



United States Embassy

*Kigali, Rwanda*

250-596-400

[consularkigali@state.gov](mailto:consularkigali@state.gov)

<http://rwanda.usembassy.gov>

## Help for American Victims of Crime in Rwanda

---

Please click on this link to read the Department of State's brochure for victims of crime.  
(Template last updated February 21, 2008)

**May 19, 2008**

Being the victim of a crime in a foreign country can be a devastating and traumatic experience. While no one can undo the emotional trauma, physical injury, or financial loss you may experience if you are a crime victim, the U.S. Embassy in Kigali is ready to help. We will assist you in managing the practical consequences of being a crime victim and provide you with information about accessing the local criminal justice system, as well as other resources for crime victims abroad and in the United States. We can also assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family or friends on your behalf and explain how funds can be transferred. We can also help you to better understand the criminal justice system in Rwanda which is very different from the system in the United States.

The information included in this guide relating to the legal requirements in Rwanda is provided for general information purposes only. The information may not be fully applicable or relevant to a particular case. Questions involving interpretation of Rwanda laws should be addressed to legal counsel licensed to practice law in Rwanda. The investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities and not the U.S. Embassy. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), however, may assist local authorities in certain cases of kidnapping, hostage-taking and terrorism.

**REPORTING CRIMES:** Victims of crime may file police reports or register complaints at police stations. Crimes must be reported in the jurisdiction in which they occurred. There are no special police officers dedicated to assisting foreigners, but Americans can find contact numbers for bilingual station chiefs at our website: [http://rwanda.usembassy.gov/rwanda\\_police\\_contact\\_information.html](http://rwanda.usembassy.gov/rwanda_police_contact_information.html) Police reports should be filed as soon as possible to aid police in investigating the crime. If someone else files the police report on the victim's behalf, they should have a notarized "procuration" or statement from the victim giving them authority. Statements should include all details of the crime. Crime victims are generally given copies of their police reports, and Americans who have left Rwanda can request the U.S. Embassy facilitate this for them. While there are generally bilingual staff to be found at police stations, police do not provide formal interpretation services; victims may call upon bilingual colleagues or friends to accompany them.

Criminal investigations and prosecutions are all handled locally rather than through the Rwandan Embassy in Washington.

If you have difficulties filing your police report with an official, please contact us immediately. You may need a police report to file for crime victim compensation or insurance reimbursement. If you do decide to file a report, please send a copy to us, along with your address and phone number in the event we need to communicate with you. While we are not authorized to act as your legal representative, prosecutor or investigator, our office can help you track the progress of your case and advise you of any developments.

**INVESTIGATIONS:** Many crime investigations never result in the arrest of a suspect. The Rwandan National Police are responsible for investigating crimes, but there is little to no forensic capability in Rwanda. Police must investigate the crime within 72 hours which is the maximum amount of time a suspect can be detained; in some cases the police may request an additional 24 hours to gather evidence before filing charges. Victims who have left Rwanda can get information about the progress of investigations by contacting the police station handling their case, their lawyer or through us. Victims experiencing threats, harassment or intimidation by the accused or his/her family or friends should report this to the police and to their local lawyer. A list of Rwandan lawyers is provided at: [http://rwanda.usembassy.gov/attorneys\\_in\\_rwanda.html](http://rwanda.usembassy.gov/attorneys_in_rwanda.html).

**ARRESTS / PRETRIAL PERIOD:** Please see our explanation of the Rwandan criminal justice process at: [http://rwanda.usembassy.gov/criminal\\_justice\\_in\\_rwanda.html](http://rwanda.usembassy.gov/criminal_justice_in_rwanda.html). Victims are notified of arrests by their lawyers or representatives in Rwanda, and are expected to identify perpetrators if necessary. Victims are questioned for details at the time they make their statement to file a police report. Plea bargaining is an option in the Rwandan justice system. There are no special victim advocates; in general victims are represented by the National Prosecutor's Office unless they choose to hire their own lawyer.

**TRIAL:** Trials can last over a year or more in Rwanda. The victim may be required to return to the host country one or more times to testify unless s/he hires a lawyer to represent her/him at trial. Victims that have left the country generally would not submit their statements to the Rwandan Embassy in Washington, DC, but send them to the police station responsible for their case or via the US Embassy in Rwanda. Media, outside visitors and U.S. consular officers are generally allowed to attend court hearings. The court should provide translation for witnesses who do not speak the local language, but in practice victims will often have to find their own interpreters. Many foreigners use the translation services of Symposia Group at 250 (0)8300380 / 250 (0)8456416 or [symposiasarl@yahoo.fr](mailto:symposiasarl@yahoo.fr). Filming and photos are generally prohibited in court rooms.

**SENTENCING:** Sentencing is typically determined by the judge assigned to the case. Sentences are published in public registrars and victims could also be informed of sentences by their local lawyers.

**APPEALS:** Victims may request an application for review to the court that delivered the judgment. They may have to testify again.

**ATTORNEYS:** You may want to consider hiring a local attorney to insure you have appropriate legal guidance. Local legal procedures differ from those in the United States. Although the national prosecutor is responsible for prosecuting your case, an attorney you hire can promote your interests with the police and the court. While we cannot recommend specific attorneys, we can provide you with a list of attorneys who have expressed interest in representing U.S. citizens. This list is available on our website at [http://rwanda.usembassy.gov/attorneys\\_in\\_rwanda.html](http://rwanda.usembassy.gov/attorneys_in_rwanda.html).

**VICTIM COMPENSATION IN RWANDA:** There is no national crime victim assistance office in Rwanda. There is a bilingual hotline for domestic, gender-based and sexual abuse at phone number 3112. Psychological and medical assistance referrals can be found at our website: [http://rwanda.usembassy.gov/medical\\_information.html](http://rwanda.usembassy.gov/medical_information.html). Some states in the U.S. offer services and compensation for residents who have been victims of crimes overseas. Please find more information at our website: [http://rwanda.usembassy.gov/resources\\_for\\_crime\\_victims2.html](http://rwanda.usembassy.gov/resources_for_crime_victims2.html).

The Rwanda government does not provide monetary compensation to crime victims. The court can order the perpetrator to pay restitution. Victims can sue for damages in civil court or file a criminal suit, not both.

**EMBASSY LOCATION:** Americans living or traveling in Rwanda are encouraged to register with the nearest with the Embassy through the State Department's travel registration website so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Rwanda. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the Embassy. By registering, American citizens make it easier for us to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 2657, Avenue de la Gendarmerie, Kacyiru, Kigali, Rwanda. Tel.: 250-496-500. Fax: 250-590-591. Website: <http://rwanda.usembassy.gov> . E-mail: [consularkigali@state.gov](mailto:consularkigali@state.gov) .

**SPECIAL INFORMATION FOR CASES OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND RAPE:** Physical evidence is very important in sexual assault cases, and can deteriorate as time passes. As such, victims should not change clothes, avoid bathing if possible, and have a physical exam at the first opportunity. You should take these steps even if you are unsure about whether to report the crime to police. If you decide to pursue a prosecution at a later time, these steps preserve evidence that will assist the prosecutor. A consular officer or after-hours duty officer from the U.S. Embassy may be able to accompany victims of sexual assault for the medical exam.

Sexual assault in Rwanda is defined as any unwanted touching or defilement, and rape is defined as unwanted sexual penetration for adults, and any sexual relations with minors.

The Rwandan police authorize sexual assault exams at the time the crime is reported. The police provide the victim with a form attesting to the crime that he / she can take to any local hospital for a free exam. The medical exams are done primarily to confirm sexual penetration. The hospital would also look for signs of violence. The victim is allowed to bring someone along for support.

While an exam may aid in the investigation and subsequent prosecution of a rape or sexual assault, it is not required in order to file charges.

You should get medical attention to determine if you have been injured in any way and to discuss treatment and prevention options for pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. While voluntary abortion is a crime in Rwanda, emergency contraception ("the morning after pill", or Microgynon) is available with a doctor's prescription at the Pharmacie Conseil (tel. 250-572-374), opposite the Belgian School in town. King Faisal Hospital also offers emergency contraception and post-exposure HIV prophylaxis through its emergency and Ob-gyn medical staff. HIV testing and post-exposure prophylaxis is available from many NGOs such as Women's Access to Care and Treatment (We-ACT) at 250 (0)860 6709 and Project San Francisco at 250 503 233. The Embassy can provide you with a list of local medical facilities, available at: [http://rwanda.usembassy.gov/medical\\_information.html](http://rwanda.usembassy.gov/medical_information.html). The Centers for Disease Control offers a 24 hour hotline on HIV / AIDS at: 800-342-AIDS.

The victim will be interviewed by a specially trained police officer assigned to sexual crimes. Spousal and date rape are viewed as crimes. Male rape is also considered a crime, though not explicitly discussed in the Rwandan criminal code.

Media outlets are not permitted to release the names of rape victims.

There is a hotline for victims of gender-based violence and child abuse, at 3112. English speakers are available.

**SPECIAL INFORMATION FOR CASES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:** Domestic violence is considered a crime in Rwanda. Protective / restraining orders are uncommon in Rwanda and would be difficult to enforce. Domestic abuse shelter facilities are very limited and most victims would seek shelter from

family or friends. There is a domestic abuse hotline at telephone number 3112 with English-speaking operators available. Harassment is considered a crime in Rwanda.

**SPECIAL INFORMATION FOR CASES OF CHILD ABUSE:** The Rwanda National Police are responsible for the protection of children and investigation of child abuse. Crimes against children carry heavy sentences. Anyone can report child abuse, either by calling the child abuse hotline at 3112 or by calling the police chief responsible for their area. Most abused children would be placed with friends or family as foster care facilities are limited in Rwanda. A list of orphanages in Rwanda can be found at: [http://rwanda.usembassy.gov/orphanages\\_in\\_rwanda2.html](http://rwanda.usembassy.gov/orphanages_in_rwanda2.html). Local counseling and medical references can be found at our website: [http://rwanda.usembassy.gov/medical\\_information.html](http://rwanda.usembassy.gov/medical_information.html). It is uncommon for a child to be required to testify at a trial in Rwanda, and special accommodations can be made to minimize the trauma.