



DISPOSITION OF REMAINS REPORT FOR IRAQ

The following general information is provided to assist families with their initial decisions following the death of a loved one. Indicated costs are estimates based on deaths with no unusual circumstances and are subject to change. The funeral home will be able to give families exact costs. The laws cited are from the Iraqi Public Health Law of 1981, Chapter 4, Articles 58 to 63; a translation is included at the end of this document.

Part I: Name of Country
Republic of Iraq

Part II: U.S. Embassy or Consulate Information

United States Embassy Baghdad, Iraq
Address: Al-Kindi Street, International Zone (IZ), Baghdad, Iraq
Tel.: +1-240-264-3467 ext. 4554
Tel: +964-760-030-3000
E-mail: BaghdadACS@state.gov

U.S. Consulate General Erbil, Iraq
Address: 413 Ishtar Street, Ankawa, Erbil, Iraq
Tel.: +964-66-211-4000
E-mail: ErbilACS@state.gov

Please visit U.S. Embassy Baghdad's [webpage](#) for Iraq-specific information, such as the Travel Warning, Country Specific Information Sheet, Iraq-specific Alerts to U.S. citizens, and COVID-19 information. If you are traveling to or residing in Iraq, we strongly encourage you to enroll with the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#).

Part III: Profile of Religions of the Host Country and Religious Services Available to Visitors

Country Profile - Religions

Approximately 97 percent of the Iraqi population is Muslim. Shi'a Muslims constitute around 65 percent of the population and 32 percent are Sunni Muslim. Muslim sects predominately come from Arab ethnic groups but can also be Turkmen or Kurdish. Approximately 3 percent

of the population represents other faiths: Christian, Yezidi, Sabeian-Mandaean, Baha'i, Shabak, Kaka'i (sometimes referred to as Ahl-e Haqq), and Jewish.

Iraq is home to a variety of important historical places of worship and shrines. Many visitors come to Iraq as pilgrims to visit the holy cities or family members traditionally attend mosques in their family neighborhoods. Some examples of holy sites include the Ziggurat of Ur, Meskenta Church, the Kadhimain Shrine, Karbala Imam Hussein Shrine, Najaf Imam Ali Shrine, the Latin Church, the Mosque and Mausoleum of Al-Imam Al-Aadham, the Caliphs Mosque, the Chaldean Church, and historic Jewish synagogues.

In the event of a person's death, mosques, and churches in Iraq, whether these mosques are affiliated with the Sunni or Shiite Waqf, or Catholic, Assyrian, or Armenian churches, can help in providing instructions and in the burial process. For example, praying for the soul of the deceased, performing a funeral ceremony, providing information about the process of preparing the deceased, and locating places of burial. Many also can help with logistic support, such as providing the casket and transporting the deceased to the burial places.

Part IV: Funeral Directors, Mortician and Related Services Available in Iraq and Kurdistan Region

DISCLAIMER: U.S. Embassy Baghdad and U.S. Consulate General Erbil assume no responsibility or liability for the professional ability or reputation of, or the quality of services provided by, the following persons or firms. Names are listed alphabetically, and the order in which they appear has no other significance. Professional credentials and areas of expertise are provided directly by the funeral directors, morticians, and other service providers.

In Baghdad, there is only one funeral home authorized by the Medico Legal Institute (Forensic Medicine Institute) to assist in repatriation of remains.

Baghdad Funeral Office

Address: AL-Mansour, Abu-Jaafar AL-Mansour Square, Baghdad

Tel: +964-790-322-4450

Tel: +964-770-828-4100

Email: Khalid_Khalid222000@yahoo.com

Director: Khaled AL Khafaji

In Kurdistan, contact the Erbil office of the Medico Legal Institute for assistance.

Erbil Medico Legal Institute

Address: 100m Street, next to Rizgary Hospital, Erbil

Tel: +964-750-445-9513

Email: dr_yka@yahoo.com

Director: Dr. Yasin Kareem Amin

Part V: Profile of services available in Iraq regarding preparation and shipment of remains

1. Disposition of Remains, General

Local burial within 24 hours is the norm in Iraq. Due to limited refrigerated storage facilities available at hospitals, the deceased's remains are delivered to a funeral home soon after death. Repatriation of remains may be arranged, but preparation and embalming of remains in Iraq may not meet with standards expected in the United States. Family members are advised to consult with the funeral home regarding viewing the deceased or performing an open casket service.

In cases where no foul play is suspected, any authorized medical doctor from a government hospital may examine the remains and issue a certificate of death. The local police and hospital authorities authenticate the certificate, and the remains may be taken directly to the cemetery, funeral home, or transportation company.

In the case of death of a foreign citizen in any other provinces, such as Mosul and Basrah, the remains will be moved to the medical legal Directorate in Baghdad for conducting the autopsy and the death certificate will be issued from Baghdad.

Unique Circumstances

In suspicious cases, the hospital or police deliver the remains to the central morgue, according to each province. Morgue personnel may perform an autopsy at the request of local police or when ordered by judicial authorities. When possible, the family of the deceased or next-of-kin are consulted before the autopsy to obtain consent. Upon completion of the autopsy, local authorities release the remains to the family, next-of-kin, or funeral home for burial or repatriation.

If the death occurred because of a disease listed with the World Health Organization's [International Health Regulations](#) or an infectious disease designated by the Competent Health Statement, the family may be required to bury the body in specific locations designated for this purpose near where the death occurred.

2. Maximum Period Before Burial

Normally, burials of the deceased must occur within 24 hours death, and before burial, a death certificate is required from a hospital or health institution. Any holding or transfer of remains beyond this period requires special permission. Embalmed remains can be held in cold storage until further instructions are received from the next-of-kin regarding disposition. However, there are few refrigerated mortuary facilities and experienced morticians in Iraq.

3. Embalming

Embalming is not a common practice and is only required when remains are to be repatriated, not for local burial. Embalming standards and materials used in Iraq are

often not to U.S. standards. Facilities are available at the Baghdad Funeral Office or government hospital morgues, and they provide the minimum requirements to preserve the body during shipping, which is often limited to injecting the remains with formalin and dressing the body according to the religious preferences of the deceased. Embalming procedures can only commence with permission from local authorities, which is obtained by the authorized physician. Generally, local customs and health department officials are cooperative, but one should expect delays when the death occurs outside of regular business hours, in a place other than a hospital, or when foul play is suspected.

4. Cremation

Cremation is not available in Iraq.

5. Caskets and Containers

Caskets suitable for shipment are available through the Baghdad Funeral Office or airline cargo company and must meet the standards for the aviation authorities and Iraqi law (see Appendix). Such caskets are usually made in two sections: a wooden exterior and a metal interior compartment. The metal unit is lined with absorbent material, such as sawdust, and welded shut, then placed inside the wooden box, which is sealed again with a red seal. The average cost is US\$2,000. Caskets for local burial are of simple wooden construction and available from the local mosque, church, or morgue.

6. Export of Remains

Export usually takes place via the cargo of three airlines in Iraq: Iraqi Airlines, Turkish Airlines, and Royal Air Jordanian. Below are procedures and documents for the exportation of human remains. Except as noted, all are requirements of the shipping company or the United States.

Preparation Requirements for Exporting Human Remains:

- Embalm the body per regulations
- Clothe the body according to religious preferences
- Enclosure of the remains in a metal-lined casket
- Original passport of the deceased
- Consular Mortuary Certificate
- Consular Report of Death Abroad
- No Objection Letter from the Embassy of the deceased
- Local death certificate with translation
- Transport letter from the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Baghdad Funeral Office usually uses non-refrigerated trucks for internal

transportation and airlines for external/international transportation. Both Royal Jordanian Airlines and Iraqi Airlines have a daily flight to Amman, Jordan where a connection can take the remains to the United States. Turkish Airlines has a connection in Turkey and then routes to the United States. The estimated transport cost from Baghdad to New York-JFK is US\$35 per kg.

7. Costs

For repatriation of remains to the United States, the cost is estimated to be US\$3,500, which includes embalming, casket, local ground transportation, and shipping from Baghdad to New York-JFK. If the cause of death by infectious disease, like COVID-19, that requires special handling, the cost is US\$45 per kg. For local burial, the average cost is US\$2,000 if the next of kin has a family gravesite, and approximately US\$2,500 to include costs of acquiring a gravesite.

[Exchange rate](#) on 12 January 2022: US\$1.00 = 1,455.51 Iraqi Dinar

8. Exhumation and Shipment

Remains may not be exhumed and transferred unless the body has been buried for a period of at least one year. If the deceased died of a disease listed in the International Health Regulations, the remains must be buried for at least two years and must obtain specific permission from health authorities before transferring.

APPENDIX

Iraq's Public Health Law of 1981, Section 89, Articles 58 to 63 outlines the local customs and procedures for disposition of remains. Below is a translation:

Transfer of Funerals and Burials

Article 58

First – Funeral planners and families may enter into, or pass through, the territory of the Republic of Iraq in order to bury a deceased person under the following conditions:

- A. The remains must enter or transit through the official border posts of the country, whether naval, air, or land borders, as designated by the health authorities.
- B. The remains are to be accompanied by a death certificate and transfer license, including the name and title of the enactment of the deceased, place, date, and cause of death issued by a competent authority in the place of death. The certificate may also be issued by an authority at the place of burial in the case of exhumation. It must be written in the language of the country that issued it, or Arabic, English, or French, to be ratified by the Iraqi Consulate or its substitute in the country through which the remains were transported.
- C. Also required are the aggregated approvals of the Directorate of Public Health as presented to the Iraqi Representative in that country or its substitute, in order to enter or pass-through Iraq prior to shipment.
- D. The remains must be placed in a metal coffin with five centimeters of absorbent material (e.g. coal, sawdust, or powdered coal with detergent additives).
- E. In the event of a death due to an infectious disease on the International Health Regulations list, the body must be covered with a cloth saturated with antiseptic solution, then enclosed in a metal coffin, welded shut in the presence Iraqi Consul or representative, and placed inside a wooden box at least two centimeters thick and treated so as to be impermeable to liquids, then sealed with anchor screws, and stamped by the Iraqi Consul or its substitute.

Second – Responsibility rests on the carrier to re-charge the remains outside the Republic of Iraq at their own expense if they did not fulfill the conditions set forth above.

Third - Take into consideration the provisions contained in first item of this article when a person moves the remains from Iraq to another country. A prior approval must be obtained from both the embassy of the country of the deceased or the recipient, and the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The approval must also apply the procedures set forth in Paragraph D of the Section 1 of this Article, in the presence of a consulate representative in which the remains will be transferred, who will then apply the stamp of the health authorities of this country.

Article 59

The remains of a deceased person due to one of the diseases subject to the International Health Regulations list may be transferred only after two years from the date of burial and with special permission from the health authorities.

Article 60

First - The remains may not be transferred from one town to another within the country without a death certificate.

Second - The funeral may be transferred within the country if the burial is more than 36 hours from the time of death, and that death was not caused by a disease subject to the International Health Regulations, or a disease designated by the health authorities with a statement issued for this purpose. An exception may be made for transfer delays due to medico-legal procedures but will require a permit from the legal authorities to keep the remains in a refrigerated storage facility.

Third – Remains may not be transferred unless the body has been buried for a period of at least one year.

Article 61

A fee of one hundred dinars or its equivalent in foreign currency will be paid for each foreigner's body to be buried in the country. Iraqi Consulates abroad may receive this fee and issue an official receipt.

Article 62

The body of the deceased may not be buried without a death certificate issued in accordance with the law. Specifically, the certificate may only be issued after the body is examined by an authorized physician in a health institution and that physician verifies the cause of death. The body must be identified by an ID card or any other government-issued identification document.

Article 63

If death occurred due to a disease list on the International Health Regulations list, or an infectious disease designated by the Competent Health Statement, the body may not be buried by relatives, but instead by the health authorities in coordination with the capital authorities or municipalities. Such remains will be buried in locations designated for this purpose, most likely in a cemetery in the city where the death occurred.