

## INFORMATION SHEET RELATING TO DEATHS IN AFGHANISTAN

The death of a relative or a friend can be a traumatic experience. When a death occurs overseas, family and friends in the UK can feel additional distress as they are unfamiliar with foreign procedures and perhaps are unable to communicate in the language of the country where the death occurred. Consular Directorate of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and our Embassy in Kabul are ready to help as far as they can. You may be uncertain about 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 understand and make. You should be aware that Afghan procedures differ to those in the United Kingdom and that, while we understand your need for arrangements to be made quickly, this is not always possible. Please note that should a British national be killed in a terrorist incident, different procedures may be required. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the British Embassy in Kabul can provide more information.

*Disclaimer: 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.*

### **Repatriation:**

The pre-repatriation process can be lengthy, and in case of an death of an employee, employers should have procedures in place to deal with arrangements. The Embassy will of course advise. You should check with your employer that they have plans in place to deal with such an event, and check that you have appropriate insurance to cover any costs incurred. If you are posted to Afghanistan with family, also check that any assistance/cover from employers or insurance extends to them.

Autopsies are not usually the norm. A request must be made to the Ministry of Health to have one carried out. It may be a week after death before this is done. For further information on arranging a post mortem, contact the Embassy Consular Section.

Repatriations are mostly handled by two companies listed below who can advise on the documentations required for repatriation. In general, they will need a death certificate from the hospital, an authorisation letter from the next of kin, employer and British Embassy, a letter from the funeral home about arrangements/acceptance of the remains and a colour copy of the passport/visa page of the deceased.

1. **Westex Medical Services:** House No 3, Street 4, Sher Por, Kabul  
Phone: 0700-606-762, 0786-353-203, 0702-887-581  
Email: [drgranzwan@gmail.com](mailto:drgranzwan@gmail.com), [kimberly@westexmedicalsolutions.com](mailto:kimberly@westexmedicalsolutions.com)  
Website: <http://www.westexmedicalsolutions.com/>
2. **Remote Medical Solutions International (Dubai based):** Dubai Airport Free Zone, Building 7W, Block B, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Suite 4000, Dubai, UAE.  
Phone: +971 4253 6188, +971 5055 70081  
Email: [emergency@rmsi-medicalsolutions.com](mailto:emergency@rmsi-medicalsolutions.com)  
Website: <http://www.rmsi-medicalsolutions.com/Default.aspx>

### **Mortuary Facilities**

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As Afghanistan is an Islamic country, facilities such as embalming are not readily available and burials usually take place on the same day or day after death. Mortuary facilities are limited. There are, however, some options available. Camp Warehouse may be able to offer morgue storage, but their capacity is limited. The 400 bed Wazir Akbar Khan hospital in Kabul has a morgue storage. Sardar Mohammad Dawood Hospital is a military hospital that can offer storage facility. However, the Police Forensic Department in Kabul is the only facility authorised by the government to store the body before pre-repatriation that can issue necessary documentation.

The Embassy is unaware of any other mortuary facilities outside of Kabul, except those available in the US military base in Bagram.

### **Caskets sealing and travel:**

International specification caskets are available from the repatriation companies. There are no direct flights between Afghanistan and United Kingdom. Hamid Karzai International Airport (HKIA), located 16 km from the city center Kabul, serves as the country's main international airport. Major airlines operating to and from HKIA are: Emirates, Turkish Airline, PIA, Air India, Ariana, Kam Air, and Flydubai.

Repatriations can take 7-10 days. If transiting Dubai, ensure connecting flights depart on the same day. If the casket is in transit through Dubai for more than 24 hours, then it is likely that Dubai customs will open it. This may cause problems in the final destination country who may refuse the casket due to possible contamination.

### **Local burial**

There is no local equivalent to funeral undertakers in the UK, and currently none of the international undertakers have formally established relationships with agents. However UK based international funeral directors Roland Brothers can be contacted on +44 (0) 208 684 2324 for assistance through their agent in Pakistan.

There is a Christian cemetery in Kabul. There is also a crematorium in Kabul, which can also be used. All paperwork must be in order before a cremation can take place.

If a local burial or cremation takes place, there will be no inquest carried out in the UK.

### **Registration of the death**

A local death certificate, citing the likely cause of death, will be issued in Dari and possibly translated into English depending on where it is done. It is usually available within a few days of death from the Ministry of Health or a military base. We have been advised by the Ministry of Health that other hospitals and clinics that produce death certificates are not legally authorised to do so.

Death certificates do not need to be certified by the British Embassy in Kabul. Consular death registration can be done in the UK, further details on <https://www.gov.uk/register-a-death>

### **Return of Personal Effects**

Personal effects are normally returned to next of kin, or their authorised representative, without any formalities.

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### **Police/Judicial Inquiries**

In the case of suspicious death or a road traffic accident, the police in the district in which the death occurred will lead an investigation.

For road traffic accidents, compensation is normally given to the victim's family whether the police are formally involved or not.

In the case of a suspicious death, if a suspect is arrested the local police have 72 hours to carry out their investigation. The case will then be passed to the prosecutor's office, who will have 15 days to prepare the case for the Primary court. If prosecutor' office require more time to prepare the case, a further 15 days are granted. After this period the suspect should either be formally charged or released.

The case will then be heard by a Judge (no trial by jury) within one month of the initial arrest by the police. If the accused does not accept the sentence passed, then s/he can appeal against the verdict within two months at the Secondary court. However, the decision of the Secondary court is considered final.

### **Legal Aid**

Legal aid is not available in Afghanistan. The Embassy in Kabul, however, holds a [List of English speaking local lawyers](#) on the website.

### **Compensation**

There are no formal government compensation schemes available, although damages in some circumstances can be claimed from the accused.