

the prisoner. It will also try to answer your specific questions or to obtain information if it is not readily available to you. Although you may be tempted to undertake immediate action (such as visiting or sending parcels or money), you should first consult with the Consular Operations Division about the advisability of such initiatives and how best to proceed.

The general approach of the department combines an emphasis on self-reliance and respect for privacy with a willingness to assist where appropriate. To the extent possible, the family and friends of Canadian prisoners should maintain direct contact with the prisoner and resolve problems through normal channels. The department and its missions abroad will give advice and information in all cases, but they will only provide further services to the extent that they are not otherwise available. This means that the department will, in general, provide a more comprehensive range of services when a Canadian is imprisoned in a country where the conditions are poor or more difficult than would be the case in Canada or other industrialized countries.

## **Hiring a Foreign Lawyer**

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The search for suitable legal representation in the country of arrest is a task of critical importance and should be approached with care and caution. It is not at all uncommon, for instance, for foreign lawyers to request payment of large retainers, frequently in exchange for vague promises, and there have been many cases in which such promises have been ignored, abandoned or forgotten. Regrettably, the victimization of foreign clients has become a systematic and highly refined practice in certain parts of the world. While Canadian representatives abroad will do their best to provide a list of lawyers who may specialize in particular types of cases, no individual lawyers can be recommended. The decision on hiring counsel is the responsibility of the prisoner or the prisoner's representatives.