

INFORMATION SHEET RELATING TO DEATHS IN LEBANON

The death of a relative or a friend can be a traumatic experience. When the death occurs overseas family and friends in the UK can feel additional distress as they are unfamiliar with foreign procedures and are perhaps unable to communicate in the language of the country where the death occurred. Consular Directorate of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and our Embassy in Beirut are ready to help as far as 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 in Lebanon 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.

The information contained in this document is not meant to be a definitive statement of the law, nor is it to be taken as a substitute for independent legal advice.

WHAT WE CAN AND CANNOT DO FOR YOU

Please see our separate leaflets that are available online at:

“Death Overseas” - <http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/2855621/death-overseas>

“Bereaved Families” - <http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/2855621/bereaved-families>

Autopsies (Post Mortems)

If the cause of death is not clear or it is a suspicious death or a crime is involved the authorities will want to do a Post Mortem. They will not do this without the family’s permission.

If a doctor cannot sign that no communicable diseases are involved a Post Mortem may also be needed before an airline will accept the body for repatriation to the UK.

Organs are not removed or retained without the family’s consent.

General Prosecutor's Office approval is also needed to carry out an autopsy.

To get a copy of the autopsy report you will need to write a letter to the General Prosecutor’s office. It may be possible for the Embassy to get a copy of the report for you. The report will be normally be in Arabic. We can provide a list of local translators who can translate the report for you but there may be a charge for this.

Mortuary Facilities

There are mortuaries in all hospitals. If someone dies in hospital, they keep the body in the mortuary and call the NOK or Embassy (for foreigners). There is a charge for storing the body.

Burial and Cremation

The Embassy can supply you with the contact details of an undertaker who can make all the necessary arrangements for a local burial or cremation. Unless you speak Arabic then you are advised to seek professional help to make the arrangements.

In Lebanon burials take place in religious burial grounds. You will be asked which religion the deceased belonged to. If the deceased has no religion they could be buried in the catholic or Latin burial grounds. The cost of the cheapest burial is currently around £300.

Cremations only take place at the American University Hospital in Beirut, subject to the hospital approval.

Please note that if burial or cremation takes place in Lebanon it will not be possible for an inquest to take place in the UK.

Repatriation

You are advised to contact an international undertaker based in the UK if you wish to repatriate the deceased's body or remains. There are several international funeral directors, some of which are listed below:

> Co-operative Funeral Services available throughout the UK

> Kenyon Air Transportation
020 7258 1130

> Haven Repatriation
020 8993 8767

> Rowland Brothers International
020 8684 2324.

The UK undertaker will liaise with a Lebanese undertaker to make all the necessary arrangements in Lebanon and in the UK as soon as he has your authority. They will probably ask for an advance payment or assurance from a recognised insurance company that they will meet the costs.

The undertaker will arrange for the relevant papers and approvals which will be accepted by the Lebanese and UK authorities and by the airlines.

Local Registration of the death

Birth, death and marriage records are kept at the Office of the Registrar in each of 5 jurisdictions (called muhafazat) each covering subdivisions of 10-15 villages (Kalam Al Noufouss). A death should be registered in the place where the doctor certifies it took place. The doctor certifying the death will advise you which office to go to.

You may also want to translate the document in Lebanon to use in the UK.

Copies of death certificates can be obtained within a week from the mayor (Mukhtar) by submitting an application and paying a nominal fee.

Return of Personal Effects

These can be returned to the family by a courier company e.g. DHL. There is a charge for this. The Embassy cannot be responsible for obtaining or storing personal effects.

Police/Judicial Inquiries

The police take the lead in all cases of incidents involving foreign nationals. They will visit the scene of any death outside a hospital. Upon request the police will make their report available to the Embassy, relatives, insurance companies, or government organisations. The document will be in Arabic which we can have translated. A charge may be made for the translation.

A charge will be made for a copy of a Coroner's report.

Legal Aid

There is no Legal Aid in Lebanon; a list of lawyers is available from the Embassy.