



LIFE IS TEMPORARY · WHEN A MUSLIM DIES IN FRANCE
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إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

Innā lillāhi wa innā ilayhi rāji'ūn. Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return. Qur'ān, al-Baqarah 2:156

We are sorry. Here is what happens next.



As soon as you can, call your masjid's funeral committee.

They will arrange the washing, the shroud, the prayer and the burial, and tell you which funeral company to use.

You do not have to do this alone, or all at once. Your masjid has done this many times. Follow the steps in order, and open each one when you reach it.

New

This guide is new and is being reviewed by people in France. It is also available in French. If something here is wrong or out of date where you live, please tell us at hello@lifeistemporary.com.

WHAT THE LAW SAYS IN FRANCE

Declaring the death

The death is declared at the town hall (mairie) of the commune where it happened. A hospital or care home must declare it within 24 hours; for a death at home or in a public place there is no legal deadline, but the body cannot be moved until it is declared. Any adult can declare it, free and without an appointment, or the funeral company can with your written authority. Service Public, Déclaration de décès (F909); Un proche est décédé (F16507); Transport d'une personne décédée (F35706)

Obstacle médico-légal and autopsy

If the doctor ticks “obstacle médico-légal” on the certificate, the public prosecutor takes charge and the body usually goes to the forensic institute, most often for an autopsy. The family cannot refuse a judicial autopsy. Once the body is no longer needed for the investigation, it must be returned as soon as possible and at the latest one month after the autopsy, so ask the prosecutor's office to confirm the date before fixing the funeral. Close family can ask to see the body before the coffin is closed. Service Public, Un proche est décédé (F16507); Code de procédure pénale, art. 230-28 and 230-29

Release, timing and repatriation

Burial takes place at least 24 hours after the death and no later than the 14th calendar day after it. The prefect of the département of burial can allow exceptions, and the funeral company usually asks. After an obstacle médico-légal, the 14 days run from the day the prosecutor authorises burial. Code général des collectivités territoriales, art. R2213-33 (décret n° 2024-790 du 10 juillet 2024); Service Public, Inhumation (F14935)

Release, timing and repatriation

To bury abroad, the funeral company asks the prefect of the département where the coffin is closed for authorisation. A hermetic, metal-lined coffin is compulsory by air, and the family pays the cost, so check any insurance. The destination country's consulate sets its own conditions: call it early. Service Public, Transport d'une personne décédée (F35706); Code général des collectivités territoriales, art. R2213-22

Burial and graves

French law requires a coffin for every burial. Whether the cemetery has a Muslim section (carré musulman) is for the mayor alone to decide, so ask the town hall. We have not confirmed the legal rules on the family or a mosque team washing the body in a funeral home, so ask the funeral company in advance who may do the ghusl there. Code général des collectivités territoriales, art. R2213-15; Assemblée nationale, QE n° 6776, JO 12 December 2023

Burial and graves

A free plot (terrain commun) lasts at least 5 years, after which the commune can take it back. A concession lasts 5 to 15, 30 or 50 years, or for ever, at a price set by each commune. Ask which long or perpetual concessions are offered. A perpetual one has no end date, but it must be kept up: an abandoned grave can be taken back after a set procedure. Renew a fixed one within 2 years of its end.

Service Public, Concession funéraire (F31001); Inhumation (F14935)

The notaire and the estate

A notaire is needed if the estate includes a home or land, is worth €5,965 or more, or there is a will or a gift between spouses. Whatever a will says, children share at least half the estate (one child), two thirds (two) or three quarters (three or more), sons and daughters equally, so ask the notaire how the heirs can agree to follow the Islamic shares. Service Public, Notaire (F1295); Quelles sont les règles pour hériter ? (F2529)

Small estates

Below €5,965, with no home or land, no will and no gift between spouses (donation entre époux), a statement signed by all the heirs can prove who they are, without a notaire. The bank can also pay the funeral bill from the deceased's account, up to €5,965, on the paid invoice. A husband, wife, child or parent who received only declared gifts need not file an inheritance tax return if the estate is under €50,000. Service Public, Déclaration de succession (F80);

Notaire (F1295); Frais d'obsèques (F17059)

Death benefit and help with costs

If the deceased was an employee, on unemployment benefit, on sick leave or on certain pensions in the 3 months before death, the family can claim a death benefit (capital décès) of €4,009 from the CPAM or MSA with form S3180. A dependant claims first, within 1 month;

others have 2 years. If the family cannot pay for the funeral, the commune of the place of death pays. [ameli.fr](https://www.ameli.fr), capital décès; Service Public, Capital décès (F3005); Code général des collectivités territoriales, art. L2223-27

From official sources, checked October 2026. Laws change; your funeral company and a notaire can confirm them.

WHERE YOU ARE

France has one national law for declaring a death, burial and estates, and this guide describes that national framework. In Alsace-Moselle local law also allows separate confessional cemeteries. For overseas departments we have confirmed only the transport rules (the prefect's authorisation to move a body to or from mainland France); local cemetery and civil-status procedures there have not been checked yet.

Alsace-Moselle

1

Have the death confirmed

In the first hour

A doctor, or another authorised health professional, has to confirm the death and write the death certificate (certificat de décès) before anything else can happen. You need it to declare the death and to arrange the funeral.

- ☐ In a hospital or care home (Ehpad), ask the staff to confirm the death
- ☐ At home, call the family doctor or SOS Médecins
- ☐ If the death was violent, such as an accident or a suicide, call the police or gendarmerie, not a doctor

WHO SIGNS

A doctor, and in some cases a retired doctor, a senior medical student or a registered nurse. The certificate is required to declare the death and organise the funeral. Service Public, Un proche est décédé (vérifié le 1er octobre 2026)

- ☐ In an emergency, call 15 (SAMU) or 112
- ☐ Tell the staff early that the family needs a quick burial for religious reasons

and

Close the eyes, cover the body, make duʿā

In the first hour · at the same time as the step above

Gently and without hurry. Those present can do this while the calls are made.

- ☐ Close the eyes and the mouth
- ☐ Straighten the arms and legs
- ☐ Cover the body with a clean sheet
- ☐ Pray for them, and say only good

EVIDENCE

The Prophet ﷺ closed the eyes of Abū Salamah and prayed for him. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 920

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Call the mosque's funeral service

In the first few hours

Many mosques and Muslim associations help with the washing, the shroud, the prayer and the burial, and know which funeral company (pompes funèbres) to use.

- ☐ Call the mosque's funeral service or the imam
- ☐ Tell them where the body is and who the next of kin is
- ☐ Agree a time for the ghusl and the janazah prayer

NO NUMBER?

Call the nearest large mosque. They will know who to call.

Ask whether the prosecutor is involved PAPERWORK

If the death was sudden or violent

If the doctor sees signs of a violent or suspicious death, they tick the box “obstacle médico-légal” on the certificate. The public prosecutor (procureur de la République) then takes charge. The body usually goes to the forensic institute (Institut médico-légal), most often for an autopsy, and there can be no funeral until it is released.

- ☐ Ask the doctor or the police whether the box “obstacle médico-légal” was ticked
- ☐ Ask the prosecutor’s office or the forensic institute, early and in writing, to release the body quickly for religious reasons
- ☐ Ask to see the body before it is placed in the coffin
- ☐ The funeral company will need the police record for burial (procès-verbal aux fins d’inhumation)

A JUDICIAL AUTOPSY

The family cannot refuse an autopsy ordered by the justice system. The doctor must restore the body as well as possible before it is returned. Code de procédure pénale, art. 230-28 et 230-29 (autopsie judiciaire)

RELEASE

Once the body is no longer needed for the investigation, it must be returned, and the burial permit given, as soon as possible and at the latest one month after the autopsy. Ask the prosecutor’s office to confirm the release date before fixing the funeral. Close family who wish to see the body cannot be refused, except for public-health reasons. Code de procédure pénale, art. 230-28 et 230-29 (autopsie judiciaire)

THE 14 DAYS

In these cases the time limit for burial runs from the day the prosecutor authorises it. Code général des collectivités territoriales, art. R2213-33 (décret n° 2024-790 du 10 juillet 2024)

A HOSPITAL AUTOPSY

An autopsy only to find the cause of death, outside any investigation, follows the consent rules for organ donation. For an adult, consent is presumed unless they made a refusal known in their lifetime, mainly by entering it in the national register kept for this. It can go ahead against their objection only for an overriding public-health need. Tell the doctor straight away if the deceased objected. Code de la santé publique, art. L1211-2 (autopsie médicale) ; Code de la santé publique, art. L1232-1 (version en vigueur depuis le 1er janvier 2017) — Légifrance, capture Wayback du 19 septembre 2024

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Declare the death at the town hall PAPERWORK

As soon as possible

The death is declared at the town hall (mairie) of the commune where it happened, whatever the nationality of the deceased. A hospital or care home declares it itself. For a death at home there is no legal deadline, but the body cannot be moved until it is done, so do it quickly. The town hall then draws up the death record (acte de décès).

- ☐ Any adult can declare the death, preferably a relative
- ☐ Take your ID, the death certificate and an identity document of the deceased (family record book, ID card or birth certificate)

HOSPITAL OR CARE HOME

The establishment must declare the death within 24 hours. Service Public, Déclaration de décès (vérifié le 26 avril 2025)

AT HOME

There is no legal deadline for a death at home or in a public place. The declaration is free, immediate and needs no appointment. Service Public, Déclaration de décès (vérifié le 26 avril 2025) ; Service Public, Un proche est décédé (vérifié le 1er octobre 2026)

- ☐ Or let the funeral company declare it for you: they need your written authority (mandat)
- ☐ If the death was in a hospital or care home, ask the staff to confirm they have declared it

BEFORE MOVING THE BODY

The death must be declared before the body is moved, for example to a funeral home. Before the coffin is closed, the move must be finished within 48 hours of the death. Service Public, Transport d'une personne décédée (vérifié le 28 janvier 2026)

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Choose the funeral company and the grave PAPERWORK

Within the first day

You are free to choose any licensed funeral company (pompes funèbres). It collects the body, provides the coffin and handles most of the paperwork. French law requires a coffin for every burial.

- ☐ Ask at least 3 companies for a free written quote (devis)
- ☐ Ask in advance whether the mosque's team or the family may wash the body at the funeral home
- ☐ Ask for no embalming: it is not compulsory
- ☐ Ask the town hall which long or perpetual graves (concession perpétuelle) it offers

A COFFIN

Before burial the body is placed in a coffin. A cover around the body inside the coffin must be biodegradable. Burial in the shroud alone is not provided for. Code général des collectivités territoriales, art. R2213-15 ; Service Public, Inhumation (enterrement) (vérifié le 1er octobre 2026)

THE WASHING

We have not confirmed the legal rules on the family or a mosque team washing the body in a funeral home. Ask the funeral company in advance who may do the ghusl there and what it requires.

IN HOSPITAL

Before the body goes to the hospital mortuary (chambre mortuaire), the family may be with the deceased, for up to 10 hours. The mortuary keeps the body free for the first 3 days; a private funeral home charges from the first day. Code général des collectivités territoriales, art. R2223-93 (chambres mortuaires) ; Service Public, Déclaration de décès (vérifié le 26 avril 2025)

QUOTES

The company must show its prices and give a free, detailed quote on an official model. Model quotes (devis types) are kept at the town halls of communes of over 5,000 people. Service Public, Inhumation (enterrement) (vérifié le 1er octobre 2026)

HOW LONG A GRAVE LASTS

A free plot (terrain commun) lasts at least 5 years before the commune can take it back. A concession lasts 5 to 15, 30 or 50 years, or for ever, at a price set by the commune. A perpetual one has no end date, but it must be kept up: an abandoned grave can be taken back after a set procedure. Renew a fixed one within 2 years of its end. Service Public, Qu'est-ce qu'une concession funéraire ? (vérifié le 7 février 2025) ; Service Public, Inhumation (enterrement) (vérifié le 1er octobre 2026)

IF RELATIVES DISAGREE

The deceased's wishes must be followed. If relatives cannot agree on the funeral, the court (tribunal judiciaire) decides within 24 hours, and no lawyer is needed. Service Public, Un proche est décédé (vérifié le 1er octobre 2026) ; Code pénal, art. 433-21-1

and

Wash and shroud the body

Within the first day · at the same time as the step above

Done by trained Muslims of the same sex, or by the spouse. The funeral service usually provides the cloth.

- ☐ Confirm who will wash
- ☐ Confirm the kafan is ready

How the washing and shroud are done >

A SPOUSE MAY WASH

The Prophet ﷺ told ʿĀ'ishah that if she died before him he would wash and shroud her himself. Sunan Ibn Mājah 1465 (ḥasan)

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The janazah prayer and the burial

As soon as possible

The prayer is often held after one of the daily prayers, and the burial follows straight after.

- ☐ Tell family and community the time of the prayer
- ☐ Confirm the grave in a Muslim cemetery or Muslim section
- ☐ Plan the burial for at least 24 hours after the death
- ☐ Ask the town hall the price and length of the grave (concession)

HASTE

The Prophet ﷺ told us to hurry with the funeral. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1315

THE LAW

Burial takes place at least 24 hours after the death and no later than the 14th calendar day after it. The prefect (préfet) can allow exceptions; the funeral company usually asks. Code général des collectivités territoriales, art. R2213-33 (décret n° 2024-790 du 10 juillet 2024) ; Service Public, Inhumation (enterrement) (vérifié le 1er octobre 2026)

PERMITS

The funeral company usually gets the authority to close the coffin and the burial permit from the mayor. Service Public, Inhumation (enterrement) (vérifié le 1er octobre 2026)

MUSLIM SECTIONS

The mayor alone decides whether the cemetery has a Muslim section (carré musulman); it is not an obligation. There is a right to burial in the commune where the person died or lived, or has a family grave. Assemblée nationale, question écrite n° 6776, réponse du ministère de l'Intérieur, JO du 12 décembre 2023 ; Code général des collectivités territoriales, art. L2223-3

and

If the burial will be abroad PAPERWORK

Before the coffin is closed · at the same time as the step above

Some families bury their dead in another country, for example in North Africa (the Maghreb), Türkiye or West Africa. The funeral company does the paperwork. The family pays the cost, so check any insurance first.

- ☐ Tell the funeral company early that the burial will be abroad
- ☐ Call the consulate of the country early: it sets its own documents and conditions
- ☐ Ask the consulate whether it requires embalming
- ☐ Check repatriation insurance, bank-card insurance, home insurance and any funeral contract

AUTHORISATION

To take a body out of France you need the authorisation of the prefect (préfet) of the département where the coffin is closed. Code général des collectivités territoriales, art. R2213-22 ; Service Public, Transport d'une personne décédée (vérifié le 28 janvier 2026)

BY AIR

A hermetic coffin with a metal lining is compulsory. Service Public, Transport d'une personne décédée (vérifié le 28 janvier 2026)

THE CONSULATE

Each country sets its own requirements. Ask its consulate in France early, before the coffin is closed.

COST

Repatriation costs fall on the family. Repatriation, bank-card or home insurance may cover them. Service Public, Transport d'une personne décédée (vérifié le 28 janvier 2026)

WAITING

The coffin can wait in the commune's temporary vault for up to 6 months. A hermetic coffin is needed beyond 6 days. Service Public, Inhumation (enterrement) (vérifié le 1er octobre 2026)

OVERSEAS DEPARTMENTS

Moving a body between an overseas department and mainland France also needs the prefect's authorisation, and a hermetic coffin by air. Service Public, Transport d'une personne décédée (vérifié le 28 janvier 2026)

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Get copies of the death record PAPERWORK

In the first week

Banks, insurers and pension funds will each want a copy of the death record (acte de décès).

- ☐ Ask the town hall where the death happened, or of the last home, for copies
- ☐ Or ask online or by post

COST

Copies are free, and anyone can ask for one. In person you get it straight away. Service Public, Acte de décès : demande de copie intégrale (vérifié le 13 août 2026)

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Pay the funeral costs and list every debt

In the first weeks

The funeral is paid from the estate first, then the debts. Nothing is inherited until both are settled.

- ☐ Pay the funeral costs from the estate
- ☐ Ask the bank to pay the funeral bill from the deceased's account
- ☐ List loans, bills and money owed to family
- ☐ Ask a scholar about any unpaid zakat

THE ORDER

Funeral, then debts, then bequests from a third, then the heirs. al-Sirājiyyah (al-Sajāwandī), opening chapter

FROM THE BANK

The bank can pay the funeral bill from the deceased's accounts, on the paid invoice, up to €5,965 and within the balance, even to someone who is not an heir. Joint accounts are not blocked. Service Public, Qui doit payer les frais d'obsèques ? (vérifié le 1er janvier 2026) ; Service Public, Un proche est décédé (vérifié le 1er octobre 2026)

and

Find the will, and claim the death benefit PAPERWORK

In the first weeks · at the same time as the step above

A notaire, a public legal officer, usually settles the estate. Tell the health insurance fund (CPAM, or MSA for farm workers) and the pension funds.

- ☐ Check papers at home, email, and with any notaire
- ☐ Ask the notaire to search the national register of wills (FCDDV)
- ☐ If the deceased was working or on certain benefits, claim the death benefit (capital décès) with form S3180
- ☐ Secure the house and car, and keep the phone line active for sign-in codes

WHO PAYS

Children and parents of the deceased must pay the funeral costs, even if they refuse the inheritance. Service Public, Qui doit payer les frais d'obsèques ? (vérifié le 1er janvier 2026)

IF THE FAMILY CANNOT PAY

The commune where the death happened pays, and the town hall chooses the funeral company. Tell the town hall clearly that the deceased was Muslim and must be buried. Code général des collectivités territoriales, art. L2223-27 ; Service Public, Qui doit payer les frais d'obsèques ? (vérifié le 1er janvier 2026)

REGISTER OF WILLS

It records wills left with a notaire. After a death anyone can search it with the death record; the notaire does this if they settle the estate. Service Public, À quoi sert le fichier central des dispositions de dernières volontés (FCDDV) ? (vérifié le 29 mai 2026)

DEATH BENEFIT

€4,009 since 1 April 2026, if in the 3 months before the death the deceased was an employee, on unemployment benefit, on sick leave, or on certain pensions. A person who fully depended on them claims first, within 1 month; others have 2 years. It is not taxed. The self-employed and civil servants have other schemes. ameli.fr, Décès d'un proche : prestations et formalités ; Service Public, Capital décès versé pour le décès d'un salarié du secteur privé (vérifié le 1er avril 2026)

PENSIONS

The state pension fund (Assurance retraite) can refund funeral costs from pension still owed, up to €2,286.74. Service Public, Qui doit payer les frais d'obsèques ? (vérifié le 1er janvier 2026)

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Settle and divide the estate PAPERWORK

In the months after

French law reserves part of every estate to the children, in equal shares for sons and daughters. Dividing by the Islamic shares therefore often needs the heirs to agree. Ask the notaire early how this can be done.

- ☐ See a notaire if the estate needs one
- ☐ Close accounts and cancel subscriptions
- ☐ Pay any bequest, up to one third, to people who are not heirs

ONE THIRD

A bequest is limited to a third, and an heir cannot receive one. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 2742 ; Sunan Abī Dāwūd 2870 (ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ)

☐ Divide the rest by the fixed shares

See how the estate divides >

A NOTAIRE

Needed if the estate includes a home or land, is worth €5,965 or more, or there is a will or a gift between spouses. Only when none of these applies can the heirs sign a statement (attestation) of who they are instead.

Service Public, Le recours à un notaire est-il obligatoire dans le cadre d'une succession ? (vérifié le 1er janvier 2026) ; Service Public, Droits de succession : déclaration (vérifié le 29 janvier 2025)

THE CHILDREN'S SHARE

Whatever the will says, the children share at least half the estate with one child, two thirds with two, and three quarters with three or more.

All the heirs can agree a division between themselves.

Service Public, Quelles sont les règles pour hériter ? (vérifié le 16 juin 2026) ;

Service Public, Partage des biens d'une succession (vérifié le 20 janvier 2025)

HUSBAND OR WIFE

Only a husband or wife by civil marriage inherits. A PACS or unmarried partner inherits nothing without a will. Ask a notaire about a marriage that was religious only. Service Public, Quelles sont les règles pour hériter ? (vérifié le 16 juin 2026)

TAX

A husband, wife or PACS partner pays no inheritance tax, and each child has a €100,000 allowance from each parent. The return is due within 6 months of a death in France. Service Public, Droits de succession : évaluation de la succession et calcul des droits (vérifié le 9 février 2026) ; Service Public, Droits de succession : déclaration (vérifié le 29 janvier 2025)

10

Look after the family

Four months and ten days

Mourning is kept to three days, except by a widow, who mourns four months and ten days, the length of her ʿiddah, or until she gives birth if she is pregnant.

- ☐ Bring food and help with the household
- ☐ Help the widow with errands and appointments
- ☐ Make duʿā for the one who has died

What to say and do when you visit >

EVIDENCE

No mourning beyond three days except for a husband: four months and ten days. A pregnant widow's term ends with the birth. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1280 ; Qurʾān, al-Ṭalāq 65:4

FOOD

Prepare food for the family, for what has happened has occupied them. Sunan Abī Dāwūd 3132 (ḥasan)

ʿIDDAH DATES

Work out when four months and ten days have passed, by the Hijri and the Western calendar. [Open ↗](#)

Write your own Islamic will

For those left behind

Without a valid will, French law decides who inherits, not the fixed shares, and sons and daughters inherit equally. An Islamic will in France is an ordinary French will that directs the estate by the shares, within the part the law leaves free.

- ☐ Write it entirely by hand, date it with the day, month and year, and sign it; or make it before a notaire
- ☐ Each spouse makes their own will: two people cannot share one
- ☐ Leave it with a notaire so it is recorded in the national register
- ☐ Ask a notaire how the children's reserved share affects the Islamic shares

[Work out the Islamic shares to take to a notaire >](#)

VALID WILL

A handwritten will must be entirely in your own hand, dated and signed; one typed even in part is not valid. It needs no witness and may be in another language. You must be of sound mind and 18 or over; from 16, you can leave only half of your property, unless you are emancipated. Service Public, Faire un testament (vérifié le 5 octobre 2026)

THE FREE PART

Only the free part (quotité disponible) can be left as you wish: half with one child, a third with two, a quarter with three or more. A child who receives less than their reserved share can claim the difference within five years of the death, or two years from learning of it, and never more than ten. Code civil, art. 912 à 930 (réserve héréditaire, réduction) ; Service Public, Quelles sont les règles pour hériter ? (vérifié le 16 juin 2026)

General guidance, not a fatwa or legal advice. French law on registering a death, burial and estates is national, with a local difference in Alsace-Moselle; your funeral company and a notaire can confirm them.

Last reviewed October 2026. Something wrong? Tell us