

# Prisoner Support

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Prison is designed to grind you down, and it isolates people from the outside world. Writing to prisoners helps break this down. It might be intimidating to sit down and write a letter to a stranger, but you can keep it short the first time. Just sending a card with a few well wishes and some words about who you are can brighten up someone's day and make them feel remembered. It can also possibly lead on to a correspondence.

Some people, when they write to prisoners are afraid of talking about their lives, what they're up to, thinking this might depress someone locked up or just not be of interest. But prison life is dead boring, and any news that livens it up is generally welcome. Use your sense, don't write about things that are likely to get the prisoner into trouble with the screws or get you or anyone else into trouble.

Remember to include a return address, also on the envelope. Don't necessarily expect an answer - some prisons restrict the number of letters a prisoner can write or receive, or the person may be out of stationery/stamps, or just not be very good at writing letters.

Passing cards round meetings, the pub or among your friends for people to sign with messages of support is an easy thing to do to brighten up a prisoner's mailtime. Or maybe you have the time to start up regular letter writing sessions with your friends, with the purpose of motivating each other to write.

# Sending Stuff

If you are up for it - don't offer your help if you aren't - ask what items the prisoner can receive in the post, or give the prison a ring, as this varies from prison to prison. It also often depends on which screw handles your post and what mood they're in!

Stamps: You can usually include a couple in a letter without problems - mention that you have in your letter (they might just disappear otherwise). If writing to someone outside the UK, you can include some International Reply Coupons (IRC's) that are available at any post office and can be used in place of stamps.

Stationery: Remand prisoners are normally allowed to use writing paper (not wire bound) and envelopes sent in to them. Ask convicted prisoners what they're allowed.

Books: There are different regulations on this too, so ask. More than often a prisoner can only receive books directly from the publisher - this goes for alternative magazines as well - or via a recognised distributor or bookshop. A friendly bookshop will usually oblige if you buy the book and pay for the postage.

Pamphlets/Zines: These seem to get through to most prisons in the UK okay if they're not too big and folded up inside a normal sized envelope, for some reason. They are often counted as photocopies which are, up to a certain amount, usually allowed.

Tapes: Home-recorded tapes are often allowed, but ask. Use see-through ones.

# Legal Aid

Fund raising for competent legal representation is the best way to win an early release. Find a competent lawyer and keep them on the appeals and parole process.

# Outside Support

Ask about prison rules regarding:

- Visits
- What can and cannot be sent in the mail
- Prisoners rights to private objects and clothing
- Money
- What are the prisoners rights to send communications
- Arrangements for release

Find out what is permissible to send, sometimes you can even send books or clothing in the mail. Never send something that is not allowed as this may cost your prisoner their mail privileges. It is important to see that any special dietary needs are met it might be possible to send funds to the prison to provide vegan or religious meals. Just sending personal letters on new paper and envelopes is a major morale boost to your prisoner, of course follow Security Culture at all times. Sending extra paper and stamped envelopes might be a way to save your prisoner money when communicating.

# Letter Campaigns

If you can get a large letter writing campaign together it can actually have a major effect on the chances of your prisoner in being released. It is best to address local and regional representatives. If there is a judge or parole board chairperson that can be written to this might also be useful. You must advise your letter writers especially the regulars to be respectful and to the point. Long letters are almost never read in full. Short, respectful, clear, and concise are the rules

# Publicity

Do whatever you can to keep the incarceration of your prisoner at the front of the minds of their support group and sympathetic members of society. public demonstration, picketing, and posters are good ideas if they will provoke sympathy. It is important to avoid publicity in places where people might strongly support continued imprisonment.



# Visitation

If possible try to arrange visits from friends as often as possible, if the prisoner has a spouse or partner on the outside try to collect funds for travel and petition for regular conjugal visits. It is a good idea to be in contact with the prisoners clergy and the chaplain at the prison as they have some power over visitation in some prisons.

If you are up for travelling to visit a prisoner, mention this to them. But bear in mind that convicted prisoners are only entitled to a limited number of visits (remand prisoners to much more), usually about 2-3 a month lasting up to 2 hours with 2-3 people. The prisoner will then have to send out a visiting order (V.O.) to the persons wanting to visit them, fully naming each visitor. You will need to identify yourself at the gate, so take along sufficient I.D., and 'clean up' before you go - getting caught with even the tiniest bit of drug residue or anything else dodgy can have serious consequences for the prisoner.

# Adopt a Prisoner

Even if nobody in your group has been imprisoned it does not mean you do not have a responsibility to the larger movement. Contact prisoner support circles and larger radical groups, but remember the most forgotten prisoners are those that come from small or broken up organizations.

# Links

There are a number of prisoner support groups around. Get in touch to find out more and to read about some of the prisoners that shouldn't be forgotten.

[http://www.prisonactivist.org/links/Prisoner\\_Support/](http://www.prisonactivist.org/links/Prisoner_Support/)

Brighton Anarchist Black Cross - 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 2GY. Email: [mail@brightonabc.org.uk](mailto:mail@brightonabc.org.uk)  
<http://www.brightonabc.org.uk>

Earth Liberation Prisoners - BM Box 2407, London WC1N 3XX. <http://www.geocities.com/earth-libprisoner>. Email: [earthlibprisoner@hotmail.com](mailto:earthlibprisoner@hotmail.com) check out

Animal Liberation Front Supporters Group - BCM 1160, London WC1N 3XX

Miscarriages of Justice UK - <http://www.ncadc.org.uk> Email: [justiceUK@appleonline.net](mailto:justiceUK@appleonline.net)

Miscarriages of Justice Organisation - Email: [mojo-uk@justice.com](mailto:mojo-uk@justice.com). Phone: 07050618240.



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Last updated: 22 January 2011

[stealthiswiki.com](http://stealthiswiki.com)