

OWS Jail Support Basics (for Manhattan)

What Jail Support is

Jail support is both tracking arrestees as they move through the arrest and arraignment process and providing comfort to arrestees when they are released. It is a way of showing solidarity with other people involved with Occupy Wall Street and a way of taking care of our friends and community. Through jail support, we show that we're not going to let the legal system be used as a way to wear us down.

What Jail Support is Not

Jail support is not a chance to stick it to the man. This means that you should comply with reasonable requests from officers, such as moving slightly farther away from the precinct, and that you should not antagonize desk sergeants or court officers. When our fellow activists are in custody our behavior outside the precinct can effect how quickly they are released. The general policy of OWS jail support is that if you are arrested for doing something stupid while providing jail support, we won't provide jail support for you.

→ Jail support is not legal assistance or advice. We work closely with the National Lawyers Guild (NLG), but we aren't lawyers and therefore can't answer specific legal questions, though we happily share our knowledge of the legal system and arrest process.

How OWS Jail Support Works

OWS Jail Support has a central coordination phone number (google voice account). Coordination monitor the account and response to text messages, voice mail, and calls. Coordination is in touch with the NLG and several OWS working groups. After finding out about arrests, coordination mass texted people who have volunteered to do jail support and lines up coverage. Coordination acts as a go-between and resource for the people on the ground. Coordination can also be a resource for friends and family of arrestees.

→ When arrestees are released, be friendly, but remember that not everyone wants to be hugged after an upsetting and possibly traumatic experience. They will probably be released without their coats, bags, phones, and possibly even wallets. If possible, offer them a phone to make a call. Try to have food and water to offer them. Make sure to know where the closest subway stops are.

→ Once they have had a moment to catch their breath, collect the following info for the NLG: (1) legal name, (2) charges, (3) court return date, and (4) contact info- either phone or email. The NLG has a form that you can use, but this is the crucial info in case you don't have forms with you. If they do not feel comfortable giving you that info, having them call the NLG and leave the info on their voice mail. Please make sure that you either give that information to the JS coordinator or to the nlg and let the coordination know that you have. In terms of getting it to the NLG, you can call it in, email it, or drop off paper copies the next day. The NLG needs this information promptly. Make sure that coordination knows what's going on with this information.

Basics for Jail Support at Precincts

When you get to the precinct, go in and ask if they are holding specific people. Some precincts will let you wait inside. Others will request not only that you wait outside, but that you wait about a block or just around the corner away. As long as the request is somewhat reasonable, please comply. Either the arrestees will be released from the precinct, or they will be transferred to Central Booking (100 Centre Street). We try to have someone witness the transfer so that we know for certain that it happened and when.

Basics for Jail Support at One Police Plaza (1PP)

The standard set up for 1PP is to have a single person close to the back doors and then a larger set up at Chatham Square. As far as we can tell, people are only taken to 1PP in cases of large mass arrests. There is no desk sargent, so you won't be able to find out who is being held there. It is difficult but exceptionally important to catch people being released from here. Otherwise, we don't know where they are and we won't know when everyone is out and we can all go home and sleep.

Basics for Jail Support at 100 Centre Street (Central Booking)

The first step at 100 Centre is to get the names of those arrested from coordination. With the list of names, you can go to the clerk and get their arrest numbers, and then later docket numbers. Arrest numbers are in the format "Mxxxxxxx." Docket numbers are in the format "#2012NYxxxx." There is also a list in the hallway that contains all of that information, but it is only updated periodically. Docket numbers are generally available 2-4 hours before the person comes up for arraignment. Arraignment is when the arrestee goes in front of a judge, charges are read, and bail is set (if applicable). If bail has been requested, it should be in the docket (paperwork the lawyer receives). Just because bail has been requested by the prosecution does not mean that the judge will set it. The high-definition iris photographs taken in the courtroom are in a legal gray area. We believe they not mandatory, but the judge or court officers tell many arrestees that they are. If the person declines the photo it seems to increase the amount of time between docketing and arraignment, sometimes overnight.

What You Need to Know About Bail

Bail is posted at 125 White Street. Contact coordination immediately if bail is needed or a lawyer tells you that it might be needed. Make sure that non-NLG lawyers know bail will be posted. Once the arraignment happens and bail is required, tell the court officers that you will be posting bail as soon as cash arrives, call or text jail support coordination, and go immediately to the bail office and start waiting for the form for posting bail. This can be a long process. The information that you need to start is: name, address, date of birth, charges, docket number, and bail amount. There are runners for the bail fund who will bring the money down to pay the bail, but you need to start putting the paperwork through immediately to stop the transfer of the arrestee to Rikers.

Remember

We are all volunteers. We are all trying our best. This is true for other people *and* yourself. We're working with a system that does not want to work with us. Sometimes police or court officers give us bad information.

Sometimes it might be on purpose, sometimes it's clearly by accident. There's a good chance that no matter what, some arrestees will slip though, but that doesn't mean that anyone is a bad person or that it isn't worth continuing to try. If you realize that someone you are waiting for has been released and you missed them, please let coordination know. Please tell coordination if you think you know why or how it happened so that we can learn from it. We're never going to blame you for stepping up to help and being unlucky.

→ Jail support is tough. You will probably be outside, possibly in bad weather, late at night, for many hours. We do jail support because we believe that it is important to take care of the people in our movement. Taking care of people in our movement includes taking care of ourselves. Take your vitamins, eat well, sleep as best you can, spend time with friends, meditate or do other things that ground you and make you happy. It's good for you, it's good for our community, it's good for our movement, it's good for our world. Please take a break now for self-care instead of dropping out completely in the future from burn out. We like having you around.

Useful Information

Jail Support Coordination #774-257-4697 (77-42-JS 4 OWS), ows.js.voice@gmail.com

National Lawyers Guild (NYC Chapter) #212-679-6018, nlgnyinc@igc.org

1st Precinct- 16 Ericsson Pl (Varick St, near Holland Tunnel). ACE to Canal, 1 to Franklin.

7th Precinct- 19 ½ Pitt St (Broome St, near Williamsburg Bridge). JMZ to Essex, F to Delancey.

Sometimes arrestees are taken to other precincts, but the 1st and the 7th have been the most frequent.

100 Centre Street (Central Booking)- A few blocks north of Folley Square. Limited space inside. You can wait on benches outside the court room, outside to the side of the steps, and at Folley Square.

One Police Plaza (1pp)- Complex south of Folley Square on Park Row, at base of Brooklyn Bridge.

Chatham Square- A set of two parks where jail support sets up for 1PP. We wait at Pearl and Rose.

125 White Street- Bail Office. This is around the left corner of 100 Centre.

List of all NYPD Precincts: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/html/home/precincts.shtml>

Central Booking # 212-374-3921 and 212-374-3942

Webcrims: http://iapps.courts.state.ny.us/webcrim_attorney/jcaptcha