



British Consulate General  
Amsterdam

## Deaths in the Netherlands

The death of a relative or a friend can be a traumatic experience. When the death happens 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 consular officers at the British Consulate General in Amsterdam are ready to assist and provide advice where 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 make. You should be aware that Dutch procedures differ significantly to those in the United Kingdom and that, while we understand your need for arrangements to be made quickly, this is not always possible.

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### Repatriation and burial

A relative or a formally appointed representative must instruct a funeral director in the Netherlands or the UK for the deceased to be repatriated to the UK or buried or cremated in the Netherlands. If the deceased was insured you should contact the insurance company so that they can make the necessary arrangements. If there is no insurance cover, funds for repatriation or burial will need to be met by the family. Neither the Foreign and Commonwealth Office nor the Consulate General or Embassy in the Netherlands have budgets to meet these costs.

A medical certificate certifying the death is issued by the local doctor and serves as a burial permit. A death is registered at the **gemeente** (*town hall*) in the locality in which it occurred. A relative or their formally appointed representative usually registers the death. This, however, can also be carried out by a local firm of undertakers. A certified copy of the entry is usually issued immediately if all necessary details are available. You need to ask for an **international version of the death certificate**. No fee is charged for the medical certificate or for the registration. Dutch death certificates, however, do not

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show the cause of death. In the Netherlands there is no central registry corresponding to the General Registry Offices in the United Kingdom.

Although not obligatory, it is possible [to register the death of a British national who has died in the Netherlands](#) with UK authorities.

## Coroners

When a deceased person is repatriated to England or Wales from the Netherlands, a coroner will only hold an inquest if the death was violent or unnatural or if the death was sudden or the cause unknown. As the cause of death is not given on the Dutch international death certificate, the coroner may order a post mortem as part of the inquest (even if a post mortem has already been carried out in the Netherlands). The coroner does not have access to the Dutch judicial file so they may request a copy from the Dutch police and for post mortem reports through Consular Directorate. However these reports will only be provided once the judicial process (if any) has been completed and the death is no longer sub judice. In some cases this can take several months.

If there is no requirement for a coroner to become involved and a cremation is to be carried out, a cremation order will need to be obtained from the Home Office. An application for the order is usually made by the local undertaker. There is no equivalent order required for burials.

Coroners in Northern Ireland are not obliged to hold an inquest into the cause of death, but next of kin can apply for a judicial review if an inquest has been decided against.

Under the CREMATION (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 1935 AND 1952, a permit for cremation must be obtained from the Scottish Executive in Edinburgh. Coroners do not exist in Scotland and there are no special formalities for a burial there.

## Police/judicial inquiries

Inquiries are not held when the doctor who certifies a death is satisfied that no suspicious circumstances exist and the death was due to natural causes. However, an inquiry is held when the death occurs and foul play is suspected. In such cases the responsibility for issuing the burial permit lies with the **Officier van Justitie** (*public prosecutor*) at the **Arrondissement Rechtsbank** (*local court*).

## Legal advice and release of information

Inquiries into deaths in the Netherlands are not public. In order to have access to the investigation and obtain information from the magistrate's file, interested parties must apply to the courts. This should be done through a lawyer and you can find a [list of English speaking lawyers](#) on our website. Consular staff do not have access to a judicial inquiry and cannot give legal advice.

Even in routine cases, such as a death from natural causes in ordinary circumstances, there is no routine way of obtaining official confirmation of the medical cause of death.

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The doctor who certifies the death will usually provide a medical certificate which states nothing other than that they have medically certified the death.

## **Legal aid**

British nationals who have court cases in the Netherlands, and are unable to engage the services of a lawyer privately, are advised to refer to the **Officier van Justitie** (*public prosecutor*) regarding whether or not they are entitled to apply for legal aid.

## **Victim support**

[Slachtofferhulp Nederland](#) (*victim support in the Netherlands*) is a similar organisation to Victim Support in the United Kingdom. They can advise and help victims and/or their close relatives and guide them through some aspects of the judicial process. They can also help with claims for compensation.

They do not, however, take the place of a lawyer as they do not have access to the judicial file. Police in the Netherlands can advise at how such support may be obtained.

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