



# KNOW YOUR RIGHTS:

## Law Enforcement

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Last Update: April 20, 2025

**ADC**  
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## Introduction

This guide explains your basic rights when interacting with law enforcement officers like local or state police, or federal agents like the FBI. These rights generally apply to everyone in the U.S., regardless of citizenship or immigration status. Knowing your rights can help you navigate these encounters safely and protect yourself, especially as individuals of Arab descent may sometimes face profiling or biased questioning. The most important things are to stay calm, state your rights clearly, and don't consent to searches or answer questions without a lawyer if you are being investigated.

## Your Rights

### 1. If You Are Stopped on the Street (Pedestrian Stop)

- **Stay Calm:** Do not run, resist, or obstruct the officer. Keep your hands where the police can see them.
- **Ask:** "Am I free to leave?" If the officer says yes, calmly walk away. If they say no, you are being detained.
- **Ask:** "Why am I being stopped?" Police need "reasonable suspicion" that you are involved in criminal activity to detain you temporarily.
- **Right to Remain Silent:** You generally do not have to answer questions about where you are going, where you are coming from, what you are doing, or your immigration status. In some states/localities (including DC), you may be required to provide your name if detained based on reasonable suspicion, but you don't have to answer other questions. You can say, "I wish to remain silent."
- **Searches:** Police can pat down your outer clothing for weapons only if they have a reasonable suspicion you are armed and dangerous. They cannot search your pockets or belongings during a simple stop unless they feel an obvious weapon or contraband, or if they have probable cause or your consent. State clearly: "I do not consent to a search."

## 2. If You Are Stopped in Your Car (Traffic Stop)

- **Pull Over Safely:** Stop the car in a safe place as quickly as possible. Turn off the engine. At night, turn on the internal light. Keep your hands on the steering wheel.
- **Provide Documents:** Show your driver's license, registration, and proof of insurance when asked by the officer.
- **Right to Remain Silent:** Both the driver and passengers have the right to remain silent. The driver may need to answer questions related to the traffic stop itself, but you don't have to answer questions about where you are going, where you came from, or other unrelated topics. Passengers do not need to answer questions.
- **Searches:** Police need "probable cause" (a reasonable belief a crime has been committed) or your consent to search your car. They can search the passenger area if they arrest an occupant. State clearly: "I do not consent to a search" of your vehicle or belongings. If they search anyway, do not physically resist.

## 3. If Police or FBI Come to Your Home

- **Do NOT Open the Door (Unless They Have a Judicial Warrant):** You do not have to open your door to police or FBI agents unless they have a warrant signed by a judge. An arrest warrant allows them to enter if they have reason to believe the person named on the warrant is inside. A search warrant allows them to search the location described in the warrant for the items listed.
- **Ask to See the Warrant:** Ask them to show you the warrant through a window, peephole, or by sliding it under the door. Check it carefully: Is it signed by a judge? Does it have the correct address? Does it list who or what they are searching for?
- **If No Valid Judicial Warrant:** You can state clearly through the closed door: "I do not consent to your entry or search." Do not open the door or let them in.
- **If They Have a Valid Judicial Warrant:** You must let them enter. Stay calm. Do not interfere with their search. Clearly state: "I wish to remain silent. I want a lawyer."

Observe and remember details if it is safe to do so.

- **Do Not Consent:** If you voluntarily let officers in without a warrant, you give up your right to privacy in your home for that instance.

#### 4. If You Are Arrested

- **Do Not Resist:** Do not physically resist arrest, even if you believe it is unfair or unlawful. Resisting can lead to additional charges.
- **State Your Rights Clearly:** Say clearly and repeatedly if necessary: "I wish to remain silent. I want a lawyer."
- **Provide Basic Information:** You may be required to provide your name, address, and date of birth. Do not answer any other questions, sign any forms, or make any decisions without a lawyer present.
- **Right to a Phone Call:** After being arrested and taken to the station, you generally have the right to make a local phone call (to a lawyer, family member, etc.) within a reasonable time.

#### 5. Questioning by Police or FBI

- **Right to Remain Silent:** This is crucial. You do not have to answer questions from police or FBI agents, whether you are on the street, in your home, at work, or at a police station. This includes questions about your background, beliefs, religion, associations, travel history, or political opinions.
- **FBI Interviews:** The FBI often conducts interviews they describe as "voluntary." You have the right to refuse to speak with them. You can tell them you will not answer questions without a lawyer present. Do not feel pressured to "cooperate" by answering questions that could be misinterpreted or used against you or others.
- **Right to a Lawyer:** If you are arrested and being questioned ("custodial interrogation"), police must read you your Miranda rights, including the right to a lawyer. State clearly: "I want a lawyer." If you are not under arrest but are being

questioned (e.g., FBI "voluntary" interview), you still have the right to refuse to answer and to consult a lawyer before speaking.

## 6. Searches (Your Person, Car, Home)

- **Do Not Consent:** Always clearly state: "I do not consent to a search" of your person, belongings, car, or home. Police generally need probable cause and often a warrant to conduct a search, unless an exception applies (like consent, items in plain view, search incident to arrest, etc.). Saying you do not consent makes it clear they cannot rely on your permission.
- **If Searched Without Consent:** Do not physically resist the search. Clearly state that the search is being done without your permission.

## 7. Important Reminders

- Stay calm and polite. Do not run, argue, resist, or obstruct the officers.
- Clearly state: "I wish to remain silent. I want a lawyer."
- Clearly state: "I do not consent to a search."
- Never lie or provide false documents.
- Do not sign anything without consulting a lawyer.
- After the encounter is over, write down everything you remember as soon as possible: officer names, badge numbers, patrol car numbers, agency (e.g., local police, FBI), witnesses, what was said and done, and the location and time. Take photos of any injuries or property damage if applicable.

**Protect yourself, your family, and your community. Share this to spread awareness!**

**Contact us at our 27/7 hotline at 844.ADC.9955 (844.232.9955).**



**Disclaimer:** This information is for educational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Laws and procedures can vary by location. For advice on your specific situation, please consult with a criminal defense attorney.