

Impact Report to the CLSC

Prisoners Abroad, July 2025

Prisoners Abroad was awarded £2,000 from the City of London Solicitors' Company in October 2024.

We were delighted to receive this grant, which has been used towards our work **protecting the human rights and welfare of British people affected by overseas imprisonment, and their families**. In supporting our organisation you have helped promote access to justice for people so often-forgotten by society - which for us means providing advice and welfare support to counter some of the inequalities British people face as foreign nationals in prisons around the world, helping their families to navigate these unfamiliar justice systems, and helping ex-prisoners to have the best possible support to successfully resettle in UK society after their sentence.

Above all else, you are standing up for human rights and showing compassion to people who would otherwise have nowhere to turn to.



Pictured: 1-2-1 resettlement support delivered at our office

"The assistance the Prisoners Abroad team has given me has helped enormously with my mental health and emotional wellbeing. The contact with your organisation is most invaluable. I will be forever grateful for your help." – Someone we supported in prison in India

YOUR SUPPORT IN NUMBERS

Over the last year we have helped:



1,370

British people detained in **109** countries worldwide



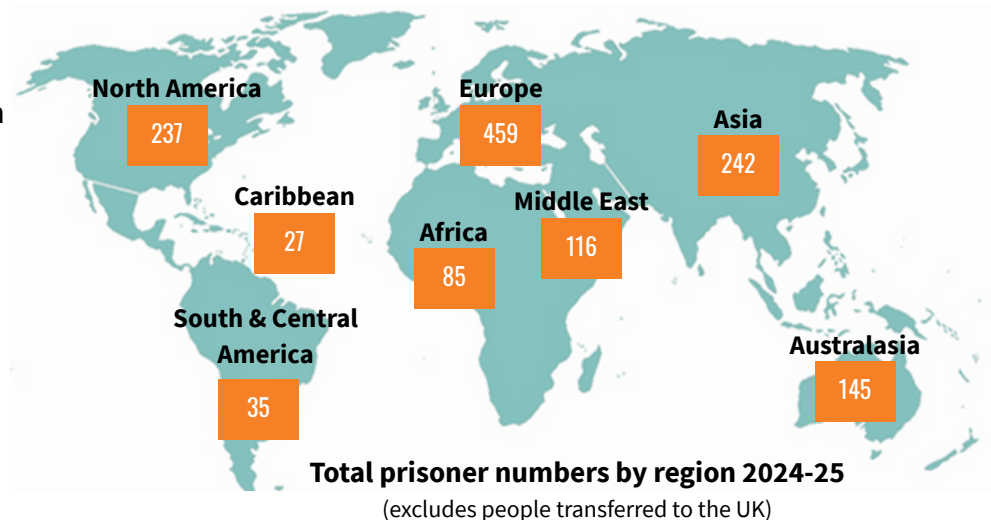
1,768

Family members and friends of prisoners



278

Ex-prisoners returning to the UK



The following pages highlight the activities your support has helped us to deliver.

OVERSEAS SUPPORT

The conditions of overseas prisons vary greatly from country to country and even from prison to prison. Many are overcrowded, violent and do not provide adequate supplies of food or clean water. These conditions profoundly affect the mental and physical health of British people held there, who are already facing the reality of spending years or decades imprisoned far away from family or friends, in a country where they may not even speak the language.

Last year, your support helped us to reach **1,370** British prisoners detained in **110** countries. Of these, **491** were new prisoners, an increase from **363** the previous year.



Our London-based team of caseworkers assist people in over 100 countries around the world.

SUPPORTING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

While we are not a legal charity, we can help prisoners and their families by signposting them to trusted places they can go for legal support, and by highlighting what people's rights are in our prisoner and family handbooks/ factsheets. Being a foreign national in prison can place you in a significantly more vulnerable situation. Prisoners Abroad exists to ensure people can access the basic items they need to survive their sentence, have tools to ease isolation, know what their rights are, and know where they can turn to for help.

- We employ two Human Rights Advisers (HRAs), who are seconded to the Foreign Office where they work in the prisoner and policy team. This enables to raise human rights concerns for our beneficiaries directly with this team. Between April 2024 and March 2025 we made **48** referrals to the HRAs, including allegations of torture and mistreatment, medical neglect, denial of legal rights, and arbitrary detention.
- We distribute a range of literature to prisoners and their families, including our prisoner handbook which includes a chapter about prisoners' rights and the legal process. Last year **306** people received this.

An extract from our prisoner handbook 'In Prison Abroad?'



"The Prisoners Abroad booklets sent were excellent! Explaining about transfers [to a UK prison] and what could happen is very helpful. My situation in Japan is that the Japanese Government takes so many years to process paperwork that a transfer might never happen. I really appreciate the information given... knowing the legal processes and the steps that happen before/after release. Knowing that you are not 100% forgotten. Knowing that other people have survived prison and made it to the other side." - Someone we supported in prison in Japan

To help protect British citizens' health and wellbeing in prisons abroad, we sent:

- **825 survival grants** to **284** recipients in **47** countries, supporting prisoners in the harshest conditions who don't receive financial assistance from friends or family to buy basic essentials such as food and water
- **200 vitamin grants** to **68** prisoners in **10** countries to supplement an insufficient prison diet
- **72 medical fund payments** to **30** people in **9** countries to help those who are unable to pay for medical treatment and procedures
- **46 wellbeing fund payments** to **42** people in **17** countries, helping to prevent the development and progression of medical conditions by providing items such as water filters, warm clothing, glasses and exercise guides.
- **3,329** magazines, **2,524** newspapers, **547** books and **2,306** Christmas and birthday cards to ease the loneliness of prison and remind people that they are not alone.

FAMILY SUPPORT

The experience of a loved one being in prison abroad is extremely difficult. People often feel isolated and unable to talk to friends or other family members about the situation. The shock of hearing about the arrest of a loved one, the trauma of the sentence, worrying about the conditions in which their relative is being held, the physical distance without contact, and the language barriers all have a massive impact on families' lives.

Your support helped us to provide a wide range of practical and emotional support to **1,768** family members and friends of British overseas prisoners. **760** of these were newly registered with the service, an increase of over **15%** on last year. The support available to them included:

- **A Freephone helpline** – families can contact Prisoners Abroad caseworkers about their relative's case or their own situation at home.
- **Publications** – We sent **434** copies of our *Holding the Fort* handbook [pictured above], which offers information and guidance on some of the issues that families may face. It also contains quotes and comments written by family members who have had similar experiences themselves. We also sent leaflets with information to help people manage their mental health.
- **Family support and information groups** – **20** regional support groups were delivered by volunteers in-person and via Zoom in eight locations around the country, offering a safe, non-judgmental space for family members to talk about any issues they may be facing in a supportive environment. We also held **11** information groups attended by consular staff, enabling family members to ask questions about imprisonment in certain regions and on more specific topics, such as long-term imprisonment and preparing for release. **99** people attended these last year.



RESETTLEMENT SUPPORT

The people who access our resettlement support often have no family or friends they can rely on for help, and many arrive with no money or belongings. As people released from overseas prisons are not eligible for support from the probation service, Prisoners Abroad is often the only place they can turn to for help.

Last year we supported **269** people returning to the UK after imprisonment abroad, **72** of which were new arrivals.

- Support begins as soon as someone arrives at the airport, with essential items supplied and accommodation booked for their first days and weeks.
 - **43** people were provided with emergency accommodation to prevent them sleeping on the streets.
- To help people move into longer-term housing, resettlement staff give support tailored to each individual's needs. Last year this included helping:
 - **55** people access welfare benefits
 - **34** access health and medical services
 - **62** access a range of other services, including foodbanks, substance misuse support, and opening a bank account.
- We held **28** resettlement support groups at our office in London, providing people with a space to discuss their experiences and build social connections at what is an extremely lonely time.
 - Additional information groups offered specific advice for over 65's and on housing in the UK.

In response to the increasing need for digital skills amongst our service users, we held digital skills workshops to improve people's digital literacy. These were delivered by a fellow prison leaver, as well as Prisoners Abroad staff, and included topics on using email and how to browse the internet, with more topics planned for the coming year.

Our work preparation programme is a vital part of the resettlement process, helping people to access employment, training and volunteering opportunities. A dedicated work coach teaches people essential employment skills such as interview techniques and how to write a CV. This was attended by **47** people last year, and many were referred to partner organisations specialising in employment for ex-prisoners.

CASE STUDY

Musa share's their experience of prison in Thailand and resettlement in the UK

"I spent 5 years in prison in Thailand. From the moment I arrived it was all about humiliation, as I learned from the mandatory strip search. **They take away your dignity.** On a usual day, you were let out of your cell between 5:30am and 6am to shower. There were ten showerheads in a row for twenty people. The water came in two bursts: one to soak you and another to rinse you off.

Sleeping was particularly difficult. **There were around 200 people in the same small room.** You were given two blankets, one to use as a mattress and the other one to cover yourself. For me, this was one of the hardest things about the whole sentence. The lights were on all the time and the Thai prisoners would watch a loud TV until 9pm. The toilet situation was unbearable. There were uncovered squat toilets in the cell with no privacy. If you didn't use it between 8am and 9am in the morning, you couldn't flush because there was no water.

The meals we got throughout the day were terrible: rice and cabbage in the morning and rice in water in the afternoon. In the evening we were supposed to have rice with chicken, but **by the time the food reached the foreigners, the Thai prisoners had already taken all the meat.** Without Prisoners Abroad sending money, I wouldn't have survived on these meals. Even still, the lack of proper nutrition caused health issues. My teeth started falling out, I lost a lot of weight, and I developed scabies.

Throughout all of this, Prisoners Abroad were sending me letters, books and magazines. This was the only meaningful contact a lot of us had with the outside. We'd have really suffered without books, so I am very grateful to Prisoners Abroad for that. They also sent us birthday and Christmas cards – something we could look forward to.

When my sentence came to an end, Prisoners Abroad and the British embassy arranged a deportation flight. The immigration detention centre I stayed in was worse than prison, but I was only there for 10 days. It was overwhelming when I did arrive in London, but Prisoners Abroad provided me with a basic smartphone, a travel card, a prepaid SIM, and a food voucher. **I had been out of the country for 20 years, so returning was a big shock.** My resettlement officer was incredible. She helped me with everything: getting a doctor (which I was in desperate need of), setting up Universal Credit, opening a bank account, and even arranging a full health check. Prisoners Abroad gave me money weekly and paid my rent until my benefits came through.



Pictured: Some of the items people receive in our arrival packs when they return to the UK.

After five months, Prisoners Abroad helped me move to my own little flat. I realise I'm really lucky – I couldn't have done it without my resettlement officer and Prisoners Abroad. They also gave me CV advice and six months after returning, I got a job."

Thank you to the City of London Solicitors' Company

The wellbeing of overseas prisoners and their families is not a common concern in society. Your support helps us to provide invaluable assistance to people when they need it most.