

# How the WLC Can Help Families of Political Prisoners

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*A practical guide for the World Liberty Congress, the Political Prisoners Support Team, and the Playbook for Liberty*

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Political imprisonment is designed to break more than one person. It targets a family, a movement, and a society. The prisoner is isolated, but the family is forced into a second prison: uncertainty, fear, economic stress, public pressure, legal confusion, surveillance, and grief.

The World Liberty Congress can help families transform that isolation into organized support. The purpose of this guide is to explain, in simple and practical terms, how WLC can accompany families before release, during imprisonment, at the moment of release, and after liberation. It is not a substitute for lawyers, doctors, therapists, or emergency services. It is a practical coordination framework: how to think, what to do first, who to involve, and how WLC can help connect families to the right support.

The central message is simple: families are not passive victims. Families are often the first liberators. With the right support, they can become organized advocates, protectors, documenters, communicators, and moral witnesses. WLC's role is to make sure they do not carry that burden alone.

**Core WLC promise: No political prisoner should be forgotten, and no family should be left alone. WLC can help families document the case, build a support network, protect themselves, communicate with dignity, connect with legal and international allies, and prepare for life after release.**

## 1. What Families Usually Need First

**Clarity:** Families need to understand what happened, where the person is, what charges are being used, who is responsible, and what immediate risks exist.

**Safety:** Families may be watched, threatened, harassed, doxxed, or pressured into silence. Safety must be treated as a core part of the strategy.

**A plan:** The first days are confusing. A simple plan reduces panic: who documents, who speaks, who contacts lawyers, who contacts WLC, and who supports children or older relatives.

**A network:** No family can do this alone. The family needs trusted allies: lawyers, doctors, media contacts, human rights organizations, faith leaders, diaspora groups, and other families.

**Emotional support:** The family carries fear, anger, helplessness, and exhaustion. WLC should normalize care for family members as a strategic necessity, not a luxury.

## 2. The WLC Family Support Pathway

**Step 1 — Receive the case safely:** WLC should create a simple intake process. The family should be asked for only the information needed at the beginning: name of the prisoner, country, date of detention, location if known, charges if known, urgent health or safety concerns, and preferred contact method.

**Step 2 — Identify immediate risk:** Is the person disappeared? Is there torture risk? Is the family being threatened? Are children at risk? Is the case public or still private? The answer determines urgency and visibility.

**Step 3 — Build a small case team:** Each family should have a small coordination group: one family contact, one WLC contact, one legal or human rights contact if available, one communications contact, and one security/digital support contact when needed.

**Step 4 — Create a case file:** WLC can help the family organize facts, documents, photos, medical information, legal records, witness statements, media links, and a timeline. The case file must be secure and updated.

**Step 5 — Decide public or private strategy:** Some cases need immediate visibility; some require short-term discretion. WLC can help families think through the risks, but the decision should respect the prisoner's interests and the family's safety.

**Step 6 — Connect the case to action:** A case should not remain only a story. It should lead to concrete actions: legal petitions, diplomatic briefings, media outreach, prisoner support, family assistance, sanctions documentation, or reintegration planning.

## 3. The First 72 Hours After a Detention

The first 72 hours are often decisive. This is when authorities may deny the detention, hide the location, pressure the family, fabricate charges, or mistreat the detainee. WLC can help families move from panic to disciplined action.

Time	Family priority	WLC can help by...	Do not forget
0-6 hours	Confirm the detention and location.	Help the family prepare a basic incident report and identify trusted legal or human rights contacts.	Do not publish unverified information.
6-24 hours	Document facts and decide whether visibility is needed.	Help assess whether public attention may protect the detainee or increase risk.	Preserve screenshots, videos, names, dates, and official statements.
24-48 hours	Build the support team and clarify roles.	Help assign roles: spokesperson, documenter, legal contact, media contact, security contact, family care lead.	Keep one official narrative to avoid confusion.
48-72 hours	Begin legal, media, and international pathways.	Help prepare a short case brief, outreach list, and action plan.	Protect family members from burnout and digital exposure.

## 4. The WLC Political Prisoner Case File

A case file is the backbone of advocacy. It should be accurate, organized, secure, and easy to update. It can support legal defense, international advocacy, media work, asylum claims, sanctions dossiers, and future reparations.

Section	What to include	Why it matters
Identity	Full name, date of birth, nationality, profession, family contact.	Prevents confusion and helps partners verify the case.
Timeline	Detention date, place, responsible actors, transfers, hearings, visits, health updates.	Creates a clear record and helps identify patterns of abuse.
Legal status	Charges, case number, court, lawyer, hearings, documents, restrictions.	Supports domestic and international legal action.
Health and detention conditions	Injuries, chronic conditions, medication needs, torture allegations, isolation, lack of visits.	Helps urgent protection, medical advocacy, and evidence gathering.
Public narrative	Short biography, peaceful activities, family story, photo, clear call to action.	Humanizes the case and counters regime propaganda.
Evidence	Photos, videos, witness statements, court papers, media reports, medical reports.	Provides proof for advocacy, litigation, and accountability.
Risk notes	Sensitive names, security concerns, family vulnerabilities, topics not to publish.	Protects the prisoner, relatives, and sources.

## 5. How WLC Can Help with Documentation

- Help families create a timeline of the detention and update it regularly.
- Teach families to keep a secure log of visits, legal events, health updates, harassment, threats, and official statements.
- Encourage families to save copies of documents in two secure places: one physical and one encrypted digital backup.
- Help families distinguish confirmed facts from rumors. Credibility is protection.
- Connect families with legal experts or human rights organizations when a case may require international mechanisms.

## 6. How WLC Can Help Build a Support Network

- Start small: family members, trusted friends, lawyer, doctor if possible, one communications person, and one WLC contact.
- Assign roles clearly: spokesperson, monitor, legal contact, media contact, family care coordinator, security contact, diaspora liaison.
- Set a meeting rhythm: a short weekly update, plus emergency calls only when needed.
- Create a simple task list: what must happen this week, who owns it, and when it must be done.

- Connect families with other families of political prisoners for moral support, shared learning, and solidarity.

## **7. How WLC Can Help with Communications**

- Prepare a one-page human profile: who the prisoner is, what they did peacefully, what happened, what rights are being violated, and what action is requested.
- Choose one respectful image and use it consistently across materials.
- Appoint one spokesperson when possible. This avoids mixed messages and protects the family from constant pressure.
- Help the family decide which channels to use: social media, traditional media, diaspora networks, diplomatic briefings, faith communities, or private advocacy.
- Practice interviews before going public. The spokesperson should stay calm, avoid speculation, and repeat the central demand: release and protection of rights.

## **8. How WLC Can Help with Legal and International Advocacy**

- Help families understand the difference between domestic legal action, international complaints, urgent protection mechanisms, and advocacy with governments or parliaments.
- Connect families to pro bono lawyers, human rights clinics, or specialized NGOs when available.
- Support preparation of a short technical brief for diplomats, legislators, UN mechanisms, regional bodies, and international organizations.
- Help identify specific asks: prison visit, medical attention, end of isolation, proof of life, release, precautionary measures, sanctions, or public statements.
- Encourage careful coordination between national lawyers and international advocates so the legal and public strategies do not contradict each other.

## **9. How WLC Can Help with Security and Digital Protection**

- Help families assess physical risk: surveillance, harassment, travel risk, hostile crowds, police visits, or threats to children and relatives.
- Encourage a basic digital security reset: strong passwords, password manager, multifactor authentication, device updates, reduced location sharing, and careful use of photos.
- Create a simple PACE communications plan: primary, alternate, contingency, and emergency methods of communication.
- Teach families not to send sensitive information through unsafe channels and not to publish routines, locations, or travel plans.

- Connect high-risk families with digital security helplines or trusted technical partners when spyware or hacking is suspected.

## 10. How WLC Can Help with Emotional and Family Support

- Remind families that fear, anger, exhaustion, guilt, and sadness are normal responses to abnormal cruelty.
- Encourage families to create safe spaces for children and to explain the situation in age-appropriate language.
- Promote support circles for spouses, parents, siblings, and children of prisoners.
- Help families set boundaries with media and supporters. They are not obligated to speak all the time.
- Refer families to professional mental health support when trauma, depression, insomnia, panic, or suicidal thoughts appear.

## 11. How WLC Can Help After Release

- Help families prepare a release kit: identification documents, medicine, clothing, transport, trusted contacts, cash, and a safe phone.
- Encourage immediate medical attention in the first 24 to 72 hours and documentation of injuries or untreated conditions.
- Help the family decide when to speak publicly and when to rest. The released person should respond on their own terms.
- Support reintegration planning: legal status, housing, banking, employment, education, trauma support, and family healing.
- Help former prisoners and families turn pain into purpose only when they choose. Continuing activism is meaningful, but it should not be imposed.

## 12. A Simple WLC Assistance Menu for Families

WLC cannot promise release, legal victory, funding, asylum, or protection. What it can offer is accompaniment, structure, connections, training, and strategic clarity.

Family need	Possible WLC support	Practical output
I do not know what to do first.	Initial coaching session.	72-hour action plan.
I need to organize the facts.	Case file support.	Timeline, evidence checklist, secure log.
I need people to help.	Support network design.	Role map and weekly coordination plan.
I need to speak publicly.	Communications guidance.	One-page profile, spokesperson notes, call to action.
I need legal help.	Referral and routing.	List of possible legal or human rights partners.

Family need	Possible WLC support	Practical output
I feel unsafe.	Security triage.	Basic risk plan and digital hygiene checklist.
My family is exhausted.	Family support circle or referral.	Care plan and boundaries for advocacy.
The prisoner may be released.	Release preparation.	Release kit, first-week plan, media boundaries.
We are in exile.	Reintegration guidance.	Housing, legal status, employment, banking, and community map.

### 13. Template: First Message to WLC

My name is [name]. I am contacting WLC because [name of prisoner] was detained on [date] in [country/city]. We believe this is a political detention because [short reason]. The location is [known/unknown]. The urgent risks are [health/torture/disappearance/family threats/legal hearing]. The safest way to contact us is [method]. We need help with [documentation/legal contacts/media/security/family support].

### 14. Template: One-Paragraph Public Case Summary

[Name] is a [profession/role] from [country] who has peacefully defended [cause]. On [date], [he/she/they] was detained by [authority if known] after [brief facts]. The detention appears politically motivated because [reason]. We call for [release/proof of life/medical access/legal access/end of isolation] and urge democratic governments, human rights organizations, and citizens to stand with [name] and all political prisoners.

### 15. Template: Weekly Family Coordination Agenda

1. What changed this week? 2. What do we know for sure? 3. What remains uncertain? 4. What are the prisoner's health and legal needs? 5. What threats or harassment occurred? 6. What communications are planned? 7. What legal or international actions are next? 8. Who needs emotional or material support? 9. What tasks must be completed before the next meeting?

### 16. Ethical Principles for WLC Support

**Do no harm:** Never expose information that could endanger the prisoner, family, lawyers, sources, or supporters.

**Respect family agency:** WLC advises and supports; it should not take over the family's voice or decisions.

**Protect dignity:** Political prisoners are not campaign objects. Their humanity, privacy, faith, family, and choices must be respected.

**Verify before publishing:** Wrong information can harm the case and damage credibility.

**Coordinate legal and public strategy:** Media pressure and legal action must reinforce each other, not conflict.

**Care for the caregivers:** Family members need support, rest, mental health care, and boundaries.

**Think beyond release:** Liberation is not the end. WLC should also support recovery, reintegration, justice, and renewed purpose.

## 17. One-Page Checklist for Families

- Confirm detention and location if possible.
- Start a secure case log immediately.
- Identify one family spokesperson.
- Save documents, screenshots, videos, witness names, and official statements.
- Contact a trusted lawyer or human rights organization.
- Decide whether immediate publicity is protective or risky.
- Build a support network with clear roles.
- Prepare a short human profile and respectful photo.
- Review digital security and protect family members.
- Keep children and vulnerable relatives emotionally supported.
- Ask WLC for help connecting the case to advocacy, legal, security, and family-support pathways.
- Review and adjust the strategy every week.

## **Selected WLC Source Materials**

- World Liberty Congress, *After Liberation: Handbook for the Reintegration of Political Prisoners*, 1st edition, November 2025.
- World Liberty Congress, *Camino hacia la Libertad: Manual para la Liberación de Presos Políticos*.
- World Liberty Congress *Theory of Change and Playbook for Liberty framework*, 2026.

Note: This guide is a practical training document. It does not replace legal, medical, psychological, or emergency security advice. Families should consult qualified professionals whenever possible.