion of democracy, and international law enforcement issues.

**Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC)** - In addition to holding jurisdiction over all diplomatic nominations, the SFRC considers, debates, and passes legislation related to foreign policy and international treaties.

The U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate have a range of other committees that may shape policy and legislation on issues impacting your loved one. Do not hesitate to contact your

Family Engagement Team if you have any questions about pending legislation or working with members of Congress. See more information in the “Actions to Consider” appendix.

## Actions Your Members of Congress Can Take

There are a number of actions your members of Congress may take to advance efforts to secure your loved one’s release. Members of Congress can request briefings from the Department of State and other government agencies and offices to ensure the executive and legislative branches of government are working towards the same objectives to secure your loved one’s release. Members of Congress can also host phone calls or meetings with you to discuss updates and options. Members of Congress may sponsor and/or support legislation or resolutions that can advance efforts to free your loved one or draw attention to their cause. Legislation changes laws and U.S. government procedures, whereas resolutions are public statements of Congress’ public approval or disapproval over something outside of their jurisdiction (such as the detention of a U.S. national overseas).

Members of Congress may use their influence to meet with and/or write letters to government officials on behalf of your loved one, which can include a foreign ambassador to the United States, the U.S. ambassador to the country of detention, the U.S. Secretary of State, the U.S. National Security Advisor, and the U.S. President.

## SPEHA and HAU Communication with Congress

If your loved one has signed a Privacy Act waiver indicating their permission to inform or seek assistance from Congress, SPEHA and the HAU are available to brief your members of Congress and/or congressional committees about your loved one. Reach out to your members of Congress and ask they request a briefing with your Family Engagement Team, which can ensure both branches of government are working with the same set of facts and updates. If it is not possible to have your loved one sign a PAW while in detention, speak with your Family Engagement Team about information-sharing options.

You may want to consider choosing a family member or trusted friend to act as the point of contact for congressional communications. You may also consider working with someone who has experience with advocating with members of Congress. There is additional information in the Assistance Resources chapter, and you may reach out to your Family Engagement Team if you have further questions.

## Helpful Websites

- [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) - search for your U.S. Representative and find other information
- [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) - search for your U.S. senators and find other information
- [Foreign.senate.gov](http://Foreign.senate.gov) - SFRC website
- [Foreignaffairs.house.gov](http://Foreignaffairs.house.gov) - HFAC website

## Working with the Media

“The media” includes journalists representing local, national, and foreign print and broadcast outlets. As businesses, media outlets typically attract consumers (and income) by being the first to “break” a story, and reporting on wrongful detentions can be more compelling if the journalist is able to get a quote from a detainee’s family member or otherwise show a personal connection. Ultimately, the decision to communicate directly with the press rests with you and your family. Media coverage can help spread information about your loved one. The outlet’s story may match the story you and your family wish to share, but if it does not, it can complicate your efforts to clearly communicate your desired message.

### Media Support

Your U.S. government team will help in any way we can. Your Family Engagement Team can offer some media support and guidance upon request and connect you to the SPEHA Public Affairs Officer (PAO). The PAO can:

- Discuss whether U.S. government officials should speak publicly about your loved one
- Provide guidance about whether a public campaign is likely to bolster or hinder other diplomatic, military, or investigative efforts to bring your loved one home safely
- Consult on what type of public engagement will be helpful in reaching your intended audience, whether you are trying to reach a foreign government, domestic lawmakers, or other influencers
- Introduce you to media experts and journalists to help get your loved one’s name in the public
- Liaise with journalists on your behalf if you request assistance asking for corrections, privacy, etc.
- Refer journalists to statements you have posted or to your family spokesperson
- Work with U.S. embassies to better understand the media climate in the region where your loved one is being held
- Work with U.S. embassies to request a media search for local articles about your loved one, including in the local language(s)
- Work with the appropriate U.S. government Public Affairs team to advise on media outlets or reporters who cover the region where your loved one is being held
- Provide cultural and diplomatic context as you shape a public narrative around identifiers such as military service, government connections, political affiliation, religion, or dual citizenship

## Media Considerations

**Strategy:** Past media experiences of hostage and detainee families have shown the importance of planning engagement and using caution when dealing with the media, especially when family members are in a vulnerable state. Some families have worked with third party experts, usually on a *pro bono* basis, to develop a media strategy.

**Spokesperson:** Some families have discovered it is best to select one person to be a point of contact for all media inquiries, and to speak publicly for the family, so that public messages are well-coordinated and support your intended outcome. Some third-party intermediaries, usually on a *pro bono* basis, have helped families interact with the media.

**Ground Rules:** You never have to agree to an interview. If you do decide to engage with members of the media, clarify and agree to the ground rules up front. If the reporter agrees to an “off the record” interview, it generally means you will not be quoted, but the information you provide may be used to shape the story. “On background” generally means the journalist may quote you but will not name the source of the information. Share information with the understanding not everyone may respect the ground rules.

**Social Media:** Media outlets may be accessing images and other information on the detainee you and your family have posted publicly. Consider removing material or restricting the privacy settings on public images and statements that demonstrate your loved one’s political affiliation, citizenship(s), religion, military service, U.S. government connection, wealth, or circumstances in the detaining country.

**Veiled messages:** One consideration is whether family members should consider sending “secret signals” to their loved ones in detention via media engagements. We discourage this approach because, if detected, it could lead to additional interrogations, scrutiny, or other prejudice against your loved one.

**Fraudulent Contact:** Communication methods can be easily manipulated. Your loved one, the detaining party, or a third party with questionable intent, could contact you using an email address, phone number, or username you know. If this occurs, you may want to keep in mind that the detaining party or other unknown individuals will most likely be monitoring the conversation. If or when you respond, consider limiting your conversations or communications to messages of support and concern for your loved one. Contact your Family Engagement Team for assistance if you receive any unexpected or concerning communication.

Please see the “Actions to Consider” chapter for a list of additional actions you may take in working with the media.

## After Detention

The impact of a wrongful detention does not end with the return of your loved one. It is important to understand it may take time for your loved one to adjust once he or she is home, especially after a prolonged detention in a foreign country.

Detainees and their families tend to adapt and sustain themselves during the detention period. It can take time for both the detainee and the family members to re-acclimate to a normal routine back home. Your loved one may need time to rest and to tell his or her story in his or her own way and time. Life will gradually return to normal. You and your loved one both have been through difficult—but ultimately different—experiences during the detention. Allow ample time to reestablish connections and support one another with patience and an understanding of each side's experience.

Wrongful detention can be an isolating experience. Those detaining your loved one may have attempted to foster feelings of hopelessness in your loved one. In addition, setbacks and roadblocks in navigating a foreign—and sometimes incomprehensible—legal system may have led your loved one to believe they were abandoned by their family and their government, and that nothing was being done to secure their release. It is possible your loved one may feel remorse about putting your family through the ordeal. It is also not uncommon for people to second guess their decisions or behavior after the fact. It is important to accept and understand each person's feelings as normal reactions to an abnormal situation. There will be many emotions that you may be unprepared for but there are resources to help you and your loved ones. Therapists and family counselors can help with the process.

Issues and problems that existed within the family before the detention may resurface after the return of your loved one. Re-establishing normal relationships can take time after a lengthy absence. It is important to be patient and not rush the process. NGOs focused on your family's problem can help identify counseling resources and other services for wrongful detainees and their families.

### Return to the United States

When your loved one is released, the primary concern is their return to their former life. While each case is unique, we will coordinate with the interagency to ensure a smooth return home, and we will keep family members updated on repatriation options given individual circumstances.

## Summary of Assistance Resources

### Local Government and Non-Governmental Assistance Resources

Non-profit or private organizations or individuals may be able to provide important services to wrongful detainees, former wrongful detainees, and/or families of detainees and former detainees. As a starting point for building your networks and identifying available resources, we are providing descriptions of possible support options below. If you feel you need any of the services listed below, please speak with your Family Engagement Team and we can provide you a list of organizations or private intermediaries outside the federal government that have offered particular resources to families, usually on a *pro bono* basis, in the past.

#### Financial Advice and Support

- **Secure potential employer benefits (income, health insurance, advance pay, etc.):** Contact your loved one's employer to determine what financial support they may be willing to offer in light of the wrongful detention. This may include continued income, continued benefits (health insurance), or other benefits. If you are employed, contact your employer to see if you can get advance pay, paid time off, or other benefits during this time.
- **Manage your loved one's and your finances:** Certified financial planners, accountants, and tax professionals may be able to offer insight on how best to manage your and your loved one's finances and expenses, including taxes, over the term of the detention. Some of these professionals offer *pro bono* or reduced fee services to families of wrongful detainees or people with limited incomes. Professional societies of these organizations, and some individuals and organizations that work with families of wrongful detainees keep lists of these professionals.
- **Find state and local government financial support programs:** Many counties throughout the United States have a city/county/town Health and Human Services office (the name may vary) or some other local government entity that is responsible for administering financial support programs, such as food stamps, housing assistance, utility assistance, and other financial support. If you, or your recently returned loved one, are struggling with unexpected costs and/or income losses, you may consider contacting your local community assistance office.
- **Find non-profit community organization support programs:** Similarly, many communities across the United States have secular or religious non-profit organizations that offer assistance with housing and utility expenses, food banks, clothing banks, or miscellaneous financial needs.
- **Obtain financial support in crisis from financial institutions:** Some financial institutions have programs to support people in financial need or crisis. You may be able to contact your loved one's banks and/or credit card companies to explore options for pausing payments and/or interest, if possible, while your loved one is wrongfully

detained. You may wish to explore this option with any other organization to whom your loved one had been making payments. See our Actions to Consider section for more ideas on organizations that this may include.

- **Safeguard your loved one from identity theft:** See the resources to protect against identity theft in our Legal and Financial Considerations chapter. This can safeguard your loved one's accounts to prevent against further financial loss.
- **Raise funds to support your loved one and your family's advocacy efforts:** Online fundraising platforms can be helpful in raising money for legal fees, travel costs, supplies for your loved one during detention, or even money to help your loved one rebuild their life back home following their release. Be mindful of how best to pace your fundraising efforts over time so as not to exhaust your donors.

### **Social/Emotional Support**

- **Obtain counseling and social work support through insurance:** If you have health insurance, you may have access to your healthcare provider's network of counselors, social workers, and other mental health professionals. Ask your healthcare provider for a list of mental health professionals with experience working with trauma, anxiety, depression, and/or any other issue that is relevant to you.
- **Locate support through local government organizations:** Local government community organizations may also administer public mental health services and may be able to help you access free or reduced fee counseling services through area providers.
- **Obtain support through teaching hospitals and clinics:** University clinics in your area may offer free/reduced fee mental health services through counseling/social work students who are supervised by licensed professionals.
- **Find support through religious organizations:** Local religious organizations may offer counseling services either through religious, medical, or social organizations and congregations. Whether in a formal setting or not, clergy and members of your religious congregation may be able to offer counseling, peer counseling, community and/or emotional support.
- **Obtain support for children through schools:** One resource specific to children may be any school counselors at your children's schools.
- **Locate support through hostage or wrongful detention support groups:** While it may be difficult to find someone who can truly understand having a loved one wrongfully detained overseas, you may wish to look into support groups for families with incarcerated loved ones.
- **Obtain counseling services from employers:** As one of the benefits for employees and their families in a crisis situation, some companies offer confidential counseling services, often at no cost for a limited period of time.

### **Media Strategy and Support**

- **Find support for communicating with the media:** Public relations firms, national and international non-governmental organizations, and third-party interlocutors may be able to help you in your efforts to effectively engage the media on your loved one, often on a

*pro bono* basis. Whether someone seeks you out or you reach out to them, be sure to verify upfront whether they can help you on a *pro bono* basis. If *pro bono* services are available, you can compare and determine whether or not a paid service would be valuable to your family.

- **Develop a media strategy and press statements:** National and international non-governmental organizations, public relations firms, and third-party interlocutors with experience with these types of cases may be able to offer help ranging from working with you to create press statements, to planning short and long-term media strategies both in the United States and overseas. Some organizations who support families of wrongful detainees, or your family engagement team, may be able to provide information about groups or individuals families have worked with in the past.
- **Find legal support for media engagement:** Some attorneys, should you decide to hire one, may be able to help you evaluate legal concerns with media engagement, public appearances, or contract review if you do decide to hire someone. Talk to your lawyers about how they may be able to assist.

### **Congressional advocacy support**

- **Identify and communicate with Members of Congress:** If you are not comfortable reaching out to your member of Congress, some NGOs and third-party interlocutors have experience with advising families about interacting with Congress. They can help you with everything from identifying relevant Congress members, to explaining how to formally address them in writing and in person. Some family member of past or current wrongful detainees may also be willing to share their experiences with building their congressional networks.
- **Secure meetings with senators and representatives:** As mentioned in the chapter on “Working with Congress,” most members of Congress have both local and Washington, DC, offices. If you have trouble getting a meeting or receiving responses from your member’s office, consider reaching out to NGOs or third-party interlocutors. If your loved one has signed a Privacy Act Waiver allowing the Department of State to discuss their case with Congress, you may always request that your representatives seek a briefing from SPEHA and the HAU; this can help underscore the gravity of the detention. If it is not possible to have your loved one sign a PAW while in detention, speak with your Family Engagement Team about information-sharing options.
- **Advocate for resolutions or legislation to support your loved one:** Some families have been successful in getting Congressional resolutions passed related to their loved ones. This effort is often supported by NGOs who support hostages and wrongful detainees, or third-party intermediaries.

### **Legal Advice and Support**

- **Locate *pro bono* legal support in the United States:**
  - Individual state bar associations maintain information on *pro bono* legal resources.

- Law schools in your area may offer free/reduced fee legal services through faculty supervised clinical programs. Legal aid organizations located throughout the United States offer *pro bono* and reduced fee legal assistance to residents in their areas.
- Law firms sometimes have in-house programs for *pro bono* legal work.
- **Locate legal support overseas:**
  - All U.S. embassies and consulates overseas maintain a list of local attorneys, and most have this list available on their website. The list typically includes attorneys who speak English and/or have represented U.S. nationals previously.
  - International human rights organizations may have lists of lawyers who work on wrongful detention cases. Some of these lawyers have submitted cases to the U.N. Working Group on Arbitrary Detention ([www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org)) or the European Court of Human Rights ([www.echr.coe.int/pages/home.aspx?p=home](http://www.echr.coe.int/pages/home.aspx?p=home))

## Non-profit Hostage Support Organizations

Below is a non-exhaustive list of organizations that work on hostage and wrongful detainee issues. While you can reach out to these organizations directly, your family engagement team will be able to facilitate any communication.

### **Hostage US**

Mission statement: Hostage U.S. ensures American hostages, wrongful detainees, and their families get the support and guidance they need to survive the challenge of a kidnapping.

Website: <https://hostageus.org/>

### **James W. Foley Legacy Foundation**

Mission statement: To advocate for the freedom of all Americans held hostage abroad and promote the safety of journalists worldwide.

Website: <https://jamesfoleyfoundation.org/>

### **Richardson Center for Global Engagement**

Mission statement: The Richardson Center for Global Engagement promotes global peace and dialogue by identifying and working on areas of opportunity for engagement and citizen diplomacy with countries and communities not usually open to more formal diplomatic channels.

Website: <https://www.richardsondiplomacy.org/>

### **Carter Center**

Mission statement: Founded on a fundamental commitment to human rights and the alleviation of human suffering, the Carter Center seeks to prevent and resolve conflicts, enhance freedom and democracy, and improve health.

Website: <https://www.cartercenter.org/>

Additional U.S. Government Resources

[\*\*Bureau of Consular Affairs' Travel Advisories and country information\*\*](#) - This website allows you to search for travel information on a specific country.

## Actions to Consider

Each wrongful detention is different, and your Family Engagement Team will be with you as long as your loved one remains wrongfully detained. Below is a non-exhaustive list of actions to consider taking as you work with your partners inside and outside the U.S. government to secure your loved one's release. This list comes in part from the experiences of and feedback from families of other wrongfully detained U.S. nationals. Please review and consider which actions might be appropriate for your situation. If you have questions or need additional information, you can always reach out to your Family Engagement Team for explanations or additional resources.

### General Actions to Consider

- Take notes on the meetings and phone calls related to your loved one's detention.
  - Identify a central place (a notebook, a computer folder, etc.) to keep your notes.
  - Write down meeting dates, attendee names, titles, and phone numbers, what was discussed, and what the next steps would be moving forward.
  - Keep a running list of action items, next steps, and your remaining questions.
- Maintain a timeline of events to include important facts and key dates (e.g., date arrested, what the charges are, court dates, medical concerns, etc.). Keep track of the number of days your loved one has been detained.
- Create a one-page summary of your loved one's case to leave behind with contacts you meet. Include any requests or things you need their help with on the document.
- Practice summarizing your loved one's case in 2-3 sentences. This can help you effectively communicate while avoiding too many details.
- Adopt a filing system for your notes, emails, articles, and other information.
  - Maintain a spreadsheet or some other way of tracking the names, phone numbers, and other notes about the people helping your case. If you are using a paper-based system, you may use the blank contacts pages in this book if you want to keep this information in the same place
  - Update your contact lists and other products (e.g., one-page summary) regularly.
- Document efforts you've made to secure your loved one's release for them to read once they're back home.
- Research U.S. relations with the country wrongfully detaining your loved one. This can deepen your knowledge about the challenges and issues impacting the detention.
- Make the decisions for your loved one in good faith. You will likely have to make decisions with incomplete information.

- If you are able to have contact with your loved one, try to keep their spirits up.

## Actions to Consider for Building and Maintaining Your Network

- Contact trusted family/friends about joining you in pursuing your loved one's release
- Designate the following roles on your team (one can fill multiple roles if needed)
  - Spokesperson for both in-person media events and managing social media
  - Financial manager for your loved one's financial affairs in the U.S. (securing bank accounts) and overseas (ensuring access to money in detention, if possible)
  - Advocate with the U.S. government, NGOs, other governments, etc.
  - Someone to coordinate letter writing and fund-raising campaigns. Letter writing campaigns can include letters to government officials asking for the release, as well as letters of support to your loved one, if they can receive outside mail
- Review how to formally address members of Congress, foreign government officials, and anyone else you may need to contact. This will help make your outreach as effective as possible.
- Reach out to Congress for help. Specific congressional points of contact can include
  - Your U.S. Representative and your state's two U.S. Senators
  - The U.S. Representative and two U.S. Senators of your loved one, if different
  - Your friends' and family's U.S. Representatives and U.S. Senators, if different
  - Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff
  - House Foreign Affairs Committee staff
  - Other members of Congress who might support your loved one's release due to their policy priorities, past assistance with wrongful detentions, etc.
- As private citizens, you may ask members of Congress and other government officials (which can include the National Security Council and the President) if they are willing to:
  - Host phone calls or meetings with you to discuss updates and options
  - Sponsor/support legislation or resolutions that can help free your loved one
  - Request briefings from the Department of State and/or the National Security Council so that both branches of government can share the same updates and facts
  - Write letters to the foreign ambassador, U.S. ambassador, Secretary of State, National Security Advisor, and the President on behalf of your loved one.
  - Consider traveling to the detaining country to request your loved one's release
- Possible discussion topics with members of Congress or other government officials can include:
  - Bipartisan approaches and outreach to members of all political parties
  - Different members' views in relation to policy on the country detaining your loved one. Use this information to direct your engagement
  - Grievances the U.S. government has with the detaining country and how your loved one may be impacted

- Grievances the detaining country has with the U.S. government and if these could be opportunities for negotiation as you advocate for your loved one
- Develop non-government contacts to assist you, which can include NGOs, third-party intermediaries (TPIs), lawyers, and families of other wrongful detainees. (See the “Assistance Resources” section.)
- Find a lawyer who would be willing to help you, *pro bono*. This might be a more likely option to find in the United States than overseas.
- Consider the costs and benefits of hiring a lawyer(s) to represent your loved one in the country of their detention. Your U.S. government team can help you understand the legal system of that country.
- Ask consular staff to provide detailed updates on the condition of your loved one while in detention, and messages where allowed. These partners in-country have the best direct access to your loved one and those holding him or her.
- Develop a way of sending regular updates to contacts in government, NGOs, the media, and elsewhere. This can include email lists, regular updates to your website, social media pages, online fundraising pages, and other platforms.
- Understand there can be turnover within the government. Your Family Engagement Team will do everything it can to ensure continuity and sustained momentum. As old staff depart and new staff replace them, continue to build your network of contacts.

## Media Actions to Consider

- Consider selecting a media spokesperson from family members, friends, or third-party advocates.
- Consider asking a public relations professional for help with effective media coverage.
- Maintain barriers to guard your privacy. You are never required to speak to the media.
- Decide the level of engagement you’d like to have with the media. This may change as the case develops over time. Consider working with family members, your loved one, supporting organizations or third-party intermediaries to develop this into a media strategy.
- Create a briefing book using your media statements to help you concisely answer questions from reporters.
- Practice ways to keep media focused on your loved one’s wrongful detention and the key messages you seek to communicate.

- Communicate the ground rules before an interview, if you choose to engage with a journalist. If you want to give a journalist information for background purposes only, state upfront what information is ‘not for publication or broadcast’ and verify they have understood and agreed.
- Decide what outcome you hope to achieve before you engage with a journalist.
- As you are able, secure your loved one’s social media accounts. Protect information that may imperil your loved one, such as your loved one’s prior or current government or military service, religious affiliation, or other sensitive information.
- Contact the social media companies if you don’t have your loved one’s passwords.
- Take regular screen shots of the social media accounts to track whether your loved one or others are making changes to your loved one’s pages/profiles.
- Consider starting a website or social media handle as a way of sharing information widely. Be aware anyone (including the detaining government) can access this public information.
- Stay up to date on foreign news that might have an impact on your loved one’s detention.
- Explore translation tools online and learn how to search for news on your loved one on foreign websites. This can help you track relevant updates in foreign media.

## Financial Actions to Consider

- Secure bank accounts and credit cards. Individuals in the detaining government or other hackers and identity thieves may try to misuse your loved one’s financial information.
- Alert your loved one’s employer of the detention. If your loved one is self-employed, you may need to alert their clients and take additional steps to secure the finances of the company. It will be important to know what assistance you can expect from your loved one’s employer throughout the ordeal.
- Consider the expenses that may be incurred over your loved one’s detention. Pace yourself in a way to best manage your spending, energy, and well-being.
- Weigh the costs and benefits of hiring professionals (lawyers, public relations professionals, etc.) domestically and in the detaining country. Seek out professionals that will work on a *pro bono* basis. Contact your Family Engagement Team if you have questions.

- Consider the costs and benefits of traveling to attend meetings, be they in the detaining country, Washington, DC, and elsewhere. Would such trips pose a safety risk? Are there equally effective alternatives?
- Start an online fundraising campaign for your loved one's expenses (necessities in jail, legal expenses, etc.).
- Assemble a list of your loved one's financial accounts to monitor activities, money owed, and other potential sources of income/support. Be aware that there may be such accounts outside the United States as well, depending on where your loved one was living at the time of arrest. This can include but is not limited to:
  - bank accounts
  - credit cards
  - mortgages
  - car loans
  - student loans
  - rent/lease agreements
  - insurance policies (life, health, automobile, residential)
  - child support
  - alimony
  - salary records/pay stubs
  - pensions or other government benefits
  - investment accounts
  - private pensions or other retirement benefits
  - safe deposit boxes
  - worker's compensation
  - other tax records and returns
- Do your best to locate and safeguard your loved one's important documents while they are away. These can include but are not limited to:
  - passports
  - citizenship/nationality records
  - employment contracts and records (note that individuals who work on a free-lance basis may have billing records for time spent working instead of an official employment contract)
  - birth certificate
  - marriage certificate
  - divorce/separation papers
  - custody/parenting agreements
  - adoption papers
  - legal settlements
  - wills
  - living wills
  - power of attorney records
  - property deeds/titles/surveys
  - business licenses

- union or other organized labor documents
  - copyrights, royalties, or trademarks
  - appraisals of any valuable items
  - planned giving agreements
  - military records (discharge, veterans' benefits)
  - driver's license
  - vehicle deed/title
- If you are concerned you or your loved one has been the victim of fraud or identity theft, the following resources may be helpful to you:
    - Federal Trade Commission Identity Theft Hotline: 1-877-438-4338 or [www.consumer.gov/idtheft](http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft).
    - Social Security Administration Fraud Hotline (to report theft or fraudulent use of your Social Security Number): 1-800-269-0271 or [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov).
    - U.S. Postal Inspection Service (for identity theft that involves U.S. Mail): 1-800-275-8777
    - National Credit Reporting (to report credit card theft or fraudulent misuse):
      - Equifax: 1-800-525-6285, [www.equifax.com](http://www.equifax.com)
      - Experian: 1-888-397-3742, [www.experian.com](http://www.experian.com)
      - TransUnion: 1-800-680-7289, [www.transunion.com](http://www.transunion.com)
    - Internet Crime Complaint Center (to file a complaint or read the latest warnings): [www.ic3.gov](http://www.ic3.gov).
    - National Crime Victim Bar Association (for information regarding filing civil lawsuits against a perpetrator or other responsible party, and help locating attorneys specializing in victim related litigation): 1-202-467-8753 or [www.victimbar.org](http://www.victimbar.org).

## Self-Care Actions to Consider

- Be kind and take care of yourself.
- Consider the costs (financial and otherwise) that may be incurred over the weeks, months, and years of your loved one's detention. Pace yourself in a way that best manages your spending, energy, and well-being.
- Continue your efforts, even after a particular meeting or contact proves less than helpful.
- Take advantage of support and assistance available through trusted volunteers, your U.S. government team, NGOs, etc.
- Focus on what you need to accomplish. Keep your eye on your ultimate goal.
- Be patient with yourself and those trying to help you.

- Don't waste time/energy engaging with unscrupulous people. Unfortunately, some people go online to harass, mislead, or otherwise defame those in the headlines.
- Keep supporting your loved one and those supporting you, even when it gets difficult to do so.
- Keep as much balance in your life as possible and tend to your resilience.

## Glossary of Acronyms and Terms

Acronym or Term	Definition
Administration	The President, Secretaries, advisors, and members of the executive branch of the U.S. government
AF	Bureau of African Affairs, Regional Bureau within the Department of State charged with advising the Secretary of State on matters pertaining to Sub-Saharan Africa. It is headed by the Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of African Affairs.
Ambassador	The President's highest-ranking representative to a specific nation or diplomatic role
Appropriations Committee	A committee in Congress responsible for passing bills to regulate expenditures of money by the U.S. government
Briefing	A meeting to give information or instructions
Consul General (CG)	Heads an extension of the U.S. mission in a major city other than the capital city (known as a Consulate General).
Chargé(e)	Chargé(e) d'Affaires, highest diplomatic official in the country, stands in for the ambassador when there either is no ambassador assigned or the ambassador is away from post
U.S. national	A citizen or national of the United States
Chief of Staff (COS)	Chief of Staff, usually an individual with high level of information on a specific issue or case, tasked with managing the office's operations
Committee	A group of people appointed for a specific function, in this context within the Senate or House of Representatives
Committee on the Judiciary	A standing committee of U.S. senators whose role includes providing oversight of the Department of Justice, consider executive and judicial nominations, and review pending legislation.
Congress	The national legislative body, composed of the Senate and the House of Representatives

Consular Affairs (CA)	The Bureau of Consular Affairs is a bureau within the Department of State focused on protecting U.S. citizens abroad and protecting U.S. borders. The Bureau administers laws, formulates regulations and implements policies relating to the broad range of consular and immigration services. CA staff are present in 211 embassies and consulates overseas, as well as in Washington, DC, and at 28 domestic Passport Agencies, regional visa and passport processing centers.
Consular Officer	Official representatives of the government of one state in the territory of another, normally acting to assist and protect the citizens of the consul's own country, and issue [U.S.] visas to citizens of other countries interested in travel, work, study or immigration. Often refers to someone assigned to the Consular Section at an embassy or consulate.
Consulate General	A U.S. mission presence located in a major city outside the capital.
DCM	Deputy Chief of Mission, the second ranking officer at an embassy, often functioning as the chief operating officer or chief of staff to the Ambassador. The DCM acts for the ambassador when the ambassador is away from post and as Chargé d'Affaires when the ambassador is out of the country of assignment.
Desk	Office within one of the Regional Bureaus of the Department of State. (See specific bureaus AF, EAP, EUR, NEA, SCA, WHA)
Detainee	A person held in custody.
Diplomatic Mission (Mission)	A group of people present in a foreign state to represent their home nation. The mission refers to the embassy, consulates, and other affiliated offices and agencies in a given country.
DOD	Department of Defense
DOJ	Department of Justice
EAP	Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Regional Bureau within the Department of State charged with advising the Secretary of State and Under Secretary for Political Affairs on matters of the Asia-Pacific region, as well as dealing with U.S. foreign policy and U.S. relations with countries in that area. It is headed by the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
Embassy	The headquarters for U.S. government representatives serving in a foreign country. The ambassador sits at the Embassy.

EUR	Bureau of European Affairs, Regional Bureau within State, charged with implementing U.S. foreign policy and promoting U.S. interests in Europe and Eurasia (which it defines as being Europe, Turkey, Cyprus, the Caucasus Region, and Russia), as well as advising the Under Secretary for Political Affairs. It is headed by the Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs.
FEC	Family Engagement Coordinator – position in the SPEHA office charged with representing families’ interests in the greater efforts to pursue the recovery of the wrongfully detained.
FET	Family Engagement Team – refers to the SPEHA action officer, known as the Family Engagement Coordinator, and the consular HAU officer who jointly serve as the families’ main points of contact with the Department of State
HAU	Hostage Affairs Unit, a unit within the Bureau of Consular Affairs
HFAC	House Foreign Affairs Committee
Hostage	A person held by a non-state actor against their will in order to compel a third person or governmental organization to do or abstain from doing any act as a condition for the release of the person detained.
HRFC	Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell
IRS	Internal Revenue Service – A bureau of the Department of the Treasury that is the tax collection agency of the United States government and administers the Internal Revenue Code enacted by Congress
Lawful Permanent Resident	A non-citizen authorized to live and work in the United States on a permanent basis.
Majority Leader	The head of the majority party in a legislative body
Mark-up	Refers to when the process by which members of Congress propose changes to pending legislation
Member of Congress (MOC)	A person who has been elected to represent a constituency in the United States Senate or House of Representatives
Minority Leader	The head of a minority party in a legislative body

NEA	Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Regional Bureau within the Department of State charged with advising the Secretary of State on matters in North Africa and the Mideast. NEA covers the countries and geographic entities of Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. It is headed by the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs
NGO	Non-governmental organization. Examples can include charities, aid organizations, and non-profit organizations.
NSA	National Security Agency, also used for National Security Advisor
NSC	National Security Council, the U.S. President’s principal forum for considering national security and foreign policy matters with his senior advisors and cabinet officials.
OCS Trust	Emergency mechanism for sending money from the United States to U.S. citizens overseas through the Department of State. “OCS” refers to Overseas Citizens Services, a directorate within the Bureau of Consular Affairs. Find more information at <a href="https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/while-abroad/sending-money-abroad.html">https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/while-abroad/sending-money-abroad.html</a> .
Off the record	Given or said in confidence to a journalist and not for publication
UN Human Rights, Office of the High Commission (OHCHR)	The leading United Nations entity on human rights
On background	Term used for the media, indicates a reporter can use information that’s been given to them but cannot attribute it to a specific source
Privacy Act Waiver (PAW)	A written waiver from a U.S. national or Lawful Permanent Resident of the United States authorizing the disclosure of information about that individual. A PAW may be limited or all-inclusive, at the individual’s option.
PII	Personally Identifiable Information – examples include name, date of birth, social security number, or any other information that can be used to determine someone’s identity.
Power of Attorney	The authority to act for another person in general or specific legal matters.

Pro bono	Without monetary charge
Protecting Power	A country that represents another country's diplomatic and/or consular interests in a third country. Example: as the United States does not have diplomatic or consular relations with North Korea, Sweden serves as the United States' protecting power by representing U.S. interests in North Korea. Switzerland is the United States' protecting power in Iran. The Czech Republic is the United States' protecting power in Syria.
Ranking member	The most senior member of the minority party on a congressional or state legislative committee
Readout	Summary of a meeting or event
Repatriation Loan	Loan offered by the Department of State to help cover the costs of a destitute U.S. citizen returning to the United States.
Representative	In Congress, a reference to a Member of Congress (MOC) from the House of Representatives, one of 435 members
Resolution	The official representation of the opinion of a legislative body
SCA	Bureau of South Central Asian Affairs, Regional Bureau within State, is charged with advising the Secretary of State and implementing U.S. foreign policy and promoting U.S. interests on matters in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. SCA is headed by the Assistant Secretary of State for South Central Asian Affairs.
Senator	A Member of Congress (MOC) from the upper house of Congress. Two senators are elected from each state.
SFRC	Senate Foreign Relations Committee
SHAO	Senior Hostage Affairs Officer within the SPEHA office.
SPEHA	Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, used to refer to the Envoy as well as the entire SPEHA Office (SPEHA)
SR	Special Representative
SRAR	Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation within the Department of State

Staffers	Congressional staffers who work either directly for a Senator or Representative, or a specific committee
Department of State	An executive department of the U.S. federal government responsible for the conduct of foreign policy and international relations.
TPI	Third party intermediary – may include anyone involved in a hostage or wrongful detention case who is not a member of the family, the U.S. government, or the detaining government. Examples can include lawyers, NGOs, third party governments, etc.
Vienna Convention	Usually refers to one of two international treaties, the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, which set forth how sovereign states establish and maintain diplomatic and consular relations and protect the rights of their citizens abroad.
WHA	Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, Regional Bureau within State charged with implementing U.S. foreign policy and promoting U.S. interests in the Western Hemisphere, as well as advising the Under Secretary for Political Affairs. It is headed by the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs.
Wrongful Detainee	Individual whose detention the Department of State determines to be wrongful based on certain discretionary criteria.

***DISCLAIMER: Listings of private entities in this guide are provided as a convenience and should not be construed as an endorsement by the U.S. Department of State or the U.S. government of the entity, its views, or the products or services it provides. The order in which names appear has no significance, and this list may be edited at any time at the discretion of the Department of State. Officers of the Department of State and U.S. embassies and consulates overseas are prohibited by 22 CFR 91.81 from acting as agents, attorneys or in a fiduciary capacity on behalf of U.S. citizens involved in legal disputes overseas, including those U.S. citizens who are arrested or detained abroad and their families. This guide seeks only to provide general information; it is not an opinion on any aspect of U.S., foreign, or international law nor does it constitute legal advice. The U.S. Department of State does not intend by the contents of this guide to take a position on any aspect of any pending litigation.***











