



Nobody Knows How Many Victims of Police Brutality There Are in Bulgaria

There is no institution in Bulgaria that collects and analyzes data on cases of police brutality. The Ministry of Interior and the courts provide conflicting data, the percentage of officers found guilty is very low. Download the report below and read more.

[Read the full report](#)

When can Bulgarian police stop and detain you?

A police officer may stop you and ask for your ID, if:

- there is evidence you have committed a crime or a violation of public order
- they are trying to investigate a crime
- they need to check the regularity of your ID and residence documents
- they are assisting another authority to do their job.

If you don't have your ID but you are with a friend who does, they can explain who you are.

If the officer is trying to ascertain who you are and there is no other way to do it, they may take your fingerprints, take a picture of you and/or a DNA sample.

Even if they do so, should the case be resolved they must destroy the samples.

You may be detained by the police for 24 hours if:

- There is evidence you have committed a crime.

- You are deliberately obstructing the officers from doing their job.
- You have a serious mental health problem and you are disturbing public order or you are dangerous to yourself or others.
- They can not identify you, you have escaped from prison or detention.
- There is a search for you.

If you do not speak Bulgarian, they must inform you in a language you speak and in a way you understand why they are detaining you.

You can always appeal your detention in court and it must rule immediately.

From the moment when they detain you you can call a lawyer and tell the officers whom of your friends or relatives they should inform that you have been detained.

If you are younger than 18, they have to put you in a separate room where you can eat, sleep and have access to a toilet and running water.

They cannot detain you for more than 24 hours. Immediately after you are taken to the police station **you should receive a detention order**, in which it is stated why you are detained, it is described who is detaining you; there is information about your identity, when and where you were detained and what your rights are. You should be given a copy of the order.

If you do not understand it, it should be explained to you orally. In case you believe your detention is unlawful, you need to write that as an objection and appeal the detention in court.

Apart from the order, at the police station they should also give you a declaration, in which you state whether you want a lawyer, a doctor or a relative to be informed about what is going on. If you want to contact a particular lawyer, you should write that down and call them. If you don't have one, ask for a legal aid lawyer.

If you want to see a doctor of your choice, write that down and call them. You will have to pay for the visit.

Should you need medical attention, write that down and a doctor on call will see you. They should examine you in private unless they insist on having an officer in the room b/c they are afraid you might hurt them. The doctor will examine you, describe your condition and give you the document to sign. You should received a copy.

If you are not a Bulgarian citizen, you have the right to call the consul and use a translator.

Search

You can be searched if:

- You have been detained and they suspect that you are carrying dangerous or prohibited objects

· You are found at a crime scene or an area of public disturbance and they suspect you have items that might be connected to the crime or the violation

Only an officer who is the same sex as you can search you.

They will document their findings and you can sign it, if you agree. If not, you describe why you do not agree in front of an officer and another randomly selected person.

A police officer may hit you, use a baton or handcuffs, if:

- You obstruct their work or refuse to carry out an order
- You are breaking rules and do not obey or resist a police officer
- You are being escorted and are trying to escape or threaten yourself or others
- You refuse to cooperate to various authorities while hostages are being released or you participate in group violations of public order, attacks on buildings, premises, facilities and transport vehicles; eviction of illegally occupied facilities
- The officer is taking precautions for their personal safety

The police can use handcuffs, straitjackets, batons, gas, service dogs and horses, blank cartridges, rubber bullets, plastic bullets and shock bullets.

The officer may hit you or use any of the items above, if after a warning you continue to disobey his instructions. **But this should happen only if it is absolutely necessary.**

If you are younger than 14 or a pregnant woman the police may not use these measures against you unless there is civil unrest.

A police officer may use a weapon only if it is absolutely necessary, such as:

- Attacking or threatening an officer with a weapon
- Release of hostages and abducted persons
- After you are warned when you are detained; If you are committing or have committed a crime, you are resisting or trying to escape
- After you have been warned not to run away once you are detained

Officers are required to do everything in their power to protect the life and health of others. They have no right to humiliate and insult you.

A police officer can shoot at you at the border without warning, if you attack them or resist with weapons.

If you are not dangerous and have not done anything violent, the police are not allowed to shoot at you.

If you show your ID, follow the instructions and do not attack the officers, you will most likely go through a short procedure and you will not be detained.

Even if you are detained should they suspect that you have committed a crime, it is best to be careful and collect all of your documents (a detention order, a document from a medical examination, if you requested one, a declaration in which you stated whether you want a lawyer, a doctor or a relative to be notified of your detention) and to stay calm.

Keep copies of these documents and always write down your position in them.

Practice shows that most people do not know their rights and do not insist that they should be respected.

NGOs monitor police stations, but only sporadically, and after an agreement on a project basis and there is currently no organization that does this constantly. This means there is not enough civil monitoring.

When there is civil monitoring, it finds that most detainees do not ask for a lawyer or a doctor.

Signals and complaints for illegal detention and abuse by the police are disproportionately few, and internal controls show that most signals are considered "unfounded".

Very few reports and complaints reach court.

Judgments usually only fine police officers who have exceeded their powers.

Disproportionately few officers receive a prison sentence.

The situation is such, because:

- **We do not know what our rights are and often police officers prevent us from learning them.**
- **We do not use our rights or at least we do not do it on time.**
- **Internal checks for violations are ineffective and biased.**
- **There are not enough guarantees for access to court.**
- **The judicial system does not work well.**