My Friend has been Arrested!

NOTE: we are only able to help with arrests following protest or actions. For any other reason please contact a solicitor directly.

Hearing that a friend has been arrested can be a scary experience. It is disempowering being unsure of what is going on, but there are things you can do to plan ahead and help your friend get better support.

If the arrest happened at a protest or during an action, or is protest related, then we can offer support.

> **If you have just witnessed the arrest, and it was protest related, please call us now so that we can help support you and advise on the next steps. You should also write a witness statement as soon as possible.**

If your friend was at a protest, you can't get in touch with them and you are worried they may have been arrested, you can call us and we may be able to help you find out.

1. What will happen to my friend in custody?
2. How can I get more information about my friend's arrest?
3. What should I do if I receive a call from custody?
4. Supporting friends after release

1. What will Happen to my Friend in Custody?

Custody can be a slow process. Your friend has the right to a phone call to inform someone of their arrest. They are also likely to be interviewed, for which they are entitled to a solicitor.

It may take a long time – many hours – for an arrestee to arrive at a police station, especially if there has been a mass arrest. On arrival at the station, they will be 'booked in'. This means their photograph, fingerprints & DNA will be taken, and their personal belongings taken from them. They will then be put in a cell.

They are likely to be interviewed by the police, and they have the right to free legal advice from a solicitor for this. We strongly advise using a solicitor experienced in protest law.

They also have the right to a phone call to inform someone of their arrest, to food, and to medical attention if needed.

If they are under 18, they must have an 'appropriate adult' present at their interview. If you are the parent or guardian of a young person who has been arrested, please call us and we can talk you through what this role involves.

> **For a more detailed description of your friend's rights in custody, please read this guide.**

2. How can I get more Information?

Green and Black Cross gathers information about arrestees to help us liaise with solicitors and provide police station support. We may be able to give you an update on your friend if you call us.

It can be a long time before arrestees are able to make phone calls or contact solicitors, so please be patient!

Sometimes, police officers at the scene of the arrest will know which station they are going to take the arrestee to. They are not obliged to tell bystanders this information, but it can be worth trying – please let us know if you find out as it helps us to organise police station support.

Many arrestees choose to call Green and Black Cross as their custody call, as this means we can contact solicitors and friends on their behalf. If your friend calls us from the police station then we will find out who they would like us to liaise with, and may be able to update you.

It may be possible to find out information by calling police stations directly, especially if you are a close family member of the arrestee. You can contact police stations by calling 101, or you may have better success by attending the police station in person if you know which station it is.

> Do not contact police stations asking for a named individual unless you are certain that they would have given their name to the police, otherwise you risk giving their name away.

3. Receiving a Custody Call

Arrestees have the right to have someone informed of their arrest. This may be a phone call from them directly, or a police officer may make the call on their behalf.

If you get a call from a friend in custody ask them:

- Are you OK?
- What station are you at?
- Have you got a solicitor? If they don't, then tell them to use the one on the bustcard (you can check the bustcard for their local area here). Do not use the duty solicitor!
- Remember – No Comment to all police questions – besides name, address, and DOB – except under advice from a good solicitor.
- Is it OK to share information with GBC?
- Is there anyone else you want me to contact?
- Is anyone there with you?
- Call GBC when you get out!

Keep them talking as long as they want to – you could talk them through their rights, and what might happen next.

> Please bear in mind that your call may be being listened to/recorded by the police.

If you speak to a police officer rather than directly to your friend:

- Are they OK? Do they have any injuries?
- What station are you at?
- Do they have a translator/appropriate adult (if applicable)?
- Do they have a solicitor? If so, which firm?
- Do they want me to contact anyone else?
- Are they happy to have information shared with Green and Black Cross?

4. Supporting Friends after Release

One of the most valuable things you can do is to meet your friend from the police station. Keep in touch with us so we can continue to offer support.

If you are able to, it is great to be able to meet your friend – and ideally other arrestees held at the same station – when they are released and help them get home. Please read our guide to police station support.

Please let us know when your friend is out. If they are happy to share their details with us, we can provide more information and support with what happens following arrest. You may be able to offer solidarity through helping with defendants campaigns, and by offering court support.

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Being in custody can be a traumatising experience, and being there for someone in the aftermath of arrest, or awaiting court, can also be very stressful. You and your friend may want to look at our guide to trauma and emotional support.