

When someone dies in El Salvador

This guide gives advice about the death of a British person in El Salvador, including information on burial, cremation and repatriation.

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If you are dealing with the death of a child, multiple deaths, a suspicious death or a case of murder or manslaughter, call +502 2380 7300.

Contact the travel insurance company

If the person who died had insurance, contact their insurance company as soon as possible. Insurance providers may help to cover the cost of repatriation. Repatriation is the process of bringing the body home.

Insurance providers may also help with medical, legal, interpretation and translation fees.

If the person who died had insurance, the insurance company will appoint a funeral director both locally and in the UK.

What to do if the person who died did not have insurance

If you are not sure whether the person who died had insurance, check with their bank, credit card company or employer.

If the person who died did not have insurance, a relative or a formally appointed representative will usually have to appoint a funeral director and be responsible for all costs. The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) provides a list of [UK-based international funeral directors](#).

The FCDO also provides a list of [English-speaking funeral directors in El Salvador](#).

The FCDO cannot help with any costs.

Charities and organisations that offer support

Some UK-based charities and organisations may be able to offer assistance, support and information to people affected by a death abroad. The FCDO provides a list of [UK-based charities and organisations](#) that can help.

Register the death and obtain a death certificate

Deaths must be registered in the country where the person died. In El Salvador, a death is registered at the local Registry Office: [Registro Nacional de las Personas Naturales](#). The funeral director usually registers the death, although the next of kin can also do this.

In El Salvador, you need to get a medical certificate before you can get a death certificate. You should ask the hospital or doctor that last treated the person who died for the medical certificate. If the death was violent or accidental, ask the police for the medical certificate at [Corte Suprema de Justicia de El Salvador](#).

You or the funeral director should submit the medical certificate to the local Registry Office: [Registro Nacional de las Personas Naturales](#), which will provide the death certificate. Ask your funeral director for extra certified copies of the death certificate, where possible. You might need to inform other organisations of the death.

You do not need to register the death in the UK. The local death certificate can usually be used in the UK for most purposes, including probate.

If you wish, you can [register the death with the Overseas Registration Unit](#).

You need to tell the local authorities if the person who died suffered from an infectious condition, such as hepatitis or HIV, so they can take precautions against infection.

Mortuary facilities

Mortuary facilities vary throughout El Salvador. Most major towns and cities have mortuaries with temperature-controlled storage facilities, but these may not be available in rural areas. This may mean the body cannot be preserved in a good condition.

Deal with a local post-mortem

Post-mortems are usually performed when the cause of death is unknown, unnatural, sudden or violent. Post-mortems are carried out by forensic doctors. Cultural or religious sensitivities may not be taken into account. The FCDO cannot stop or interfere with the process.

In El Salvador, a post-mortem is usually carried out at the local mortuary facilities, managed by regional forensic offices of the [Instituto de Medicina Legal “Dr. Roberto Masferrer”](#). Generally, if remains are not collected after a one week period, local authorities will bury them in a common grave in a municipal cemetery.

During a post-mortem, small tissue samples and organs may be removed and retained for testing without the consent of the family. You will not automatically be told if this happens. They are usually replaced before repatriation, burial or cremation.

You can request post-mortem reports and results of further tests, such as toxicology reports, through the British Embassy in El Salvador. These reports can take several months, and they can be delayed further if there is a criminal investigation.

Bring the body home

If the person who died had insurance, find out if their insurance provider can help cover the cost of repatriation. Repatriation is the process of bringing the body home. If so, they will make all the necessary arrangements.

If the person who died is not covered by insurance, you may need to appoint an international funeral director yourself.

Find an international funeral director

A relative or a formally appointed representative may appoint a UK-based international funeral director for the person who died to be repatriated to the UK. The FCDO provides a list of [UK-based international funeral directors](#).

Local funeral directors will work with UK-based international funeral directors to make sure all the necessary requirements are met both locally and in the UK. This includes providing documents such as a local civil registry death certificate, a certificate of embalming and a certificate giving permission to transfer the remains to the UK.

The FCDO also provides a list of [English-speaking funeral directors in El Salvador](#), some of which can also repatriate the body to the UK.

Advice and financial assistance for repatriation

For organisations and charities that may be able to offer assistance with repatriation, see information on LBT Global in [Coping with death abroad: specialist support and advice](#) or [repatriation charities in Northern Ireland and Wales](#).

If you want to have a post-mortem in the UK once the body has been repatriated, you can request one from a UK coroner. The coroner will then decide if a post-mortem is needed. If you want the person who died to be cremated, you need to [apply for a certificate from the coroner \(form 'Cremation 6'\)](#).

Bring the ashes home

If you choose local cremation and wish to take the ashes back to the UK yourself, you can contact an [English-speaking funeral director in El Salvador](#) that can complete the procedure on your behalf.

You should not have the person cremated abroad if you want a UK coroner to conduct an inquest into their death. If it is not possible for you to transport the ashes yourself, a funeral director will be able to make the necessary arrangements. The FCDO provides a list of [UK-based international funeral directors](#).

Bury or cremate the body locally

To have a local burial or cremation, a relative or a formally appointed representative needs to appoint a local funeral director.

The FCDO provides a list of [English-speaking funeral directors in El Salvador](#).

The funeral director will be able to explain the local process.

If a local burial or cremation takes place, there will not be a coroner's inquest carried out in the UK.

Retrieving belongings

Personal belongings found on the person who died at the time of death are given to the police if the family is not present.

If you choose to repatriate, instruct the local funeral director to collect all personal belongings from the police or court. These can sometimes be shipped back to the UK with the body.

If there is an investigation into the death, clothing and other belongings, such as mobile phones, may be retained as evidence and will not be returned until the court case is finished, this can take several months or even years depending on the case.

The FCDO cannot help with the cost of returning personal belongings to the family.

Find a translator

You may need a translator to help understand information from local authorities or get certain documents translated. The FCDO provides a list of [English-speaking translators in El Salvador](#).

Find a lawyer

You can apply to appoint a lawyer in certain circumstances, such as a suspicious death. The FCDO provides a list of [English-speaking lawyers in El Salvador](#).

Cancel a passport

To avoid identity fraud, the passport of the person who died should be cancelled with HM Passport Office (HMPO). To do this, you need to [complete a D1 form](#).

If you plan to repatriate the person who died to the UK, you may require their passport to do this. In these circumstances, you should cancel the passport after they have been repatriated.

Check you have done everything you need to do in the UK

Check this step-by-step guide for when someone dies to make sure you have done everything you need to do in the UK after someone has died. You can find information on how to tell the government about the death, UK pensions and benefits and dealing with the estate of the person who died.