

Victims of crime abroad



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office



Victims of crime abroad

Most visits abroad are trouble free. But should you be the victim of a crime overseas, our consular staff are ready to help you. Working hours vary but most Embassies, High Commissions or Consulates operate an answer phone service outside office hours giving an emergency number.

This leaflet explains what we can do for you and what you may need to do for yourself.

What kind of help can we provide victims of crime?

We offer help which is appropriate to the individual circumstances of each case, including:

- > help issue replacement travel documents
- > providing information about transferring funds
- > contacting family or friends for you if you want
- > providing appropriate help if you have suffered rape or serious assault, are a victim of other crime, or are in hospital
- > providing details of local lawyers, interpreters, doctors and funeral directors (see note 1)
- > offering you basic information about the local police and legal systems, including whether a legal-aid scheme is available
- > offering support and help in a range of other cases, such as death of a relative in suspicious circumstances overseas.

Note 1:

Neither the Government nor the relevant British Embassy, High Commission or Consulate can make any guarantee in relation to the professional ability or character of any person or company on the list, nor can they be held responsible in any way for you relying on any advice you are given. We welcome any feedback on the people and companies listed.

We cannot

- > give you legal advice, act on your behalf with the local authorities in any legal action, investigate crimes or carry out searches for missing people, though we can give you details of people who may be able to help in these cases, such as English-speaking lawyers
- > get you out of prison, prevent the local authorities from deporting you after your prison sentence, or interfere in criminal or civil court proceedings
- > get you better treatment in hospital or prison than is given to local people, although if you are in prison we may raise concerns with local authorities if treatment falls below internationally recognised standards
- > pay any bills or give you money.

There may also be additional steps you can take to help yourself, or additional support we can give you, if you are a victim of the following types of crime:

Theft

You should:

- > make a list of the items stolen
- > tell the local police as soon as possible and insist on a police report (needed for any insurance and/or compensation claim)
- > cancel your credit cards and travellers cheques immediately and re-book your travel tickets
- > contact the nearest British Embassy, High Commission or Consulate if your passport has been stolen. We can issue a replacement travel document once checks have taken place.

Assault

You should:

- > contact us especially if you have been arrested or admitted to hospital
- > tell the local police as soon as possible and insist on a police report.

We can provide lists of lawyers, interpreters and doctors if you want.

If you have been detained, we aim to contact you, depending on local procedures, within 24 hours of being told about your arrest or detention, and to visit you as soon as possible if you want us to. We have a leaflet called 'In Prison Abroad' with more information which is available on the gov.uk website **www.gov.uk/government/publications**.

If you are in hospital, we aim to contact you within 24 hours of being told that you are there and to visit you as soon as possible. If you want, we can help you to liaise with your insurance company or medical evacuation company. Remember to keep any receipts or doctors' notes in case you need them to make a claim. Using the resources that are available to us, we may also be able to help you communicate with hospital staff if they do not speak English.

Rape or sexual assault

- > You should talk to someone straight away. Do not keep the attack to yourself. If possible, talk to a friend or relative or contact us.
- > We take any report of rape or sexual assault seriously and will try to see you to offer support as soon as possible and in private.
- > We aim to be polite, patient, sensitive and non-judgemental. In many cases of rape and sexual assault, the victims, no matter what their sex, prefer to talk about their ordeal with women. If that is what you want, we will do our best to ensure that a female officer is present at any meeting.

- > We can tell you about local police and legal procedures. If you want to contact the police, we can come to the police station with you. If possible, we can ask that you are interviewed by a female police officer if that is what you prefer. If you want us to, we can provide you with a list of local lawyers and interpreters. However, only you can decide whether to report the crime to the police or take legal action: we cannot make this decision for you. Remember that if you choose not to report the crime immediately but change your mind later, forensic and other evidence may be lost. Also in some countries, you must report the crime before returning to the UK if you want it to be investigated.
- > We can help you to deal with the local authorities to arrange a medical examination by a female doctor, if possible and if that is what you would prefer. Depending on local conditions and laws, we can also arrange for you to see a doctor who can give advice on sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, and on pregnancy or abortion.
- > If you want us to, we can contact your family or friends.
- > We can provide you with information on what professional help is available locally and in the UK both for you and for your family. We can consider asking for the services of a sexual offences trained officer from your local police station to advise and help you.
- > We have a leaflet called 'Rape and Sexual Assault overseas' with more information. You will find this on the gov.uk website **www.gov.uk/government/publications**.

Death abroad in suspicious circumstances

The tragic death of a relative or friend is always distressing. When the death is under suspicious circumstances, it is even more so. In all cases where you, as next of kin, have concerns about the circumstances surrounding the death, we suggest you get professional legal advice.

- > You should register the death in the country where the person died. We can advise you how to do this. You will need documents about you and the person who has died, including for example, their full name, date of birth, and passport number. The local authorities will need to be told if the person suffered from an infectious condition (such as hepatitis or HIV) so precautions against infection can be taken. You do not have to register a death at the British Embassy, High Commission or Consulate, but by doing so, you will be able to 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. In certain countries, British Embassies, High Commissions or Consulates cannot currently issue death certificates and the local ones are suitable for British purposes. These countries are Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Republic of Ireland, South Africa and UK overseas territories.

- > You should consider the options of local burial and local cremation (where local authorities allow these for foreigners) or of transporting the body and personal belongings back to the UK. We can give you information about these options and details of costs. Such arrangements may be delayed by any post mortem and overseas investigations. Post mortem examinations may be carried out without the permission of the next of kin. You should be aware that, in some countries, organs may be removed and kept during these procedures without the next of kin being informed or consulted. You should also be aware that in some countries a lack of suitable storage may make it impossible to obtain the necessary international certificates to transport the body. While we cannot pay any burial, cremation or repatriation expenses ourselves or settle any debts, we can help transfer money from friends and relatives in the UK to pay any necessary costs. We can also provide lists of local and international funeral directors. If an English-speaking firm is not available, our staff can help you with the arrangements. A coroner in England and Wales will normally hold an inquest if a person died a violent or unnatural death overseas and the body is returned to the coroner's district. 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 the gov.uk website **www.gov.uk/government/publications**. In the case of a major catastrophe or terrorist attack, local practices overseas may change, and there may be delays with bodies being returned to the UK due to identification procedures.

- > Where there is evidence of suspicious circumstances, we can give you support and suggest the best way to raise concerns with the local authorities.
- > 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 or if there are justified complaints about discrimination against the person who has died or their family. 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, and they can contact the next of kin if the investigating authorities tell us about any new developments. Where possible, if the next of kin visit the country where the person died, either during the early stages of the investigation or the initial court hearings, our staff there may be able to meet them.

Insurance

You should have arranged travel insurance before travelling. If so, your policy may provide limited cover for theft and may also cover personal injuries and medical expenses incurred as a result of crime. Insurance policies are likely to require that the incident was reported to the police in the relevant country at the time. Check what your policy covers before travelling.

Compensation

Courts abroad **may** be able to order the offender to pay compensation for your injuries and losses either following conviction in a criminal court or as a result of a civil action.

Some countries have a state-funded compensation scheme to cover physical or psychological injuries sustained as a result of a violent crime, which may apply to foreign nationals as well.

It is likely that a police report will be needed. Local lawyers should be able to provide information about how to claim compensation.

Compensation in the EU

If you have been injured as a result of a violent crime in an EU country, you may be able to apply for compensation from that EU country with the help of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority.

See **www.cica.gov.uk** for further information, or contact the EU Compensation Assistance Team on 0800 358 3601 or eucat@cica.gsi.gov.uk. Please be ready to tell them the date on which you were injured and the nearest city to where it happened.

If you are called as a witness

If you are called as witness in the trial of the suspected offender, you may be able to claim back some of the expenses incurred from the courts. You should make sure before incurring any such expenses that you have clear guidance from the courts as to what sort of expenditure they will reimburse and what proof of expenditure you will need to provide.

Emergency contact in the EU

Within the EU, the emergency services can be contacted by calling 112. This number can be used on either landlines or cellular phones.

Useful contacts

If you have been the victim of a crime overseas, or a friend or relative has been the victim of violent death, help and advice is also available in the UK.

Victim Support

Supportline: 0845 303 0900

www.victimsupport.com

Support After Murder and Manslaughter (SAMM) Abroad

Tel: 0845 123 2384

Email: info@SAMMabroad.org

www.SAMMabroad.org

Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre

Helpline: 0808 802 9999

www.rasasc.org.uk

Lucie Blackman Trust – Missing Abroad

14 Belvedere Street

Ryde, Isle of Wight, PO33 2JW

Tel: 020 7047 5060/01983 565 112

24 hour helpline: 07976 854 535

Email: info@lbtrust.org

www.lucieblackmantrust.org

Samaritans

Chris
PO Box 9090
Stirling, FK8 2SA

Helpline: 08457 90 9090
www.samaritans.org.uk

Cruse Bereavement Care

PO Box 800
Richmond
Surrey TW9 2RG

Helpline: 0844 477 9400
www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

EU Compensation Assistance Team

Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority
Tay House
300 Bath Street
Glasgow, G2 4LN

Tel: 0800 358 3601
www.cica.gov.uk

Press Complaints Commission

Halton House
20/23 Holborn
London EC1N 2JD

Tel: 020 7831 0022
Email: complaints@pcc.org.uk
www.pcc.org.uk

Your local doctor



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Tell us what you think!

Giving us feedback

We welcome your views on the support we provide. They will help us to identify what we do well and what we could do better. Visit **www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office/about/research** for our customer satisfaction survey, or ask your local Embassy or Consulate for a copy. Information about our official complaints procedure is also on this website.

If you prefer to contact us directly our contact details are:

Consular Directorate

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

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