



## British Consular Network Greece

### Deaths involving British Nationals in Greece

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The death of a relative or friend is always distressing. But if it happens abroad the distress can be made worse by practical problems. Consular Directorate in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and our Consulates in Greece are ready to help in any way that they can. You may be uncertain 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 Greek procedures differ significantly to those in the United Kingdom. While we understand your need to make arrangements as quickly as possible, this may not always be possible.

#### Standard Procedures

Following the death of a British national in Greece, next of kin, or a formally appointed representative, must decide whether to repatriate the deceased to the UK, or carry out a local burial. Cremation is not available in Greece. Consular staff in London will pass on to the Consulate overseas the wishes of the next of kin about arrangements for the body. We will do our best to ensure these are carried out.

Under Greek law, a deceased person must be buried within one month of death. However, in the case of foreign nationals the authorities will normally allow as much time as necessary. The Greek authorities have informed that the death must be registered within 30 days; however, there may be slight regional differences.

If the deceased was covered by travel insurance, it is important for next of kin to contact the insurance company without delay. If there is no insurance cover, the cost of repatriation or burial will need to be met by the family. Neither the Foreign and Commonwealth Office nor our Consulates in Greece have budgets to meet these costs.

It is important to remember that if the deceased was travelling with a tour operator, they can be a valuable source of assistance and advice.

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Contact: Athens 210 7272600, Corfu 26610 30055, Crete 2810 224012, Rhodes 22410 22005, Thessaloniki 2310 278006, Zakynthos 26950 22906

## Repatriation

If the deceased was covered by travel insurance, the insurance company will normally appoint an International funeral director to arrange repatriation. If the deceased is not covered by insurance, next of kin will need to appoint an International funeral director, themselves. You may find a list of companies at the end of this document. The International funeral director will liaise with local undertakers to ensure that all necessary requirements are met in Greece.

When the deceased is to be repatriated, the remains must be embalmed and placed in a zinc-lined coffin. Local undertakers in Greece are equipped to carry out these procedures. A local civil registry death certificate, plus the doctor's death certificate (indicating cause of death), a certificate of embalming, and a certificate giving permission to transfer the remains to the UK is required to ship the body. This will be arranged by the international funeral director.

In certain circumstances repatriation may not always be possible. Our consular staff will try and inform next of kin as soon as possible if this is the case.

## Local Burial

If next of kin choose to proceed with a local burial, they will need to instruct a local funeral director. Our Consulates in Greece can provide a list of funeral directors on request and can help with practical arrangements.

## Inquests

In the event of a death in Greece, the Examining Magistrate will consider the evidence. If the circumstances of the death were not unusual, registration of the death is permitted and the body will be released for repatriation or burial. However, if the Examining Magistrate is not satisfied after the preliminary examination, an autopsy may be required. Further investigations and interviews with witnesses may also be called for before a decision is made as to cause of death.

In cases of accident or misadventure, a report of the Examining Magistrate's findings will be issued and experience has shown that this can take several months. 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.

## Autopsies

Autopsies are carried out by court appointed doctors with forensic qualifications. During an autopsy, organs can be removed for testing at the discretion of the Pathologist, without consent of next of kin. Next of kin are not informed about the removal of any organs. The deceased's body can be buried or returned to the UK before tests on removed organs are completed.

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Any organs removed are retained for the duration of the tests, after which they are destroyed. Organs cannot be removed for any purpose other than testing without prior consent of the deceased (for research) or next of kin (transplants).

Should the next of kin have a request that any organs removed are returned they need to appoint by Power of Attorney either a lawyer or a Funeral Director in Greece. The lawyer/undertaker will then approach the respective Coroner's office with an application for the organ(s) to be returned to him/her once the toxicological reports are finalised in order to forward to the family. There are costs involved and this is a lengthy administrative procedure. No court or Public Prosecutor's decision is necessary.

The British Embassy Athens can supply a list of English speaking Greek lawyers or/and funeral directors.

### **UK Coroners**

When a body is repatriated to England or Wales, a coroner will hold an inquest only 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. If a post-mortem is also performed in the UK, the coroner might be able to advise you if any organs have been removed.

In Scotland, the Scottish Executive is the responsible authority. However, they are not obliged to hold an inquest into cause of death.

Coroners in Northern Ireland are also not obliged to hold an inquest into cause of death. However, next of kin can apply for a judicial review if no inquest is held.

### **Release of Information**

Access to information concerning a death i.e. post-mortem and police reports, is restricted. The Greek authorities will not normally provide this information directly to next of kin, or to third parties including our Consulates. Requests for this information should be made through a legal representative. Our consular staff can provide lists of English speaking lawyers throughout Greece. The release of any information can take many months, and the documents will be in Greek.

### **Legal Aid**

British nationals without the available means to appoint legal representation can apply for legal aid in most European countries. The Legal Services Commission in London (<http://legalservices.gov.uk/default.asp> Tel: +44 0207 783 7000) is responsible for legal aid applications overseas. The Legal Services Commission currently forwards applications for legal aid to their counterparts in Greece, where cases will be considered for their eligibility (based on Greece's criteria).

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## Consular Death Registration

There is no obligation for the death overseas of a British national to be registered with the British Embassy. However, there are the advantages that a British form of death certificate is then available, and that a record of the death is afterwards held at the General Register Office in the UK.

To apply from within the UK, please see the following website for full details:

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/births-deaths-marriages-civil/registering-a-death>

Or alternatively, write to:

Overseas Residence Services Unit,  
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,  
Rm K4.9,  
King Charles Street,  
London,  
SW1A 2AH,

Tel: (+44) 020 7008 0186; phone lines are open 10:00 – 12:00, Monday to Thursday

If you are applying from Greece, you should contact the nearest British Consulate:

<http://ukingreece.fco.gov.uk/en/about-us/other-locations-in-greece/>

## Passports

The passport of a deceased British National is kept for 6 months at the British Embassy in Athens and then destroyed. Any next of kin who would like to have a passport returned to them should make a request in writing to:

Consular Directorate – Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
Greece and Greek Islands Desk  
Room WH4.5  
King Charles Street  
Consular Directorate  
Whitehall  
London, SW1A 2AH  
Tel: (+44) 020 7008 0141 /138

If you are residing in Greece, you should contact:

Consular Section  
British Embassy  
1 Ploutarchou Street  
Athens, 106 75  
Tel: (+30) 210 7272 600

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## International Funeral Directors

Funeral Director	Address	Telephone / Fax	E-mail / Web address
Funeralcare International (Part of the co-operative Group)	221 Upper Richmond Road, Putney, London, SW15 6SQ	T: (+44) 020 8788 5303  F: (+44) 020 8788 2525	<a href="mailto:Henley.wright@letsco-operate.com">Henley.wright@letsco-operate.com</a>  <a href="http://www.letsco-operate.com">www.letsco-operate.com</a>
Kenyon Air Transportation	81 Westbourne Grove, London, W2 4UL	T: (+44) 020 7258 1130  F: (+44) 020 7243 3125	<a href="mailto:Katuk@dial.pipex.com">Katuk@dial.pipex.com</a>  <a href="http://www.gnf24.dial.pipex.com">www.gnf24.dial.pipex.com</a>
Haven Repatriation Services (Formerly Phoenix International)	13 The Broadway, Gunnersbury Lane, London, W3 8HR	T: (+44) 020 8993 8767	
Rowland Brothers International	301-305 Whitehorse Road, Croydon, CR0 2HR	T: (+44) 020 8684 2324  F: (+44) 020 8684 8000	<a href="mailto:Info@rowlandbrothersinternational.co.uk">Info@rowlandbrothersinternational.co.uk</a>  <a href="http://www.rowlandbrothersinternational.co.uk">www.rowlandbrothersinternational.co.uk</a>
National Association of Funeral Directors	618 Warwick Road, Solihull, B9 1AA	T: (+44) 0121 711 1343  F: (+44) 0121 711 1351	<a href="mailto:Info@nafd.org.uk">Info@nafd.org.uk</a>  <a href="http://www.nafd.org.uk">www.nafd.org.uk</a>

Disclaimer: Please note that the listing of the companies above does not represent FCO endorsement of their services.

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