

# Saudi Arabia – Bereavement Information.

Prepared by British Embassy Riyadh

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## **Disclaimer**

This information is not meant to be definitive, nor is it to be taken as a substitute for independent legal advice. Neither Her Majesty's Government nor its staff take any responsibility for the accuracy of the information, nor accept liability for any loss, costs, damage or expense that you might suffer as a result of relying on the information. Some of the information may not be relevant to your circumstances. The language used is intended to be general and factual, and is not meant to cause offence.

## **Introduction**

When a relative or friend dies abroad, the different procedures, laws or language can cause additional distress. You may be uncertain about what to do or who to contact.

This country specific information is designed to help you through some of the practical arrangements you may need to make. It supplements the general information on death abroad produced by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, which applies to all countries ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/coping-with-death-abroad](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coping-with-death-abroad)).

Please note, as each country has its own laws and customs when a death occurs, it may not be possible to make the arrangements that you prefer, or at the time you would like.

## **How to contact the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office**

There is a lot of information below, but you may have questions. You can speak to someone by phone 24/7 any day of the year by contacting the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office in London on +44 207 008 1500. If you are not in the UK, you can find the contact details of the

nearest British Embassy, high commission or consulate online [www.gov.uk/government/world/embassies](http://www.gov.uk/government/world/embassies).

If the death occurred outside of usual working hours, you are able to contact the British Embassy on the 24 hour number (+966 (0) 11 481 9100)

Please note that the Saudi Government Offices are closed on Friday and Saturday and during local bank holidays. They do not offer an emergency/out-of-hours service.

# Essential Information

## 1. Next Of Kin

The next of kin of the person who died will usually need to make decisions and practical arrangements. The next of kin can sometimes appoint another person to act on their behalf. If you are not the next of kin, they will need to be informed. If required, the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office can help you do this.

There is no legal definition of next of kin in the UK. Please note that if there is a disagreement over who is the next of kin, or the person who died did not choose a next of kin, this can cause additional complications.

If you have any uncertainty on next of kin please call us at the embassy, for example if you are unsure of who would be next of kin.

## 2. Release of Information to next of kin

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office will try to obtain as much information as possible after your relative or friend has died abroad. Some of this may only be available to next of kin. Consular officers may be able to obtain this themselves, or put you in touch directly with the authorities overseas. They can provide you with details of others who can advocate on your behalf such as lawyers, charities, or other organisations. Access to information concerning a death can be restricted until a Coroner has reviewed the evidence and a case has been concluded. During this time it can be hard to get information but we can try.

## 3. Insurance

It is very important to check if the person who died had insurance. If they had insurance, contact the insurance company as soon as possible. They may have a list of approved shipping agents to help you make repatriation arrangements, or be able to cover some of the costs.

If the person who died did not have insurance and the next of kin has decided to repatriate the remains to UK or elsewhere, this has to be arranged through the deceased's sponsor/employer and a shipping agent. If it is a local burial then it should be arranged through the sponsor/employer and other concerned local authorities.

If the deceased was here on a temporary basis, it is usual for their travel insurance company to take any necessary actions and the company should be informed immediately. Quite often, the sponsoring company or individual is responsible for arranging for the repatriation to the United Kingdom (or elsewhere) or local burial. The sponsor will appoint local agents to act on their behalf, as they are knowledgeable in local procedures.

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office cannot help with these costs

#### 4. Appointing a funeral director

If you decide to bring the deceased to the UK for the funeral or cremation, you may only need to appoint an international funeral director. The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office produces a list of international funeral directors. Please see a list of UK-based international funeral directors and related industry bodies on the website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-funeral-directors-in-the-uk](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-funeral-directors-in-the-uk).

#### 5. Registering the death and obtaining the death certificate

There is a requirement to register the death with local authorities in the country where the person died. Sometimes a funeral director can do this for you. We have included more details on this and on how to obtain a death certificate under point 6 of this document.

Please note that there is no requirement for a consular death registration to be completed for any death that has occurred overseas. The original Death Certificate issued by the authorities in the country in which the death took place, along with a notarised translation if necessary, is sufficient for all purposes in the UK. If you wish to complete a consular death registration, you can receive a UK-style death registration document, and a permanent copy of it will always be available in English from the General Register Office in the UK. It can also be used for reasons of Probate. Registrations are made through the Overseas Registration Unit in the UK. Full details of how to do so are available at [www.gov.uk/register-a-death](http://www.gov.uk/register-a-death).

#### 6. Starting the local procedure

- The sponsor must obtain a 'No Objection Certificate' (NOC) from the British Embassy in Riyadh or the British Consulate General in Jeddah for repatriation or local burial, to state that the Embassy has no objection to the transportation of the deceased back to the UK or elsewhere or to bury locally. In order for the Embassy to issue the NOC, the sponsoring company or individual will have to provide hospital death notification report and deceased's passport.
- The Embassy can only issue the NOC after receiving an official death notification from the hospital along with the sponsor and/or the Next of Kin confirming the repatriation arrangements or local burial. If the Next of Kin are not present in Saudi Arabia, then the Consular Directorate of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London will arrange a visit to notify the family.
- If there is no Next of Kin in country to receive the local death certificate, the Civil Affairs Office will deliver the original death certificate to British Embassy through The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and it will take 3 to 6 months for the certificate to be delivered to the Embassy.
- The issued NOC will be presented to the City Principality along with the relevant documents (passport, medical report, police report etc). The Principality Office will issue a letter requesting the relevant Police Station to provide the sponsor with four (4) envelopes addressed to the Mortuary, the Passport Office (to arrange an exit visa), the Cargo Office, and the Customs Office.
- Generally, the police will give permission for the sponsor to move the deceased to the Central Mortuary at a government hospital.

- The sponsor should then obtain a local death certificate, known as a “Death Certificate for Non-Saudis” from the Civil Affairs Office in the Ministry of Interior. The Saudi Death Certificate will be sufficient for UK legal purposes. There is no requirement in the UK for a consular death certificate. However, if this is needed, you can register directly to the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office in the UK: <https://www.gov.uk/register-a-death/y/overseas>
- Prior to repatriation, the deceased must be embalmed. This usually takes place at the mortuary at King Saudi Medical Complex in Shumasi Hospital or the Central Mortuary at King Fahed Hospital in Jeddah. This takes place about 12 hours before the repatriation. An embalming certificate and a letter addressed to the appropriate airline regarding the transportation arrangements is then issued.
- The sponsor should settle ownership of vehicles (if any) registered under the name of the deceased. This is a necessary step required before obtaining the final exit visa.
- The sponsor obtains the exit visa for the deceased from the Passport Office.
- The Airport Cargo section will provide the sponsor with authorisation to bring the deceased to the Cargo office 6 -12 hours before the departure time.
- This usually takes between 3 to 6 weeks to complete, but could take longer if the death occurred under suspicious or criminal circumstances. All costs relating to the repatriation is paid for by the deceased’s Next of Kin.

## 7. British national’s in Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah or Hajj

The local tour operators are responsible for the welfare of their pilgrims including the proper repatriation of deceased British Nationals in accordance to regulations set by the Ministry of Hajj. The British Embassy can assist with some of the paperwork, but the deceased’s tour operator has the overall responsibility for making the arrangements for the repatriation of a British National to the United Kingdom (or elsewhere) or local burial.

## 8. Deaths in road traffic accidents

In the case of a road accident, the police will lead investigation under the supervision and instructions. Once the investigation is complete the family may seek the Police’s permission to take a copy of the medical report, and in the case of a car accident, a copy of the police report. After the police investigation, the prosecutor will decide whether further inquiries are necessary, or whether to submit the case to the court for a trial to take place. The court will then decide how the case will proceed. In these incidents, the burial and repatriation process can take significantly longer than usual.

## 9. Deaths investigated as murder or manslaughter

If the local police have confirmed that they are investigating the death as a murder or manslaughter a dedicated team within the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office will be available to provide support, including by referring you to specialised organisations. You can find more about what they can do online. More information on this can be found here: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/helping-britishpeople-](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/helping-britishpeople-)

[abroad-murder-and-manslaughter](#). In the case of a suspicious death the process will be the same as deaths in road traffic accidents under point 11.

## 10. Mortuary facilities and Post Mortem examinations (autopsies)

These are carried out only in certain circumstances, usually if the death occurred in suspicious circumstances or if the cause of death is not apparent. Any death outside a hospital will be referred to the police who will arrange for an examination. Following this, the deceased will be released only on the permission of the Saudi authority. A final report will be available to the family upon completion of both the post mortem and the investigation into the circumstances of the death.

The deceased's remains will be moved and kept in government hospitals. For deaths in Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam, The three main government hospitals are:

- King Saud Medical Compound - Shumaisy Hospital (Ulaishah, Riyadh 12746, Tel: +966 (11) 435-5555).
- King Fahed Hospital- The Central Mortuary (Al Mustashfa Al Am, Al Andalus, Jeddah 23325, Tel: 00966 (12) 6606111)
- Dammam Medical Complex (5343 King Khalid Dammam 32245&nbsp; . +966 13 815 5777)

## 11. British passport cancellation

In order to avoid identity fraud, the passport of the person who died should be cancelled with Her Majesty's Passport Office (HMPO). To do this, you will need to complete a "D1 form". The [form and instructions on where to send it is available online](#)

If you plan to repatriate the person who died to the UK or elsewhere, the embassy will cancel the passport.

## 12. Attesting original/English translation of death certificate

The all document and original death certificate should be translated and attested by the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Saudi death certificate must then be translated to English. The Embassy is not permitted to translate documents, certify to the correctness of translations, or authenticate translators' signatures. Any publicly available translation service may do this. See list of translators available on our website.

## 13. Settling deceased's estate in Saudi Arabia

Any personal belongings of the deceased can only be returned to the next of kin upon completion of police enquiries and all local procedures.

Personal belongings are usually transported to next of kin or families via the employer/sponsoring company, local agents or commercial courier companies if the

family does not live in Saudi Arabia or can visit to collect the belongings themselves. Most courier/shipping companies will transport household goods, clothing's and similar property.

A Power of Attorney (POA) must be issued by the next of kin in the UK, to officially/legally appoint a person in Saudi Arabia to take responsibility for processing the deceased's property, bank accounts, belongings, receiving indemnity etc. The POA document must then be [legalised at the FCDO legalisation Office](#) in London, followed by an attestation by the [Embassy of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in London](#). When the POA document is in Kuwait, it will need a further attestation by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kuwait and then translated to Arabic.

Please note, the British Embassy, High Commission or Consulate cannot take responsibility for the personal belongings or request access to bank account of the person who died.

## 14. UK coroners and inquests

If you repatriate the person who died to England and Wales there may be an inquest. The decision on when to hold an inquest is made by Her Majesty's Coroner. Please note, an inquest will usually only happens in certain situations, for example, when someone has died in suspicious, unnatural, and violent circumstances or whilst in detention.

If you repatriate the person who died to Scotland, the Procurator Fiscal may decide to call for a Fatal Accidents or Injuries Inquiry.

If you repatriate the person who died to Northern Ireland, there will be no coronial inquest or further inquiry.

Please note, Procurators Fiscal and Coroners do not have jurisdiction in another country, nor do they seek to apportion blame to a named individual. You can find more information on Coroners and the Procurator Fiscal in the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office guide on Death Abroad ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/coping-with-death-abroad](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coping-with-death-abroad)).

## 15. Legal Aid

There is no legal Aid available in Saudi Arabia, however a list of local lawyers who can help you if you require legal advice can be found here:

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

## 16. Steps to take in the UK

You can find more information on the steps to take in the UK online. This includes information on arranging the funeral, telling the government about the death, UK pensions and benefits, and dealing with the estate of the person who died. There is a step-by-step guide on [www.gov.uk/when-someone-dies](http://www.gov.uk/when-someone-dies).

## 17. Support organisations in the UK

In the UK, there are many organisations that can help bereaved families. Some of these are [listed in the guide coping with death abroad](#). We also have [information for](#)

[victims of crime abroad](#), which you may find helpful. You can [find information on UK compensation for victims of terrorism overseas online](#)