

When someone dies abroad

Whether the death happened overseas or the family hopes to bury someone in their home country, the same choice comes first: bury where they died, or bring them home.

1

Contact the US embassy or consulate

If a US citizen dies abroad, the nearest US embassy or consulate helps the family with local burial or the return of the body, and can issue a Consular Report of Death Abroad, which you will need in the US. The State Department cannot pay to bring remains home.

U.S. Department of State, Death of a U.S. Citizen Abroad

2

Decide: bury there, or bring them home

Burying where the person died keeps to the haste the Sunnah asks for, and costs far less. Bringing a body home can take days or weeks of permits and flights. Scholars differ on moving a body before burial: many advise burying where the person died, and some schools discourage moving it without a strong reason. Ask a scholar before deciding.

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1315

3

If you bring them home, ask about embalming first

Airlines and the countries involved set their own rules for transporting a body, and some require embalming. Ask the funeral home on both ends what is required, and whether refrigeration or a sealed container is accepted instead.

4

If you bury in another country from the US

A US funeral home that works with Muslim families can arrange the paperwork, the consulate of the destination country, and the flight. Ask for the total cost in writing before you agree.

Federal Trade Commission, The FTC Funeral Rule

THE JANAZAH

The prayer can be prayed wherever the body is. Family elsewhere may pray the funeral prayer in absence, as the Prophet ﷺ did for al-Najāshī; ask your imam. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1245

NEXT

The full step-by-step guide