

# AFTER A DEATH:

## A Brief Guide for Muslims

When someone in the family, a relative or a friend dies, there are many decisions and arrangements that have to be made, often at a time of personal distress. Quite often people are not familiar with what to do - either with the religious requirements or the legal practicalities in order to bury one's loved ones as soon as possible.

This brief guide is to help you with the practical steps which need to be completed to meet legal requirements, and to organise the funeral.

### **1. EXPECTED DEATH**

If the death was expected, contact the doctor who attended the deceased during their final illness. If the doctor can certify the cause of death he or she will give you the following:

- A medical certificate that shows the cause of death (this is free of charge and will be in an envelope addressed to the registrar), and
- A formal notice that says that the doctor has signed the medical certificate (this tells you how to get the death registered).

Also contact QRVG funeral representative (see contact details) who will give you advice and information about making the burial arrangements.

### **2. EXPECTED DEATH IN HOSPITAL**

If the death occurs in hospital, the hospital staff will contact the person named by the deceased as 'next of kin'. It is important that you make sure that hospital staff are aware of and have recorded details of the next of kin in case of emergency. A doctor will issue a Formal Notice and Medical Certificate, as in section 1 above. The hospital will keep the body in the hospital mortuary until the next of kin arranges for it to be taken away. Please note that the hospital will not normally release the body until the death has been registered and a Green Form is obtained from the Registrar of Deaths. Hospital staff will also arrange for the next of kin to collect the deceased's possessions. If you are asked for permission to do a post-mortem then please do not agree to this. As it is an expected death, doctors will only ask for research purposes. Islam does not permit post-mortems if they are not required by the law. Please be mindful of hospital regulations and procedures and avoid excessive number of people visiting at any one time. Contact the QRVG representative who will be more than happy to help you with the arrangements.

### **3. UNEXPECTED DEATH**

If the person's death is sudden or unexpected or you should contact:

- The person's family doctor
- The deceased's next of kin
- QRVG funeral representative (see contact details)

If necessary, the police will help find the people listed above. If the cause of death is quite clear the doctor will be able to certify the cause of death and he or she will give you the required documents as stated in section 1 and 2.

If the doctor treating the deceased had not seen him or her either after the death or within 14 days before the death, the death must be reported to the coroner. In any of the following circumstances the doctor may report the death to the coroner:

- If the cause of death is unknown or uncertain
- The death was sudden or unexplained, e.g. a sudden infant death (cot death)
- The death occurred in prison or police custody
- The death was caused by an industrial disease

- The death occurred while the patient was undergoing an operation or did not recover from an anaesthetic.

In these cases, the coroner may be the only person who can confirm the cause of death. The doctor will write on the formal notice that they have referred the death to the coroner. If you want advice or information about a death which has been reported to the coroner, contact the QRVG representative who will be able to assist you in contacting the coroner.

#### **4. POST-MORTEMS**

The coroner may arrange for a post-mortem examination of the body to determine the cause of death if not known.

The consent of relatives is not needed but they are entitled to be represented by a doctor at the examination. When relatives have told the coroner they wish to be represented the coroner will, if at all practicable, tell them when and where the examination will be.

If the post-mortem shows that death was due to natural causes, the coroner may issue a notification known as the Pink Form (Form 100B), which gives the cause of death so that the death can be registered. The coroner usually sends the form direct to the Registrar of Deaths.

#### **5. INQUESTS**

An inquest is an enquiry into the medical cause and circumstances of a death. It is held in public, sometimes with a jury. It is up to the coroner how to organise the enquiry in a way which best serves the public interest and the interests of the relatives.

The coroner will hold an inquest if the death was:

- Violent or unnatural or
- Caused by an industrial disease or
- The death occurred in prison or if the cause of death remains uncertain after post-mortem examination.

The coroner may give you an Order for Burial (form 101) so that the funeral can take place.

This may be done before the inquest is completed, provided the body is not required for further examination. The coroner will also send a Certificate after Inquest (form 99 [rev]), stating the cause of death, to the Registrar of Deaths. This allows the death to be registered.

#### **6. STILLBORN BABIES**

If a baby is stillborn (born dead after 24 weeks of pregnancy) you will be given a Medical Certificate of Stillbirth signed by the midwife or doctor, which should be given to the Registrar of Deaths. If no doctor or midwife was present and no doctor or midwife examined the body, you will not be given a Medical Certificate of Stillbirth. You must however sign a form (form 35) which the Registrar of Deaths will give to you when you go to register the death. If a baby is stillborn before 24 weeks of pregnancy it is treated as a "non-viable foetus". You will be given a form by the midwife or doctor recording the details of the non-viable foetus.

You do not however need to register the death of a nonviable foetus with the Registrar of Deaths; no other paperwork is involved. Consult with your local Ulama and QRVG/local representative regarding the Islamic perspective on stillbirths and the necessary funeral requirements.

#### **7. HOW TO REGISTER A DEATH**

To avoid delay, the death must be registered by the Registrar of Deaths for the sub-district in which the death occurred. You can find the address in the phone book under **REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS, DEATHS & MARRIAGES**, or from the doctor, local council, post office or police station. You should go to the Registrar (after making an appointment) as soon as possible if you need the Certificate for Burial or the Certificate of Registration of Stillbirth.

Please note that the Registrar is not normally available during weekends and bank holidays but can usually be contacted at certain times to make an emergency appointment to register a death and to obtain the paperwork to allow a burial to proceed. Contact the QRVG representative as soon as possible after the death to help you arrange the registration of the death promptly. When you go to the Registrar you should take all these:

- The Medical Certificate of the cause of the death given by the doctor or the Pink Form (form 100) given to you by the Coroner

- The deceased's medical card, if possible

You should tell the Registrar:

- The date and place of death
- The deceased's last (usual) address
- The deceased's first names and surname (and the maiden name where appropriate)
- The deceased's date and place of birth (town and country if born in the UK, and country if born abroad)
- The deceased's occupation and the name and occupation of their spouse
- Whether the deceased was getting a pension or allowance from public funds
- If the deceased was married, the date of birth of the surviving widow or widower.

The Registrar who registers the death will give you the Certificate for Burial (known as the Green Form), unless the Coroner has already given you an Order for Burial (form 101). For a stillbirth, you will instead be given a Certificate of Registration of Stillbirth. The above forms (only one of them is required, not both) give permission for the body to be buried. **No burial can take place at the cemetery without presenting one of these forms to cemetery staff.** In addition, certain other paperwork including the Death Certificate is obtained at the same time as the death is registered. You will have to pay a fee if you require additional copies of the death certificate

### **8. ARRANGING THE FUNERAL**

As soon as you have the right documents for burial, or are sure of getting the documents by a particular time, you must plan the funeral. You must have a Certificate for Burial (known as the Green Form) or Order for Burial (form 101) that a coroner has issued otherwise a burial cannot take place. Consult with QRVG funeral representative and your local Masjid regarding the practical aspects of arranging the funeral:

- Make arrangements for Ghusul
- Arrange transport of the body (from wherever it is being kept to the place where Ghusul is to take place, to the home of the family if required, to the place where Janazah Salah is to take place and then finally to the cemetery) QRVG may be able to help in organising the vehicle.
- Make arrangements with the cemetery through QRVG funeral representative or by phoning the number below yourself.

Please note folly lane Cemetery is available for burials throughout the year, including weekends and bank holidays. If a burial is to take place abroad (i.e. in Pakistan), you will need to obtain a certificate from the coroner before the body can be transported.

\*QRVG- Queens Road Voluntary Group

### **9. CONTACT DETAILS**