



British  
High Commission  
Georgetown

**Information Pack for British Prisoners in Guyana**

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**British High Commission Guyana**  
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## **Introduction**

### **Who Can Help?**

#### **The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO)**

The FCO is represented overseas by its Embassies (High Commissions in Commonwealth countries). Both employ consular officers, and one of their jobs is to provide help and advice to any Briton who gets into difficulty in a foreign country.

### **About the High Commission**

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

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

We cannot get you out of prison, pay fines or stand bail or interfere with local judicial procedures to get you out of prison nor secure you an earlier trial date; we cannot investigate a crime

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

### **Who are the Consular Representatives?**

Andrea Luke, Consular Officer  
Tisha Mootoo, Assistant Consular Officer  
[bhcguyana@networksgy.com](mailto:bhcguyana@networksgy.com)

### **Contact Information**

British High Commission  
PO Box 10849  
44 Main Street  
South Cummingsburg  
Georgetown,  
Guyana

### **Office Hours:**

Monday to Thursday 8:00am – 4:00pm  
Friday 8:00am – 1:00pm

## **First Steps**

### **Who will know I have been detained:**

When a British Citizen is arrested in Guyana, the authorities should inform the British High Commission upon the prisoner's formal request. However, we may also learn of an arrest informally from friends, or family of the detainee.

### **What will my family be told?**

For reasons of confidentiality we are not permitted to tell anyone, even your family that you have been detained or what the charges are without your permission. However, if you wish to inform your family, we can make contact with them through our colleagues in the FCO in London. We can give your family or next of kin advice on prison procedures, regulations and how you are doing. We can also pass on important messages from you.

### **What will the High Commission do?**

When notified of an arrest, a consular officer will seek to make contact within 24 hours. The first visit will be within 48 hours unless the offence is a minor one. During the period that a case is being heard by the courts, the consular officer will keep in close contact with you and your legal representative, making visits as necessary.

If appropriate, we will consider approaching the local authorities if you are not treated in line with internationally accepted standards.

### **Would I have a criminal record in the UK?**

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

## **Visits**

### **How do my family and friends arrange a visit?**

Consular staff can arrange clearance for visits by overseas family members and friends, though the prison authorities may refuse non-relatives. You should advise your visitors to give as much notice as possible, and to supply some form of identification (e.g. passport) and also document to show their relationship to you. This may be held by the prison and returned at the end of the visit.

### **How many visits am I allowed?**

Remand prisoners may be allowed two visits a week to only two persons. Convicted prisoners' one visit a month is allowed for 30 minutes to two persons. A guard is usually present at consular or family/friends visits.

Visiting days for prisoners are Monday to Friday from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm.

It is advisable to give family and friends as much information as you can about:

- what to expect on arrival in Guyana
- what happens when they reach the prison
- everything you know about the 'do's and don'ts' of visiting

## **Consular Visits**

After the initial visit upon notification of arrest, we will visit you quarterly. You will be called to the prison administration offices during a consular visit. You can also contact us by telephone.

During our routine visits you will have the opportunity to discuss any health issues, security concerns, your treatment in prison and any information you would prefer not to disclose to your next of kin you should let us know during the visit.

Consular Staff can bring the following items into the Prison for you:-

1. Toilettes
2. Books
3. Change of clothing
4. Monies from charitable organisations
5. Medication and
6. Food stuff

We are not allowed to bring:-

1. Weapons
2. Aerosol
3. Roll-on deodorant
4. Alcohol

### **What can visitors bring?**

Visitors can bring prison comforts, such as toiletries, Visitors will be searched before entering the prison. However, all bags and parcels will be searched before entry and authorities have the right to withhold items they deem to be unacceptable (amongst others, weapons, knives, alcohol, drugs, clothes made of black fabric, sunglasses, caps, canned food, grapes, apples, etc). Visits by family and friends

### **A few other useful tips are to –**

- \* pass on the name of the consular staff member you have most contact with.
- \* check that visiting days and times have not changed
- \* find out how long ordinary visits last, and if 'open' or marital visits are allowed? If so, when and for how long?
- \* let them know what they can bring in for you
- \* check if non-relatives and children can visit too

## **THE PRISON SYSTEM AND PRISON CONDITIONS**

### **What is done upon arrival at the Prison?**

You will be taken to Reception where you will be read your committal from the warrant; they will read to you the rules of the Prison. An interview will be conducted by the Officer in Charge of the Prison, Medical Officer, The Welfare Officer and the Sentence Planning team.

### **General conditions at the Prison**

#### **Can I have my own cell?**

Only high profile prisoners are isolated from the other prisoners in a separate cell. Prisoners are usually accommodated in cells shared with 4-5 prisoners or in larger dormitories with upto 12 prisoners. Mattresses and hammocks are provided. However, there's always a shortage of mattresses. Bedding is not provided. Cells do not have separate bathing and washroom facilities. All prisoners use the same bathroom and washroom facilities.

#### **How can I receive money?**

If you need funds from the UK, the quickest way to have money transferred is through a private financial service such as Western Union or Moneygram. This can be arranged with the prisoners and Welfare Officers at the Prisons. Details are given to the Shop Keeper and this person will uplift the remittances. When you have received the funds you will then sign the remittance slip as receiving. Prisoners have used this method and said it worked well. Friends/family can also send money for prison comforts through the Consulate Directorate at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Once the money is sent through the Consulate Directorate office we can arrange to get the money to the prisoners.

#### **Working while in Prison**

Work is available in prison e.g. as labourer, kitchen, trade shop, tailor, mechanic, barbering, carpentry, joinery and library. These are unpaid work but foreign prisoners are given remission if they work. Some contract work (e.g. Mayor and City Council) can be organised but these are only given to local prisoners who are serving on small sentences. You may need the help of the Consul to be assigned work, so speak to the consular visitor if you want to work.

#### **Education while in Prison**

Workshops in areas such as Sex Offence, Anger and Drug Rehabilitation are conducted in the Guyana prison. There are also programmes in Numeracy, Literacy, Carpentry, Masonry, CXC subjects and Debating offered in the Prisons.

#### **Medical and Dental Services**

Standards of healthcare generally in Guyana are very poor in comparison to the UK and worse in prisons. Poor sanitation, inadequate ventilation, extremes of temperature, bad food and overcrowding can help the spread of infections.

Guyana prisons have a list of drugs that are dispensed without charge. The prison doctor can prescribe medicines to be bought by your friends or family on your behalf, though you must have funds to cover the cost. It makes sense to keep some money in the prison shop so the authorities can buy medicine for you should you fall ill.

If you need medical or dental treatment you should ask to see the prison doctor or dentist. A prison doctor visits the prison once a month and a dentist once a week. Basic medical attention is free of charge. There are medics located at the prisons with pharmaceutical drugs available.

### **Food and Diet**

Money is vital to get by and makes things easier in a Guyanese prison. For example you will need to pay for your own toiletries or small food items. There is a shop in the prison that sells bread, biscuit, milk, cheese, toiletries, etc. Prison food is free and the food ration for all prisoners in Guyana usually consists of three (3) meals per day – breakfast, lunch and dinner. The food usually includes rice, greens and meat (beef /chicken). Some prisoners describe the food as adequate, others as very bad. In Annex IV there is a list with prices for some of the items available in the “Tuck Shop.” Food cannot be bought from outside the prison.

### **Mail**

You are allowed to receive one mail and send one mail monthly. The prison authorities censor all letters, which can result in long delays for both incoming and outgoing mail. Also, your mail or parcels can go astray at the Guyana post office. The British High Commission can accept letters via post on behalf of British nationals in prison in Guyana. Parcels can be posted directly to the respective prisons. There is a restriction on the amount of clothing and food that can be sent by family as this encourages prohibited bartering within the prison. Family members/friends may not send items that are sold at the shop in the Prison.

### **Telephone Calls**

It is possible to make two (2) telephone calls per month in Guyana prisons for ten minutes. Landline cards are available for sale at the tuck shop. This is with limits on when, where to and for how long. Numbers have to be cleared with the prison authorities through the consular staff.

It is best to give family a range of dates and times when you will try to ring. Hundreds of prisoners want to make phone calls at the same time, so be prepared for a long wait and the likelihood of disappointment.

Relatives can contact you if there may be any emergency, they will need to speak to the Officer in Charge and arrangements will be made for you to speak with them.

## **Leisure and Entertainment**

In terms of leisure a television with a DVD player and books (a small quantity) are available to prisoners.

Depending on the prison location prisoners can exercise in the yard (three (3) hours per day) or play sport such as cricket and football. Indoor games (eg dominoes, chess) can also be played.

The following items are not allowed in prisons:

Radio, CD player, cassette players and mobile phones, cigarette lighters, drugs/cigarettes and arms of any type.

The following items are censored before they are permitted into prisons:

Reading magazines, toiletries, clothing, indoor games, medical supplies and money (to be lodged at tuck shop).

## **Drugs within the Prison**

As in most countries, there are reports of drug abuse in prisons. With no remission for good behaviour while on remand there is little incentive to behave well. If you are caught holding or taking drugs, punishment can be severe. If you inject drugs you run the risk of contracting serious blood-borne infections, like AIDS and hepatitis (see Health below). Do everything you can to find other ways to cope with life in prison and avoid consuming drugs. Not only will drug consumption weaken further your state of health, but drug taking invariably results in the creation of personal debts. These debts will attract accelerated rates of interest and if not paid off, could result in serious verbal and physical harassment.

## **Religious Activities**

Guyana has three main religions: Christians, Hindus and Muslims. Priests and/or representatives from these religious organisations visit prisons and Christian religious services are usually held at the prison chapel.

## **Complaints**

If any prisoner would like to lodge a complaint they can with the Officer in Charge of the prison. You will also be allowed to contact the High Commission should this arise.

## **The Criminal Justice System of Guyana**

### **What happens when I am arrested and for how long can I be remanded in Custody?**

Any person in Guyana can be arrested and detained for up to seventy-two hours (72 hours) on reasonable suspicion of having committed an offence. If they need to hold you longer an application will have to be made at the Director of Public Prosecutions' Office.

### **How long can you be remanded once you have been charged and awaiting trial?**

Depending on the offence it determines your remand time. Please be aware that the court systems in Guyana are a bit slow and it sometimes takes a while for a case to be called. Offences relating to being in possession of arms (guns) are not bail applicable.

### **Can I get bail?**

In some instances it is possible to obtain bail from the station at which the person is detained. There are certain categories of summary offences for which persons arrested on suspicion of having committed a summary offence can be admitted to bail at the Police Station.

It is advisable at the time of arrest to ascertain who the officer in charge of the station is so that an application for bail can be made directly to him.

If arrested for the offence of causing death by dangerous driving the current practice of the Guyana Police Force is not admit a suspect for this offence to bail.

## **Legal Representation**

It is of critical importance that you consult with a lawyer as soon as possible after your arrest as there is the grave danger that you might place yourself in considerable jeopardy by the statements both oral and written you may elect to give to the police.

We strongly recommend that you restrain from providing the police with any statement whether oral or written unless you have had an opportunity to secure professional advice.

Every person arrested as suspect has a right to consult with an Attorney at law of his choice. Legal Aid Attorneys are not generally available for consultation at the time of arrest. There is legal assistance available in Guyana and you can be given a State Lawyer / Attorney.

Persons in Guyana can be charged with summary offences, indictable offences or a hybrid of the two. Except for the offences of murder, treason, terrorism, possession of arms and/or ammunition and trafficking in narcotics, bail can be granted by a magistrate.

It is particularly important that in the event of charges being filed against you that you do not enter a plea of guilty unless you have sought professional advice, even if for a minor offence.

Some offences including possession of and or trafficking in narcotics, possession of arms and ammunition, terrorist offences attract mandatory periods imprisonment. Murder attracts a mandatory death sentence.

Persons charged with trafficking in narcotics, possession of arms and ammunition, murder and terrorist offences are not normally granted bail and or pre trial liberty except in special circumstances.

Legal aid is sometimes available for persons charged with criminal offences. There is a means test for applicants for legal aid.

If indicted to stand trial for the offence of murder, an accused person will be assigned an attorney in the event that he is unable to retain one.

### **What happens at the trial?**

On your trial day you will be taken to the court office where your case is being handled. There will be a Magistrate in charge of your case along with the public prosecutor and your lawyer.

### **Sentences**

Sentences vary in Guyana and will depend on the seriousness of the crime. Your lawyer will be in a better position to advise on the length of sentences and the appeal's processes. You have the right to appeal against your sentence in court within two (2) weeks of sentencing through your attorney. It is usual practise for your lawyer to appeal against your sentence.

### **Appeals**

In the event of a conviction whether for a summary offence, an indictable offence or a hybrid offence, a convicted person has the right to appeal.

In all cases an appeal must be filed within two weeks of conviction.

It is important that the appeal is filed to the correct Court.

All appeals from summary offences are filed in the Full Court of the High Court of the Supreme Court of Judicature.

All appeals from hybrid offences and indictable offences are filed to the Court of Appeal.

### **Remission**

When sentenced 1/3 is immediately deducted as remission from the day the person enters prison. After six (6) months you are able to work and remission if offered but the amount of time is determined by the Minister of Home Affairs.

### **Clemency/ Pardon**

In Guyana, pardon/clemency can only be given by the President. A pardon/clemency means that although the prison sentence will end the person will still have a criminal record.

### **Financial Penalties**

The Prison authorities are not responsible for financial penalties of prisoners. The Guyana Police Force is the party responsible but this is not usually imposed on foreign nationals after they have served their sentences.

### **Parole and post conviction procedures**

Parole is available for persons convicted of some offences. Applications for parole are determined by the Parole Board.

### **Transfers**

There is currently no prisoner transfer agreement between the UK and Guyana.

### **What are the procedures for Release and Deportation?**

The discharge process is a compulsory administrative process that is carried out against all foreigners that commit a crime in Guyana.

Any prisoners released that have a deportation order issued against them will be transferred to the main Prison, Camp Street, where they might be held under arrest until expelled. The prisoner is responsible for the purchase of their airfare and must have the ticket in advance of their discharge. He or she should discuss this with the prison authorities/with a consular officer. Once a flight has been arranged, the prisoner will then be escorted to the airport by the Immigration authorities until they are on a plane leaving Guyana.

If the prisoner is released and they don't have an expulsion order issued against them, they can leave the country at any time at their own expense (this applies to dual nationals).



## **PRISONERS ABROAD**

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

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

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

Prisoners Abroad  
89 – 93 Fonthill Road  
London N4 3JH  
UK

**Telephone:** 00 44 (0)20 7561 6820 or, for your relatives in the UK, Freephone 0808 172 0098  
(Mondays to Fridays 9.30 am to 4.30 pm, UK time)

**Email:** [info@prisonersabroad.org.uk](mailto:info@prisonersabroad.org.uk)

**Website:** [www.prisonersabroad.org.uk](http://www.prisonersabroad.org.uk)

## **Annexes**

Annex 1: List of Lawyers

Annex 2: FCO Leaflet: In Prison Abroad

Annex 3: Prisoners Abroad Authorization Form

Annex 4: Prisoners Abroad Family Contact Form

Annex 5: Prisoners Abroad CFF form

Annex 6: Cost of items from Prison Tuck Shop

## **ANNEX 6**

Please find below a table of the items available for sale in the Prison Tuck Shop.

SERIAL NO.	ITEMS	UNIT COST
1	Vest	\$800.00
2	Bowl	\$760.00
3	Peter Pan Nut Butter	\$720.00
4	Roll-on Deodorant	\$240.00
5	Colgate Tooth Paste	\$200.00
6	Tooth Brush	\$180.00
7	Tooth Brush Holder	\$200.00
8	BIC	\$230.00
9	Clothes Clips	\$100.00
10	Dettol	\$240.00
11	Soap Dish	\$140.00
12	Life Buoy Soap	\$75.00
13	Blue Soap	\$50.00
14	Large Soap Bowl	\$275.00
15	Toilet Paper	\$76.00
16	Large Water	\$164.00
17	Supligen	\$250.00
18	Tampico Juice	\$163.00
19	Guzzler Juice	\$188.00
20	Large Drink	\$183.00
21	Caramel	\$100.00
22	M&M	\$180.00
23	Skittles	\$180.00
24	Snickers	\$180.00
25	Milky Way	\$180.00
26	Mints	\$495.00
27	Large Shirley Biscuits	\$120.00
28	Club Social	\$35.00
29	Small Butter	\$200.00
30	Milk	\$880.00
31	Oreo Biscuits	\$55.00
32	Minees	\$35.00

## **Disclaimer**

This booklet was compiled by the Consular Section, Guyana. It is revised on a regular basis.

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

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

Thank you.

Last updated: 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2015