

In case of arrest in Belgium

General advice

1. Only speak the languages you are fluent in, and only answer when someone speaks to you in these languages. Tell them you don't speak English if they ask. You have the right to be assisted by a translator (ask for a translator who speaks the same dialect as you).
2. Do not sign any documents given to you. If you face pressure to sign and have no other option, write: 'I do not understand' in your native language.

If you are arrested by the police

1. Immediately inform someone you trust.
2. The police can keep you at the police station for a maximum of 24 hours. When letting you go, the police must hand back your personal belongings.
3. The police will give you a document called the 'right to be heard'. Ask to be accompanied by a translator who speaks the same dialect as you, to help you write and to check the document afterwards. This document will be essential if you want to apply for release from the closed centre later. So make a note of the reasons why you cannot be sent back to your country of origin (or the country where you left your fingerprints) and also the connections you have in Belgium (family, children, ...).
4. If you have any doubts when the police ask you questions during the investigation, remember that you have the right to remain silent.
5. When you are released, inform the person you trust.

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If the police brings you to a closed centre

1. Your phone will be taken away as soon as you arrive at the closed centre.
Write down on a piece of paper the phone numbers of people you may need (family, lawyer).
2. As soon as you arrive at the centre, inform a person you trust and your lawyer. If you don't have a phone yet, ask to borrow one.
3. Do not sign any documents given to you. Be aware that one of these documents may be a voluntary return document, so be sure to carefully read what is written.
4. Try to find a lawyer as soon as possible who can follow your case: it is essential to have someone to help and defend you. Only a lawyer can lodge an appeal in extreme urgency, but within 5 days (including the weekend). Only accept lawyers who are recommended by people you trust. You can certainly benefit from free legal assistance (pro bono lawyer), and we recommend it: just because a lawyer charges you a lot of money does not mean that their services are better. Be careful: don't trust lawyers who ask you to pay in cash. They are scammers.
5. Don't trust social workers: they are employed by the Immigration Office. Their instructions are clear, and their objective is to encourage you to accept deportation.
6. In the centre, you can call the phone line of the group Getting the Voice Out (0465 24 24 30). These are citizens who support people locked up in detention centres, and who can share your testimony about what happens in the centre. They can also send you credit for your phone or help you find contacts for lawyers or doctors.

When you are released, inform the people you have been in contact with.

Save these phone numbers in your phone book.

Take a photo of this information sheet.

Send it to your friends.