



Foreign Laws and Regulations

Nearly 500 Canadians are currently imprisoned abroad. Do not expect that because you are a foreigner you will be exempt from local laws or enjoy preferential treatment. You are subject to the laws, both criminal and civil, of the countries you are in. You should also respect their customs and practices.

The legal system and judicial procedures abroad may be very different from our own. You may be detained for months before being charged. It could take months and even years before you are tried. In many countries, once you are accused of violating a law you will be presumed guilty until you prove your innocence. In several countries, releasing foreigners on bail is out of the question.

It should also be stressed that conditions of detention are often difficult, sometimes deplorable, especially in developing countries. Canadian missions can only ensure that Canadians detained are not discriminated against because of their citizenship. They cannot get you out of jail!

When you travel abroad, you may not enjoy the rights and freedoms that you consider universal. Some countries

do not recognize or respect religious freedom, freedom of association, speech or the press, or the equality of men and women. In some countries, you must observe dress codes and local rules of etiquette. It is not advisable for foreigners to criticize or protest these situations.

The criminal law of some countries presumes guilt by association. This means you may be charged simply for being in the company of a person suspected or found guilty of a crime.

If you become involved in a civil action abroad, you may be jailed or denied permission to leave until the matter is settled. Check with local authorities before doing anything having legal implications. This is particularly relevant to Canadians doing business in other countries.

You can avoid trouble. Take time before you go abroad to get to know some of the laws and traditions of the countries you will visit. Write to one of their missions in Canada, or consult your travel agent or neighbourhood library.

Illegal Drugs

Drug use and trafficking are prohibited in all countries, even though drugs are readily available and openly used in some places. Most countries impose heavy fines and long prison sentences for possession or trafficking in drugs.

In some countries, possession of even small amounts of drugs carries the death penalty.

Refuse if asked by a stranger to transport any parcel across a border. Remember that drug traffickers try to use respectable, innocent-looking tourists to carry drugs for them through customs inspection lines. No reward that a trafficker promises you is worth the risk of spending long years in a damp cell.

Never cross a border with a hitch-hiker or as a hitch-hiker. Separate and meet on the other side of the border. Though you may not be carrying anything illegal, the same may not be true of your companions. If anything illegal is found by border officials, all occupants of a vehicle will be considered suspects.