

**Bereavement Information for British Consulate, Littoral - Cameroon**  
**Prepared by British High Commission Consular section**  
**Commission, Yaoundé**  
[www.gov.uk/government/world/cameroon](http://www.gov.uk/government/world/cameroon)

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The death of a relative or friend is always distressing, if it happens abroad the distress can be made worse by practical problems. You may be uncertain what to do next or who to contact for advice. Consular Directorate in the Foreign & Commonwealth Office and our British Deputy High Commission in Cameroon are ready to help in any appropriate way.

These notes are designed to help you through the practical arrangements you will need to make. While care has been taken in compiling these notes, the British Deputy High Commission in Cameroon accepts no legal liability for their contents. You should be aware that Cameroon procedures can differ significantly from those in the United Kingdom. While we understand your need to make arrangements as quickly as possible, this may not always be possible.

**Consular Support:**

In Cameroon, please call the British High Commission in Cameroon on (+237) 222 220 545 or (+237) 222 220 796. Email: [bhc.yaounde@fco.gov.uk](mailto:bhc.yaounde@fco.gov.uk)  
Working Hours: Mon-Thur 8a.m. to 4 p.m. Fri 8a.m.-2p.m.

In the UK, please call Consular Directorate at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office in London on 020 7008 1500

**Standard Procedures**

Following the death of a British national in Cameroon, the next of kin, or a formally appointed representative, must decide whether to:

- i) Repatriate the deceased's remains to the UK
- ii) Have a local burial in Cameroon
- iii) Have a local cremation and the ashes repatriated to the UK or
- iv) Have a local cremation and the ashes scattered in Cameroon.

If the deceased had travel insurance, it is important for next of kin to contact the insurance company without delay. If the deceased had no insurance cover, the cost of repatriation or cremation will have to be met by the family. The services of an international undertaker are normally necessary to help with these arrangements. Neither the Foreign and Commonwealth Office or British High Commission in Cameroon can meet these costs. The next of kin should also be aware that all hospital bills may need to be paid before the body can be released.

The Cameroon authorities can provide a basic burial for those without adequate finances (pauper's burial) or with no family or friends willing or able to pay the costs involved.

## **Caskets and container companies in Cameroon**

Caskets and containers which meet Cameroonian export and United Kingdom import regulations are available through funeral homes in Cameroon. Remains are placed in a zinc casket which is sealed by soldering. The casket is enclosed in a hardwood coffin. Before shipment/transportation, the wood coffin is placed in a wooden shipping case. The following funeral homes may provide the required containers and general assistance:

1. Cameroon Assistance Sanitaire  
BP 2265 Douala  
Tel.: 33342-4891, 33342-1414, 33342-1515, 33342-2020, 33342-7575, 33343-7474, 33343-7575, 33343-8080, 33343-4000, 33300-8900, 69990-2020, 67770-9020  
Fax: 33342-0079, 33343-3030  
Email: camassist@facil.net
2. Gottel Assistance International  
BP 13107 Douala  
Tel.: 67770-9485, 67956-3117  
Fax: 33343-2656  
Email: rigottel@yahoo.fr
3. Paix L'ame  
BP 4293 Yaounde  
Tel.: 22220-9376
4. SOCASEP- (Société Camerounaise de Sepultures)  
BP 498 Yaounde  
Tel.: 22222-4423  
Has branches in Douala, Nkongsamba and Garoua
5. Funeservice Belgique (Cameroonian representative)  
GP 4818 Yaounde- Nlongkak  
Tel.: 22220-6295, 22204- 8313, 69631-9983, 67461-8333  
Fax: 22220- 6295  
Email: tchami\_patrice@yahoo.fr (Director: Tchami Patrice)

### **Profile of services available in Cameroon regarding preparation and shipment of remains:**

To export human remains from Cameroon, a permit issued by the Ministry of Territorial Administration and a signature by the Minister is required. To obtain this permit, one must submit the following documentation. (Note: The Ministry retains all original documents, therefore duplicates must be obtained):

1. A written application to export the remains addressed to the Minister.
2. Medical certificate ("Certificat de Genre de Mort"): A medical certificate from a licensed doctor stating the cause of death, certifying that it was not due to a contagious disease, and granting permission to bury or transport the body.
3. A death certificate ("Acte de Décès") from the Town Hall where the death occurred.

4. “Certificat de Prise en Charge” – a formal note from a responsible organization or individual accepting all expenses involved.
5. “Attestation de Mise en Bière” – an attestation from the police stating that they have witnessed the placing of the body in the casket and the sealing of the said casket.
6. “Permis d’inhumer” – a burial permit written by the High Commission stating the place of burial in the United Kingdom.

Formal request to the Minister of Territorial Administration for authorization to transport the remains should be notarized with fiscal stamps affixed. In addition, should the death have occurred away from Yaoundé or Douala, permission to transport the body from the Region must be sought from the regional prefect.

### **Autopsies**

Autopsies are generally only carried out when the cause of death is suspicious (examples include cases where complaints by relatives or other reliable sources suggest unnatural death such as suicide or murder). It is frequently difficult to obtain autopsy reports. An autopsy will usually be carried out upon the request of the police, the court and/or a request by a legal representative. Even in these circumstances it is possible that an autopsy will not be conducted due to insufficient time/medical staff in the hospital concerned.

It should be noted that the standard of autopsies carried out in Cameroon falls somewhat below the U.K. standard. In most cases, it will be preferable to have an autopsy carried out in the United Kingdom once the body has been repatriated.

Normally, a copy of the autopsy report will be requested by the British High Commission in Cameroon; although this process can be very long and may not always result in a copy of the report being made available.

The U.K. High Commission is not aware of any instances of organs being retained, either with or without the consent of the next-of-kin.

### **Mortuary Facilities**

There are refrigerated facilities available in most major cities and towns in Cameroon although the electricity supply is notoriously unreliable. While hospitals have emergency generators, they are not always operational.

The maximum period before burial when remains are preserved in a mortuary is unknown, but presumed to be about four weeks. Mortuaries in major cities will preserve remains for a longer period of time, but are subject to power fluctuations, and therefore long term storage is not advised.

The maximum period before burial when remains are not maintained in a mortuary is 24 hours.

### **Repatriation and Burial**

Both repatriation and local burial are possible. Authorization to repatriate the body can be obtained by a funeral home or service with the assistance of the High Commission. A quote is usually given to the client at the beginning of the operations

and the High Commission advises reaching an agreement in writing on costs of services prior to any rendering of services to avoid disputes about costs later in the process.

Repatriation costs to the United Kingdom are approximately £ 2000, including local ground transportation. Funeral homes also do provide *embalming and treatment services* (about £ 500), *assistance for clearance* (about £ 700), and can provide *coffins and accessories* (about £ 750).

In addition to the services fees above, a funeral home may also charge an administrative fee of about £ 400. Note that these costs, especially repatriation costs, are estimates and are variable upon the transportation company. Most commonly used airline companies based in Cameroon that will transport remains are:

AIR FRANCE (+237) 22222-9327  
SN BRUSSELS (+237) 23342-0243/ 23342-0515

Local burial is possible with the assistance of a funeral home. Alternatively, local churches and missionary organisations can also help. The cost for coffins suitable for local burial range from £ 150 to £ 250, transportation of remains, funeral home and administrative fees approximately £ 200.

### **Cremation**

Cremation services are available on a limited basis. Currently, Yaounde General Hospital, the Military Hospital and the Genico-Obstetric Hospital are the only known service providers in Yaounde City. The Douala General Hospital is the only service provider in Douala. Cremated remains are stored in a small bag, encased in a hardwood box, and sealed by soldering to facilitate repatriation outside of the country.

### **Cost**

The fees below are provided by “Funeservice Belgique” an international funeral home with a branch in Yaounde, Cameroon that deals in the repatriation of remains abroad. All fees are approximate and actual costs may vary depending on the distance from the actual place of death to the nearest airport, availability of flights and time period of the year (low or high season). Charges are based on the estimated exchange rate: £1.00 = 738 FCFA (local currency).

#### *Transportation*

Local ground transportation: £ 200

#### *Other services*

Embalming and treatment: £ 400

Assistance for clearance: £ 800

Coffin and accessories: £ 700

#### *Internal Cost*

Service provider administrative fees: £ 600

## **Repatriation**

If the deceased is covered by travel insurance, the insurance company will normally liaise with the international funeral director in the UK to arrange repatriations. If the deceased is not covered by insurance, the next of kin will need to appoint an international undertaker in the UK.

Few local undertakers in Cameroon are equipped to carry out repatriation procedures. The local undertaker will work with the international undertaker and will be able to arrange the documents required for the repatriation of the deceased. Local formalities for repatriation will be delayed if a post-mortem is required.

## **Mortuaries**

The deceased will normally be cared for by the hospital morgue. The next of kin will need to present themselves to the morgue to secure release of the body, although a nominated designate may do this on their behalf with written permission. Local funeral directors can advise on the procedure. Most of the large hospitals will have mortuary facilities but standards do vary across the nation with a number falling below UK standards.

## **Funeral Directors**

Standards of Funeral Directors vary widely. It is important that you use a reputable funeral director. International Undertakers in the UK can usually suggest an undertaker to use. A list of funeral directors is available on: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/list-of-funeral-directors-in-cameroon>

## **Consular Death Registration**

The NoK may wish to register the death with the Overseas Resident Unit, in the United Kingdom. This is an optional service whereby a permanent record of the death is made at the General Register Office in the UK. An extract of this registration is provided in the form of a British consular death certificate. This can be useful to assist with any legal or practical arrangements in the UK. To register, please submit an application to the Overseas Resident Unit. For full information on how to apply, please visit: [www.gov.uk/register-a-death](http://www.gov.uk/register-a-death)  
A fee may be charged for this service.

## **Return of personal effects**

Personal effects are normally returned to the family by the authorities. If the family is not in Cameroon, the authorities may hand them over to a nominated person in Cameroon (usually a friend or family member) or to the British Deputy High Commissioner who will take inventory of the items and await further instructions from the deceased's family.

## **Passports**

British passports of the deceased must be cancelled. You should send or bring the passport, along with the death certificate, to the High Commission in Cameroon.

See also Annex 1 below.

### **Annex 1 – Death in Violent, Unusual or Suspicious Circumstances**

As well as the support we can offer if someone dies from natural causes, where there is evidence of suspicious circumstances we can suggest the best way to raise concerns with the local authorities.

Different procedures for investigating deaths apply in each part of the UK. We have a booklet called 'Guide for bereaved families' which you can find on [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel) under 'Our publications'.

We can also offer basic information about the local police system and legal system, including any legal aid that is available. We can provide lists of local lawyers (although we do not pay for their services and, where possible, details of support groups. In all cases where you, as next of kin, have concerns about the circumstances surrounding the death, we suggest you get professional legal advice. We cannot investigate deaths ourselves and, in many countries, investigating authorities and the courts will refuse to answer enquiries, including from British consular staff. In these circumstances, it is very important to consider appointing a local lawyer who can look after your interests in court and follow any trial for you. We will consider making appropriate representations to the local authorities if there are concerns that the investigation is not being carried out in line with local procedures, if there are justified complaints about discrimination against the person who has died or their family or where we judge that a local delay or decision creates significant distress for the bereaved. However, we cannot interfere in the investigation or judicial processes. You should be aware that the standard of investigative procedures and expertise varies greatly across the world. Consular staff in London are available to meet family representatives. They can contact the next of kin if the investigating authorities tell us about any new developments.

Where possible, if the next of kin visits the country during the early stages of the investigation and initial court hearings relating to the death, our staff there may be able to meet them.

Where legal systems differ significantly from the UK, or proceedings are conducted in a language you do not understand, we will help to arrange, and attend, an initial round of meetings with the authorities. And we may accompany you to the first day of a trial and verdict.

There are a number of organisations in the UK that can help bereaved families and friends come to terms with their loss, whether the death was natural or otherwise. If you wish, we will put you in touch with the Victim Support National Homicide Service, who will allocate a named caseworker to give you free and confidential help.

Charities such as Support After Murder and Manslaughter (SAMM) Abroad, ([www.sammabroad.org.uk](http://www.sammabroad.org.uk)), and Missing Abroad ([www.missingabroad.org](http://www.missingabroad.org)) can help you face the problems and difficulties that arise from death overseas under suspicious circumstances.

We also have a leaflet called 'Victims of crime abroad' which you may also find helpful. You can find details on [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel) under 'Our publications'.

### **Inquests**

If the circumstances of the death were not unusual and registration of the death is permitted the body will be released for burial, repatriation or cremation within a few days. However, if the police are not satisfied after a preliminary examination of the

facts, a post mortem may be required.

In cases of sudden or unexpected death whether by accident or misadventure, or where a person dies unattended, the police will prepare an initial report of their findings. However, if death was caused by a criminal act the police will be ordered to conduct a full investigation. The State Prosecutor will then decide whether to prosecute. When an autopsy has been conducted and next of kin are available to bury, the body will be released without delay, further information can also be found on their website at: [www.inquest.org.uk](http://www.inquest.org.uk)

### **UK Coroners**

When a body is repatriated a coroner may hold an inquest if the death was violent or unnatural, or if the death was sudden and the cause unknown. In some countries the cause of death is not given on the death certificate, and coroners do not generally have access to judicial files from other countries. Consequently, coroners may order a post-mortem as part of the inquest.

Coroners can request copies of post-mortem and police reports from the Cameroon authorities via the FCO in London. However, these may only be provided once any judicial proceedings are completed. In some instances this can take many months or years.

### **Release of Information**

Access to information concerning a death can be restricted. Requests for this information should be made through a legal representative. Please see our list of lawyers if you would like more information.

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

### **Court proceedings**

Under certain circumstances, such as a suspicious death, you may wish to engage the services of a local lawyer to represent your interests should a trial be necessary. Should you wish to have detailed feedback from court proceedings, you may wish to engage a lawyer before the case passes to the public prosecutor. Please see our list of lawyers.

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

### **Translation Services**

Cameroon is a bilingual country. However, French is dominant. If you need translation services, please see our list of translators and interpreters.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/list-of-translators-and-interpreters-in-cameroon>

### **Resources**

The FCO publishes two guides on death abroad: Death Overseas and Guide for Bereaved Families.

In the UK there are a number of organisations that can support and help bereaved families and friends to understand their grief and come to terms with their loss.

Useful websites include

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/internationalfuneral->

directors-in-the-uk: [www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk](http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk) [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org);  
[www.sammabroad.org](http://www.sammabroad.org) [www.roadpeac.org](http://www.roadpeac.org) [www.suzylamplugh.org](http://www.suzylamplugh.org)  
[www.victimsofcrimetrust.com](http://www.victimsofcrimetrust.com) [www.tcf.org.uk](http://www.tcf.org.uk) [www.wayfoundation.org.uk](http://www.wayfoundation.org.uk)  
[www.brake.org.uk](http://www.brake.org.uk) [www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk) [www.bacp.co.uk](http://www.bacp.co.uk)  
[www.legalservices.gov.uk](http://www.legalservices.gov.uk) [www.the-bereavement-register.org.uk](http://www.the-bereavement-register.org.uk);

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