

Introduction

“... guilty and sentenced to...”

Frightening words in any language. Spoken to you by a judge in a foreign court, perhaps in a language you do not understand, they are terrifying. They are also devastating to your family and friends.

Almost 1000 Canadians are imprisoned in foreign countries. Most of them are in the United States; the rest are in prisons in over 50 other countries.

The criminal justice system in many countries is different from that in Canada. This does not mean that those systems are inferior. It does mean that a Canadian may be at a disadvantage because of unfamiliarity with the local judicial system, culture and language. Frequently, prison conditions are harsher than those in Canada.

This booklet provides information to help you, as well as your family and friends, benefit from the assistance provided by the Government of Canada through its consular service. This assistance is available through the Consular Operations and Emergency Services Division at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade in Ottawa, and through Canadian diplomatic and consular missions abroad. “Consular” refers to the services a Government can provide to its citizens who encounter difficulty abroad. These services are clearly established in international law, and more specifically, under the terms of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, to which Canada and many other nations are signatories.