

Arrest & Detention Toolkit

Surviving State Repression with Dignity, Strategy, and Solidarity





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We live in a time where the law serves the empire more than it serves people. As resistance grows, so does repression. In 2025 America, arbitrary arrests aren't a glitch, they're the operating system. Trans people, especially those who are also BIPOC, disabled, undocumented, or visibly oppositional, face heightened threats at the hands of police, ICE, and deputized vigilantes. They want us to be afraid. They want us to disappear quietly. But we will not.

This field guide is a defiant tool of survival and mutual defense. It synthesizes grassroots tactics, legal frameworks, and community wisdom into a quick-response manual. It's meant to be copied, shared, written on, folded into your shoe, tattooed on your wrist, and whispered to your friends. Whether you're organizing a march, passing through a checkpoint, or just existing in a hostile zone, this is your pocket shield.

It does not glorify violence nor prescribe illegality. It is a **defensive document**, rooted in lawful resistance and basic survival. It will walk you through your rights, what to say, what not to say, what to bring, how to plan, and how to regroup after arrest. It is a lifeline in a collapsing empire. If they want to disappear us, we become un-disappearable.

I. Context: Arbitrary Arrest in 2025

Authoritarian regimes escalate by criminalizing dissent. In the U.S. of 2025, arbitrary arrest is being normalized, especially for trans people, BIPOC, immigrants, activists, disabled folks, and protestors.

1. Key Trends

- [Anti-protest laws](#) in 30+ states criminalize blocking roads, wearing masks, or organizing without permits
- [Border zones](#) allow for warrantless stops within 100 miles of any U.S. boundary
- [ICE, local police, and deputized militias](#) now collaborate in some jurisdictions
- [Arrests of trans people](#) under "disorderly conduct," loitering, or bathroom bills are rising



II. Know Your Rights (and Limits)

1. During a Stop or Arrest

- You have the **right to remain silent** (say: “I am invoking my right to remain silent.”)
- You do **not have to answer questions** about immigration status, gender, or political affiliation
- Ask: “Am I being detained or am I free to go?”
- **Do not consent to searches** (say: “I do not consent to a search.”)

2. Police Tactics to Expect

- “Voluntary conversations” meant to get you to self-incriminate
- Pretextual stops using minor infractions
- Pressure to reveal identity, affiliations, or unlock your phone

III. Mental Scripts & Actions

1. If Approached:

- Stay calm, hands visible
- Say: “Am I free to go?” — if yes, walk away slowly
- Record the interaction if safe (or signal to someone to do so)

2. If Arrested:

- Don’t resist physically — but clearly state: “I do not consent to this search/arrest.”
- Repeat: “I am invoking my right to remain silent, and I want a lawyer.”
- If you have health needs (disability, meds, trans-specific care), state them and ask to speak to a supervisor

3. In Custody:

- You have the right to **one phone call** — memorize a legal number or jail support line
- Give only basic ID info; do not talk about the incident, affiliations, or others

4. Arrest Survival Kit

- Written emergency contact & lawyer number (in shoe or wallet)
- Med list, allergies, disability needs (laminated card)
- Small cash for phones/transport on release
- Gender affirming documents or medical letters
- Trans Lifeline/legal hotline numbers (tattooed, memorized, or hidden)



IV. Support Structures

1. Before Action:

- Form affinity groups with a designated “jail support” comrade
- Use buddy systems: always have someone tracking you
- Write legal info on skin in Sharpie
- Leave emergency plans with someone you trust

2. After Release:

- Document injuries, names, badge numbers, statements
- Get medical/mental health care ASAP
- Debrief with your group: emotional processing, lessons, next steps
- Consider legal aid for filing abuse complaints or civil rights lawsuits

Tools & Resources

• Apps:

- [Mobile Justice \(ACLU\)](#)
- [Signal](#)
- [Bystander](#)
- [Legal Observers Toolkit](#)

• Hotlines:

- [National Lawyers Guild](#)
- [Trans Lifeline](#)
- [Immigration Legal Defense Fund](#)

• Training:

- [Know Your Rights teach-ins](#)
- [Roleplay arrest scenarios](#)
- [Mental Health First Aid](#)

• Zines:

- ["What to Do If You're Arrested"](#)
- ["Jail Support 101"](#)
- ["Queer Legal Self-Defense"](#)



Conclusion

This is not just about legal rights. It's about **presence**. About refusing erasure. About showing up and staying visible even when the system screams for us to vanish. Every trans body in a jail cell is a frontline of the war against authoritarianism. Every act of preparation is a refusal to be a passive victim.

They may control the prisons. We control the **narratives**, the **networks**, the **resistance**.

So, we keep our laces tight, our heads high, and our people close. No matter how many of us they take, we multiply. The Trans Army doesn't disappear, we **reappear** louder, smarter, and harder to kill.

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