

**Baker
McKenzie.**

Real Rights: young people engaging with law enforcement



United Arab Emirates



Developed by Baker McKenzie and the Global Initiative on Justice with Children, Real Rights provides young people – especially young people in vulnerable populations – with legal information for when children encounter police in public settings. Thanks to the pro bono work of over 1,500 volunteer professionals, this database provides answers for children in contact with the police from initial contact to searches and questioning.

Rights:

What rights do I have when I encounter law enforcement?

Question Asked

- Stopped By The Police On The Street, Now What?
- When Can Police Search You and Your Surroundings?
- Reasons Police May Detain or Arrest You
- The Difference Between Police TELLING Me What To Do And ASKING Me To Do Something
- Do Police Need A Warrant To Arrest You?
- How Do You Know If You Are Under Arrest?
- What To Do After Being Warned of Your Rights
- Police Questioning You
- How do I Contact A Lawyer and When?
- Do Police Always Have To Tell The Truth?
- How do I make a complaint if I have questions or feel my rights have been violated?
- What happens and what should I expect after I submit my complaint?
- Options after you receive a decision on your complaint.
- What if I feel I was a victim of discrimination or racism?

Stopped by the police on the street, now what?

Proposed Information

It is important to follow this advice:

- Stay calm. It is not a good idea to run. Speak carefully and clearly. Ensure you are polite and act respectfully. Anything you say may be used against you in a court of law.
- It is not a good idea to touch the officers. Keep your hands where the police can see them, and do not use any form of hand gestures.
- It is not a good idea to resist, even if you are innocent or if you think the police are acting unfairly or unlawfully.

Can the police arrest you for refusing to answer questions?

Generally, no, you have the right to refuse to answer questions. If the police are arresting you, they need to have probable cause, and inform you of your right to remain silent and the offence that you have been alleged to have committed.

Under UAE laws and regulations, a child (a person who is under 18) has the right and shall not be investigated or prosecuted without the presence of their Guardian or a lawyer assigned by their guardian. Children under the age of 12 cannot be held criminally liable.

Definition of a child: Federal Law No. (6) of 2022 concerning Juvenile Delinquent and Juvenile at Risk of Delinquency- Articles 1, 5

<https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/united-arab-emirates/>

What if the officers do not identify themselves?

If someone claiming to be a police officer stops you on the streets, politely ask to see his official identity card first. If they are unable to provide you with an official ID, you may politely decline to communicate with them, walk away and if you think they were pretending to be police officers, report such incident using the eCrime service found on the Dubai Police app or online via the Government of Dubai website.

<https://gulfnews.com/uae/government/abu-dhabi-police-unveils-new-id-cards-badge-1.2063483>

ECrime (dubaipolice.gov.ae)

What if an officer just begins speaking to me but does not order me to do anything?

Stay calm and ensure you are polite and act respectfully. How you respond might depend on the circumstances. If you are under 18, notify the police officer that you are a child and request the presence or for the police to contact your Guardian.

Federal Law No. (6) of 2022 concerning Juvenile Delinquent and Juvenile at Risk of Delinquency – Article 22

What if the officer is not in uniform or identified as an officer but I think it is one?

Politely ask the officer to show his official badge with his police ID. Do not be afraid to inspect it. All police officers have to produce their badges if you ask them, so you can get comfortable knowing that they act for and represent the police.

<https://gulfnews.com/uae/government/abu-dhabi-police-unveils-new-id-cards-badge-1.2063483>

Can I tell police I do not want to speak without a lawyer?

It depends on the circumstances. If you are speaking to the police informally (e.g., they have stopped you in the street) then you do not have a "right" to a lawyer. You should remain calm, polite, and helpful, if possible and try to understand why they have stopped you.

If there was a reason, or you have done something wrong or illegal then you have the right to call your Guardian or a lawyer assigned by your Guardian. Ask the police officer politely to call your Guardian.

Federal Decree by Law No. (38) of 2022, Promulgating the Criminal Procedures Law (UAE Criminal Procedures Law): <https://uaelegislation.gov.ae/en/legislations/1609/download>

If I sit down, am I resisting?

If you are stopped in the street and asked questions, not only could it come across rude if you respond by sitting down, but it may escalate the situation (for example, the police may decide to arrest you for obstructing justice).

In the UAE, you should treat the police with great respect, and try to help if at all possible. However, if you feel tired or you have medical issues, police are understanding, just ask the police officer if its okay to stay seated and explain your medical situation.

If I am stopped in a group, and some kids run, can I run?

It is not advisable to run away, even if others do as this may give the impression that you have done something wrong. If you are later caught, you might also be arrested for obstructing justice.

Federal Law by Decree No. (31) of 2021 Promulgating the Crimes and Penalties Law (<https://uaelegislation.gov.ae/en/legislations/1529/download>)

Can I tell others (siblings, for example) to run?

No. This will also give the police officer the impression that you have done something wrong, and you could also be accused of "aiding and abetting" (helping) the other person to resist (avoid) an arrest.

Article 45 Penal Code (Law No 3 of 1987)

If the officer's language is not my first language, can I tell them without waiving my rights?

Yes, do tell them that you do not understand what they are saying and that you would like a translator to assist. The police officer is required by law to provide you with access to a translator if you do not understand Arabic, English or any other language the police officer might know. If a translator is required during a police investigation, the translator will have to (i) sign off on all police reports that sets out measures taken by the police officer, and (ii) take an oath that he will perform his duties in all loyalty and honesty.

Make sure that you always have your Guardian present. Try to use translating apps if the Police officer is not able to understand your language.

<https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-a-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/united-arab-emirates/>

Article 8 38 of 2022 Criminal Procedures Law

<https://legaladviceme.com/legislation/156/uae-federal-law-35-of-1992-concerning-criminal-procedural-law>

If I did not do anything, can they stop me?

Generally, no, if the police is arresting you, they need to have "probable cause" (essentially, a legal basis/belief that a crime has been committed). The police officer must also inform you of the offence that they are accusing you of having committed.

<https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/united-arab-emirates/>

When Can Police Search You and Your Surroundings?

Proposed Information

It is important to follow this advice:

- The police do have the right to search you and your surroundings (including your body, clothes, or items you are carrying) for things relating to a crime or required for the investigation. (Law No 38 of 2022, Article 52)
- However, if you are female, by law, any physical inspections must be done by a female. (Law No 38 of 2022, Article 53)
- The police cannot inspect your home without a warrant from the public prosecution, unless a crime has immediately occurred, and the police think there may be evidence

in his home. If a police officer shows you a warrant, then you must allow them to carry out the search, as stipulated in the warrant. (Law No 38 of 2022, Article 54)

Chapter 4 Law No 38 of 2022

What if they want to search my phone?

If the police suspects that you have committed a crime that gives them the right to arrest you, they have the right to search your things, including your phone. However, you may ask the police politely the reason for searching your phone.

Please remember that as a child the police can not arrest you or prosecute you without the presence of your Guardian or a lawyer assigned by your Guardian.

Law No 38 of 2022, Article 52 - Criminal Procedural Law

What if they ask me for my password to my phone?

as above, if the police think you have committed a crime which allows them to arrest you, then they have the right to search your phone and will likely therefore ask you for your password, to carry out that search. You may ask the police politely as to the reason for requiring the password to your phone.

Law No 38 of 2022, Article 52

What if they tell me to give them my password or other access to my phone?

As above. UAE police are polite and respectful, try to co-operate and show you have done nothing wrong.

Do I have to give them my device password if they demand it from me if I am not under arrest? What if they just ask for it?

No, if you are stopped without there being any form of probable cause and you are not under arrest, they should not ask for your device and there is no legal obligation to provide it. However, you could politely ask why they would like to ask for your device/password.

What tools can police use to search me? What technology? (Facial recognition, hidden cameras, fingerprint searches, etc.)

In respect of tools used to search you, please note above: if you are female, any search should be carried out by a female.

Law No. 38 of 2022 – Criminal Procedures Law – Article 53

The UAE has impressive technological abilities and can use a number of forms of technology to identify you, including facial recognition and fingerprint.

On technology - no source.

Can they search my backpack or other item I am carrying?

Yes, if the police suspects that you have committed a crime that gives them the right to arrest you, they can search your backpack or anything else you have on you.

When you encounter such a situation, you may ask the police politely for the reason of the search and if you are being suspected of committing a crime.

Law No. 38 of 2022 – Criminal Procedures Law – Article 52

Can they take my picture or record me?

UAE cyber laws expressly prohibit individuals from taking photographs of others without their consent, and it is a criminal offence to do so. There is an exception when the purpose of the

photo is to share it with legal authorities. However, police officers are authorized to take photos or recordings of you upon Guardian's permission and when there is a cause.

In reference to - taking photo or video of the child – and due to the fact that all UAE police officers and vehicles are equipped with surveillance such as; body cams, car monitors, face recognition camera, and voice recording which are in compliance with UAE new cybercrime laws.

Federal Decree-Law on Countering Rumors and Cybercrimes (uaelegislation.gov.ae)

Can they ask me where I am going and why?

It is advisable to cooperate and provide the information asked in a polite and respectful manner. If you do not cooperate, the police may think that you have done something wrong and take further action.

Reasons Police May Detain or Arrest You

Proposed Information

It is important to follow this advice:

- The following applies to the below scenarios. Police cannot detain or arrest children (under 18) without the presence of your authorized guardian or a lawyer assigned by your authorized guardian.
- The police may arrest you because they suspect you of committing (or having committed) a violation of the law, or if they suspect that you currently have evidence of a crime.
- Sometimes police have a warrant for your arrest. If they do, they will need to tell you and show you the warrant document. You should ensure you read carefully and understand what the warrant says and ask for a translation if it is not in your first language.
- If arrested, you may be charged with a felony (the most serious crime, with potential jail time between three and 10 years, or as else stated in the applicable law), a misdemeanor (a less serious crime) for a less serious crime (with jail time between one month to three years, or as else stated in the applicable law) or a violation. **It is important to be aware that the UAE does have the death penalty, too, but this would not apply if you are under 18.**

Federal Law No. (6) of 2022 concerning Juvenile Delinquent and Juvenile at Risk of Delinquency

- If the police arrest you, they also have the right to search you. Anything found during this search may be used as evidence against you.

Law No 38 of 2022 – Article 52

What if I did not do anything illegal, must I speak with the police and answer questions?

The UAE police have an obligation to investigate crimes, search for their perpetrators and collect necessary information and evidence for investigation into a crime. Therefore, enquiries into your actions, even if you have done nothing illegal, should not be reacted to defensively as this could be misinterpreted.

UAE laws allow a person to remain silent and will not be construed as an admission. However, if a particular circumstance warrants a response, and you remain silent, this could be held against you and considered an admission of guilt. For example, if you are at the

scene of an obvious crime, you are asked (in your language) what happened/if you did it, and you remain silent, then that could be considered an admission of guilt.

Article 135 of the Civil Code

<https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/courts/changes-to-uae-criminal-arrest-laws-give-suspects-more-rights-1.1224460>

What if they tell me something they are investigating that is wrong? Must I correct them?

As above, you are not necessarily compelled to speak, and you can remain silent. However, you should be mindful of how this might be perceived.

1. the right to remain silent is enshrined in law, without any presumption of guilt by doing so.

Article 135 of the Civil Code

<https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/courts/changes-to-uae-criminal-arrest-laws-give-suspects-more-rights-1.1224460>

2. You should not keep silent about all or part of the relevant facts of the case known to you. This is punishable by law.

Article 253 UAE Penal Code. 1987 قانون العقوبات رقم 3 لسنة 1987 (rak.ae)

What if an officer just begins speaking to me but does not order me to do anything?

The right to remain silent is enshrined in law, without any presumption of guilt by doing so

Most importantly be polite to the police officer.

Law No. 38 of 2022 – Criminal Procedures Law –Article 48.

What is the legal difference between talking to them if they do not tell me I am under arrest, versus after they inform me that I am under arrest?

1. The law provides the right to remain silent and requires arresting officers to inform the accused of this right and the alleged charges upon arrest or detention.

Law No. 38 of 2022 – Criminal Procedures Law –Article 48

<https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/united-arab-emirates/>

2. A suspect must be informed of their crime upon detention

Law No. 38 of 2022 – Criminal Procedures Law –Article 48.

3. Arbitrary Arrest: There were reports the government carried out arrests without informing the individual of the charge, notably in cases of alleged violations of state security regulations.

<https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/united-arab-emirates/>

The difference between police TELLING me what to do and ASKING me to do something

Proposed Information

It is important to follow this advice:

- The police will only tell you (or command you) to do something if they have cause, suspect a cause and have informed you of the cause. In this instance, be polite and open with the police and do as asked. If the police ask you then it is up to you to answer or communicate just remember to be polite and nice to the police as you have done nothing wrong.

What is the difference between the police deciding to search me (phone, person, backpack) and me agreeing to the search?

It will depend on the circumstances, but you should always be respectful and polite to the police if they are telling you or asking you to do something.

What if they tell me to give them information versus them asking and me providing answers voluntarily?

As above

Do Police Need A Warrant To Arrest You?

Proposed Information

It is important to follow this advice:

- No. Police officers can legally arrest you without a warrant in several circumstances and without the presence of your guardian or a lawyer/legal representative assigned and authorized by your guardian:
 - When the crime is committed in front of the police officers; or
 - When the officer has probable cause (reason to suspect) that the suspect committed a felony, whether or not the act was done in front of them.

Article 2 - Federal Law No. (35) of 1992 Concerning The Criminal Procedural Law

If I did not do anything, can they stop me?

If the police ask you to stop, you should act politely and respectfully. If they have an arrest warrant which they show you, then you must stop.

Law No. 38 of 2022 – Criminal Procedures Law –Article 47, 99 and 100

It is always best to cooperate with the police if they try to stop you. Not cooperating may result in the police taking further action, including possibly arresting you or fining you.

Article 45, Federal Law No. (38) of 2022 Criminal Procedural Law

Can I ask for the reason they stopped me?

Yes, but be polite and respectful when you do.

If the police officer has an arrest warrant, they are required to inform you about the arrest and to provide you with a copy of the same. The arrest warrant will contain a description of the charges against you.

Explain to the police officer if they are not aware of your age, that you are a child (under 18) and require the presence of your guardian.

Law No. 38 of 2022 – Criminal Procedures Law –Article 47, 99 and 100

Even if law enforcement is not armed with an arrest warrant, they are still required to inform you about the reason for stopping you, and potentially arresting and detaining you.

Article 14 (3), Arab Charter on Human Rights

Can I advocate for another young person stopped by police if we are stopped together?

If you are stopped informally then you can assist in answering questions but do so politely.

If I think the stop is unjustified, what can I do?

If the police have an arrest warrant, you need to comply. You will have the opportunity to explain why you think the stop is unjustified before the judicial police officer and public prosecution, who may order your release. Remember you cannot be arrested or detained without the presence of your guardian an assigned lawyer by your guardian.

Law No. 38 of 2022 – Criminal Procedures Law –Article 47, 99 and 100

Even if the police do not have a warrant, it is best to cooperate if you can.

The police can – in certain circumstances – stop you from leaving, in order to answer questions, e.g., if you are caught at the scene of a crime.

Law No. 38 of 2022 – Criminal Procedures Law –Article 2(2)

Can I get the officer's identifying information for a future complaint?

Yes, you can politely ask for their name and police badge number. If you have been arrested subject to a warrant, then the warrant paperwork will contain this information.

Law No. 38 of 2022 – Criminal Procedures Law –Article 99(2)

How Do You Know If You Are Under Arrest?

Proposed Information

It is important to follow this advice:

- You are under police custody if you do not feel free to leave an officer's presence, or if a reasonable person in your shoes would not feel free to leave.
- If the following happens, you are likely under arrest under the law:
 - an officer handcuffs you;
 - an officer forcibly holds you down;
 - an officer puts you into the back seat of a police car; or
 - an officer warns you about your rights.
- An officer only has to warn you of your rights before the police question you. This means an officer can arrest you before warning you of your rights.
- An arrest without rights warnings is still a valid arrest; it just may mean that evidence collected from it is not admissible in court later.
- Remember police can not arrest you or prosecute you without the presence of your guardian if you are under 18.

What if I do not know if I am under arrest?

If you are unsure whether you are under arrest, you should politely ask the police officer. You should also immediately inform them of your age because there are laws that apply specifically to children – in particular, [Law No.6 of 2022](#) which relates to children.

What is the difference between detention and arrest?

Detention is a temporary measure used by authorities so they can ask a person certain questions and gather more information about a specific incident under investigation, while arrest is the act of authorities taking a person believed to have done the criminal act into their custody to ensure their appearance in further proceedings and prevent further offenses.

If I am handcuffed, am I arrested?

If you are a child, you should not be handcuffed at all unless the circumstances really require it and it should be done with the presence of your guardian. You should politely and clearly tell the police officer that you are a child, and that you should not be handcuffed.

Article 22(2) Federal Law No. (6) of 2022 concerning Juvenile Delinquent and Juvenile at Risk of Delinquency

Article 14 (1), Arab Charter on Human Rights

If my liberty is restricted, am I under arrest?

No, your personal liberty may be restricted for other purposes apart from arrest, such as detention.

Article 11 Federal Law No. (6) of 2022 concerning Juvenile Delinquent and Juvenile at Risk of Delinquency

What To Do After Being Warned of Your Rights

Proposed Information

It is important to follow this advice:

- Ask for your guardian to be present.
- You can use your right to remain silent or any of your other rights (e.g., the right to an attorney) by saying that you want to use that right.
- You are also able to waive your rights (that is, not use them) by, for example, saying 'Yes, I understand my rights, but I am ready to talk to you.' This is not a good idea without a lawyer present.
- Make sure you know what you are doing in giving up your rights.

Federal Decree-Law No. 38/2022 on the Issuance of the Criminal Procedure Law – Article 48.

Does it matter where I am when the police read me my rights? (Street, station, police car, etc.)

No, but they would usually be read at a police station.

Police Questioning You

Proposed Information

It is important to follow this advice:

- You are not required to make a statement, answer police questions, or participate in a police investigation, and you never have to go anywhere with the police unless they have arrested you.

If police have arrested you and if you are under the age of 18, police are required to immediately notify your parent, caretaker, or legal guardian.

Federal Law No. (6) of 2022 concerning Juvenile Delinquent and Juvenile at Risk of Delinquency – Article 22.

Am I required to make a statement?

No, you are not required to make a statement. You have the right to remain silent.

Law No. 38 of 2022 – Criminal Procedures Law –Article 48/ Article 135 of the Civil Code
Changes to UAE criminal arrest laws give suspects more rights (thenationalnews.com)

Must police notify my guardian?

Yes, UAE is a party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

1. The Juvenile Delinquent shall not be sentenced to death or imprisonment.
2. The death penalty or imprisonment for the offence committed by the Delinquent Juvenile shall be replaced by imprisonment for a period not exceeding (10) ten years.
3. The period of imprisonment imposed on a Juvenile Delinquent may not exceed half of the maximum limit prescribed for the original penalty. If a Juvenile Delinquent is aged between 12 and 16, the courts will take whatever measures they deem necessary.

Convention on the Rights of the Child | OHCHR

This is also expressly stipulated in the Federal Law No. (6) of 2022 concerning Juvenile Delinquent and Juvenile at Risk of Delinquency – Articles 6 and 8(3)

Must I confess?

No, you are not required to confess. You have the right to remain silent.

Law No. 38 of 2022 – Criminal Procedures Law –Article 48

Changes to UAE criminal arrest laws give suspects more rights (thenationalnews.com)

What adults can I ask to be with me?

Generally, you can ask a guardian or a parent to be with you. This is again in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Federal Law No. (6) of 2022 concerning Juvenile Delinquent and Juvenile at Risk of Delinquency – Article 22.

Moreover, you can be accompanied by a lawyer, but a lawyer's presence is not permitted during the taking of a deposition. A lawyer's presence is required throughout the proceedings once trial starts Federal Law No. (6) of 2022 concerning Juvenile Delinquent and Juvenile at Risk of Delinquency – Article 21.

Rule of law and human rights | The Official Portal of the UAE Government

Who do police have to contact if I am a legal minor?

Again, the police must contact your guardian or parent when you are arrested, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child and Federal Law No. (6) of 2022 concerning Juvenile Delinquent and Juvenile at Risk of Delinquency – Article 22(1).

How do I Contact A Lawyer and When?

Proposed Information

It is important to follow this advice:

- You should clearly and politely request a lawyer or for your guardian to arrange for a lawyer before making any statements to anyone in a criminal case or investigation. However, the police can interview you without one present. You are, however, entitled to a guardian present during any interview. There will also be a "child protection specialist" present.
- While you do have to wait until you attend court to get a lawyer appointed if you cannot afford your own lawyer, you should still ask for a lawyer as soon as you are questioned or arrested by the police. If you are arrested, you have the right to remain silent and to not speak until your lawyer is present.

Federal Law No. (6) of 2022 concerning Juvenile Delinquent and Juvenile at Risk of Delinquency – Article 21.

What if I am just a witness?

If you are a witness testifying in a case, you should still have a guardian present with you.

Federal Law No. (6) of 2022 concerning Juvenile Delinquent and Juvenile at Risk of Delinquency – Article 22(1).^{^t}

Do Police Always Have To Tell The Truth?

Proposed Information

It is important to follow this advice:

- The police may ask questions that could mislead or confuse you during any discussion with you, including about the strength of the case they have against you and particular evidence they have in their possession. They might do this to try and encourage you to speak more.

Can the police lie to me?

The police can mislead you, in the course of fulfilling their roles of safeguarding the general public, such as during hostage scenarios and interrogations. However, they cannot misrepresent the law, facts, and other information relating to the case when it is not for the purpose of fulfilling their roles as police officers.

Do I have to tell the police the truth?

Yes, you have to tell the truth to the police; otherwise, you may be held liable for perjury for providing false statements to authorities. Article 253, Federal Law No. 3 of 1987 on the Issuance of the Penal Code.

If you believe your statement may be incriminating, you may invoke your right to remain silent.

Decree of Federal Law No. 38 of 2022 on Criminal Procedure – Article 48(1)

How do I make a complaint if I have questions or feel my rights have been violated?

Proposed Information

It is important to follow this advice:

REMEDIES: The best way to make a complaint is to find a lawyer that can help you make a complaint in the proper venue. You can also register the alleged crime in the nearest police station where the violation of the right took place. When preparing to file a complaint, make

sure to have your evidence (documents, photos, etc.) and you have a clear set of facts that will tell the story of why you feel your rights have been violated.

<https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/justice-safety-and-the-law/litigation-procedures/criminal-cases->

What happens and what should I expect after I submit my complaint?

Proposed Information

It is important to follow this advice:

REMEDIES: A lawyer will be able to advise you about what happens after you submit your complaint.

Options after you receive a decision on your complaint.

Proposed Information

It is important to follow this advice:

REMEDIES: A lawyer will be able to advise you about what happens after you submit your complaint.

What if I feel I was a victim of discrimination or racism?

Proposed Information

It is important to follow this advice:

REMEDIES: UAE laws prohibit the search, arrest, and detention of citizens without probable cause. If this happens to you, seek help from a lawyer or a human rights group.

<https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/united-arab-emirates/>

Disclaimer

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Law is generally described as of May 2025.