



Embajada Británica
Caracas

Information sheet relating to deaths in Venezuela

The death of a relative or friend is always distressing. But if it happens abroad the distress can be made worse by practical problems. Consular Directorate in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and our Consular Section in Caracas are ready to help in any way that they can. You may be uncertain what to do next or who to contact for advice. These notes are designed to help you through the practical arrangements you will need to make.

You should be aware that Venezuela procedures differ significantly to those in the United Kingdom. While we understand your need to make arrangements as quickly as possible, this may not always be possible.

We strongly recommend that you read the Foreign and Commonwealth Office *Guide for Bereaved Families* available on:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/35526/bereaved-families.pdf

The information contained in this document is not meant to be a definitive statement of the law, nor is it to be taken as a substitute for independent legal advice

Standard Procedures

Following the death of a British national in Venezuela the next of kin will be notified through the UK police as soon as possible.

Consular staff in London will pass on to consular staff in Caracas the wishes of the next of kin about funeral arrangements. We will do our best to make sure these wishes are carried out, however, it is not always possible to do so as available facilities impact greatly on local procedures: local authorities might, for example, proceed with an autopsy followed by immediate burial if the appropriate morgue facilities are not available to them. This could happen in a time lapse as short as less than 24 hours, and family consent might not be requested for this purpose.

We highly recommend for the next of kin, or a formally appointed representative, to appoint a funeral director, either through an international undertaker or privately, as soon as possible in order to advance in dealing with the local authorities for the deceased remains to be either repatriated to the UK, or to have a local burial or cremation.

Events usually take place over a very short period of time and consular staff is unable to prevent a burial from happening, hence the importance of appointing a funeral director as soon as it is possible.

If your friend or relative was covered by travel insurance it is important for the next of kin to contact the insurance company without delay. If there is no insurance cover the

cost of any repatriation or burial will need to be met by the family. Neither the Foreign and Commonwealth Office nor our Consular Section in Caracas can meet these costs.

If your friend or relative was travelling with a tour operator, they can be a valuable source of assistance and advice.

Repatriation

In order to repatriate the body, the family would need to contact a local funeral director, either through an international undertaker or privately, to undertake all the necessary paperwork for repatriation. They make all the arrangements for repatriation and liaison, if appropriate, with an international funeral parlour appointed by the family or insurance company in the UK.

A list of local funeral directors is available on:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/venezuela-list-of-funeral-directors>

Local burial

If next of kin choose to proceed with a local burial, they will need to instruct a local undertaker. The Consular Section can assist with practical arrangements. If there is an ongoing investigation about the circumstances of the death, burial may not be allowed by the local authorities until the respective investigation is completed.

Local cremation

If the next of kin chooses local cremation and wishes to repatriate the ashes to the UK they should appoint an international funeral director / local undertaker. They will be able to arrange the necessary paperwork and transportation. If there is an ongoing investigation about the circumstances of the death, the cremation may not be allowed by the local authorities until the respective investigation is completed.

Police/Judicial Inquiries

The police may undertake an investigation if the death is suspicious or violent.

In this case the family would need to appoint a private lawyer in order to get in contact with the authorities and collect information on the case, as the British Embassy is considered to be a third party by the local authorities and cannot make legal representations on behalf of the family.

A list of local lawyers is available on:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/venezuela-list-of-lawyers>

Autopsies (Post Mortems)

Autopsies are always carried out, except when there is a medical history/record of an illness (i.e. cancer, HIV). The autopsy report is usually made available to the family. Please note that obtaining this information could be a lengthy process. Appointing a local funeral director would speed up the process of obtaining this document significantly.

Registration of the death

Venezuelan authorities will issue a death certificate in Spanish. Venezuelan death certificates include details of the cause of death. Please note that obtaining this information could be a lengthy process. Appointing a local funeral director can aid the family in obtaining this information more quickly.

There is no obligation for the death overseas of a British national to be registered. However, if you register the death with the UK authorities you will obtain a death registration document and a permanent copy of it will always be available in English from The General Register Office in the UK. Please note that this carries a statutory fee.

For further information please visit: <https://www.gov.uk/register-a-death>

Personal Effects

The Consular Section could store personal belongings of the deceased British nationals at the Embassy's premises only in very exceptional circumstances.

Ordinary personal belongings can be repatriated with the body. The local funeral director can assist the family in this regard.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office Contact

Consular Directorate – Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Global Casework Team – Tel: 020 7008 1500

Useful links

Venezuela Funeral Directors

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/venezuela-list-of-funeral-directors>

Venezuela List of Lawyers

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/venezuela-list-of-lawyers>

Venezuela List of translators and Interpreters

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/venezuela-list-of-translators-and-interpreters>