



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. 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 58:63.

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 from the U.S.: +1-301-985-8841 ext.
4100 or +1-301-985-8841 ext. 4888
Tel from Iraq: 0760-030-4100 or 0760-030-4888
E-mail: BaghdadACS@state.gov

Please visit U.S. Embassy Baghdad’s [webpage](#) for Iraq-specific information such as the **Travel Warning**, the **Country Specific Information Sheet**, and our **Iraq-specific messages to U.S. citizens**.

If you are traveling to or residing in Iraq, we strongly encourage you to enroll your stay with the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#).

Part III. Profile of Religions of the Host Country and Religious Services available to visitors

Country Profile: Visit the State Department’s website “[Fact Sheet: Iraq](#).”

Religions: Approximately 97 percent of the Iraqi population is Muslim. Shia Muslims-- predominantly Arabs but also Turkmen, Faili (Shia) Kurds, and other groups-- constitute a 60 to 65 percent majority. Arab and Kurdish Sunni Muslims make up 32 to 37 percent of the population--18 to 20 percent are Sunni Kurds, 12 to 16 percent are Sunni Arabs, and the remaining 1 to 2 percent are Sunni Turkmen. Approximately 3

percent of the population is composed of Christians, Yezidis, Sabeen-Mandaeans, Bahais, Shabaks, Kaka'is (sometimes referred to as Ahl-e Haqq), and a very small number of Jews. Shia, although predominantly located in the south and east, are also a majority in Baghdad and have communities in most parts of the country. Sunnis form the majority in the west, center, and the north of the country.

Religious Activities for Visitors: Many visitors come to Iraq as pilgrims, to visit the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala, revered by many Shia Muslims. Other visitors who return to Iraq to visit family members traditionally attend mosques in their family neighborhoods. Iraq is also home to a variety of important historical places of worship for other faiths, including Meskenta Church, the Kadhimain Shrine, the Latin Church, the Mosque and Mausoleum of Al-Imam Al-Aadham, the Caliphs Mosque, and the Chaldean Church, as well as a number of synagogues, although much of the once substantial Jewish community has almost completely disappeared from the country.

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

DISCLAIMER: The U.S. Embassy, Baghdad, Iraq, assumes 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.

There is only one funeral home authorized by the Forensic Medicine Institute (Medico Legal Institute) in Baghdad, as well as two transportation companies, which have been able to assist in repatriation of remains.

- Baghdad Funeral Office
Address: Bab Almoazam, beside the Institute of Forensic Medicine Institute, Baghdad
Tel from the U.S.: +964-790-322-4450, +964-790-322-4450
Tel from Iraq: 0790-322-4450, 0790-322-4450
Email: Khalid_Khald222000@yahoo.com
Director: Khaled Alkhafaji
Operating with a limited embalming ability.
Cremation/shipment can be also arranged.
Quality of services not yet tested.
- Jupiter Travel Jupiter Travel
Tel from the U.S.: +964-750-799-9919
Tel from Iraq: 0750-799-9919
ameer@jupitertravels.net
Director: Ameer Sheriff

- Royal Jordanian Airlines
Tel from the U.S.: +964-780-181-6738
Tel from Iraq: 0780-181-6738
hayajneh57@yahoo.com

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 police stations and hospitals, prompt arrangements for transfer of the body to a funeral home are required soon after a death. Shipment of remains may be arranged, but please note that 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 the advisability of viewing the remains 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.

2. 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.

Per Article 63, Section 89 of the Public Health Law of 1981, 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 locations designated for this purpose in a cemetery in the city where the death occurred.

3. Maximum Period Before Burial

Per Article 60, Section 89 of the Public Health Law of 1981, the deceased must be buried, embalmed, or in special circumstances cremated, within 24 hours of the death. Transferring the remains more than 36 hours after death without a valid reason is prohibited. 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, and embalming is not a common practice.

4. Embalming

Embalming is only required when remains are to be repatriated, not for local burial. Embalming facilities are available at the Baghdad Funeral Office, or government hospital morgues, which provide the minimum requirements to preserve the body during the shipping. This is often limited to injecting the remains with formalin and clothing 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. The local customs and health department officials are cooperative in such emergencies. Delays are encountered when death occurs outside of regular business hours, in a place other than a hospital, or when foul play is suspected. Embalming standards and materials used are often not to U.S. standards.

5. Cremation

Cremation in Iraq is exceedingly rare. The Baghdad Funeral Office has stated that it is possible to arrange, per the religious preferences of the deceased, but the embassy has not had experience with that service in country.

6. Caskets and Containers

Caskets in Iraq may be available through the Baghdad Funeral Office or airline cargo company, and must meet the standards for the aviation authorities and Iraqi law, per Part 1 of Article 58, Section 89 of the Public Health Law of 1981. They 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 and sealed again with a red seal. The average cost is 500USD, and is usually included in the overall transportation fees.

Caskets for local burial are of simple wooden construction, and available from the local mosque, church, or morgue.

7. Export of Remains

The export of remains is controlled by Part 2 of Article 58, Section 89 of the Public Health Law of 1981, Preparing Remains for Travel. Export usually takes place via the cargo of three airlines in Iraq: Iraqi Airlines, Jupiter Airlines, and Royal Air Jordanian. Procedures and documents for the exportation of human remains are as follows. Except as noted, all are shipping company or U.S. requirements.

Preparation Requirements for Exporting Human Remains:

- a. Embalm the body according to materials and equipment available
- b. Clothe the body according to religious preferences
- c. Enclosure of the remains in a metal lined casket
- d. Consular Mortuary Certificate
- e. No Objection Letter from the Embassy of the deceased, according to Part 3 of Article 58, Section 89 of the Public Health Law of 1981

- f. Local death certificate with translation
- g. Original passport of the deceased
- h. Transport letter from the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- i. Consular Report of Death Abroad

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 U.S. Turkish Airlines has a connection in Turkey en route to the U.S. The estimated transport cost from Baghdad to New York-JFK is 32USD per KG.

Exportation of Human Cremations/Ashes is not a common practice in Iraq, although there are no known restrictions on the service.

8. Costs

- a. For disposition of remains to the U.S., the cost is estimated to be between 2600 and 3500USD. This includes embalming, the casket, local ground transportation, and the shipping fare of approximately 32USD per KG from Baghdad to New York-JFK.
- b. For local burial, the average cost is 1000USD if the Next of Kin or family has a family grave. If not, the cost is approximately 1800USD, including the grave site.
- c. The exchange rate as of January 13, 2013: 1.00USD = 1165 Iraqi Dinars.

9. Exhumation and Shipment

According to Articles 59 and 60, in Section 89 of the Public Health Law of 1981, remains may not be transferred unless the body has been buried for a period of not less than one year. If the deceased died of one of the diseases listed with the International Health Regulations, families may only transfer the remains after two years from the date of burial, and with specific permission from the health authorities.

10. Local customs and procedures are outlined in the Public Health Law of 1981, Articles 58 to 63 as following, in 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.