

## **Belizeans in Distress Abroad**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs encourages Belizean nationals who find themselves in distress outside of Belize to contact the nearest Belizean Embassy or Consulate.

A comprehensive listing of all Belize Missions abroad (High Commission, Embassies, Consulates General, Consulates) is outlined in the link below: <https://mfa.gov.bz/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Diplomatic-Consular-List-Oct20.pdf> For ease of reference use the Table of Contents to “Embassies and Consulates of Belize” p.172 to find the nearest Belize Embassy or Honorary Consulate.

*The Ministry understands that not everyone in a situation of distress may be able to seek assistance on their own. If you are aware of a person in distress kindly gather as much information as possible to make contact on their behalf.*

Many Belizeans have received assistance through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and their representative missions, especially since the appearance of COVID-19. The processes now are much more complicated; some borders remain closed, some countries are on lock-down, and others have a variety of new rules relating to entry and exit; the Belizean representatives abroad can help persons to better navigate that processes in the countries where they are present.

### **How can we help persons in distress?**

- Verifying the Belizean Nationality of the person in distress;
- Contacting next of kin or family members;
- Seeking information to ensure nationals understand their options;
- Where possible, coordinating returns (this does not mean paying for charters, flights, repatriation of remains - though consideration is given where persons are extremely vulnerable);
- Intervening and communicating with local officials on behalf of Belizeans in distress;
- Processing of Emergency Travel Documents for Belizeans whose passports have expired, have been lost, stolen or damaged;
- Assisting with trade and other emergency movement of goods and services issues.

The scope of the consular tasks undertaken by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is much wider. We are aided in our work when Belizeans have registered with an embassy or consulate of Belize in your area. To register kindly send an email to **[consularbelize@mfa.gov.bz](mailto:consularbelize@mfa.gov.bz)** with your queries.

### **What are some limitations of consular support?**

- Embassies and consulates are not able to coordinate travel on behalf of persons as a regular function. Belizeans regularly expect hotel and airline bookings to be made on their behalf. Efforts are made to assist in exceptional cases where individuals are in serious distress.
- Embassies and consulates do not offer banking services (but they can put you in touch with family members if there is a need for financial help and may be able, in some cases, to identify sources of assistance);
- Embassies and Consulates work within the confines of the laws and procedures of the country where persons in distress are located. Our remit is to assist persons in understanding their options;
- In cases of death abroad and the repatriation of human remains – this is a highly emotional experience for families. While the efforts are made to assist with translations, communicating with officials and the families, please note that the laws of the country where the Belizean died must be respected. Due to COVID-19 some countries only allow for cremated remains as a public health measure. This process also may take longer than we are accustomed to in Belize. Embassies and Consulates do not have the authority to overturn such regulations.
- Consular officers at our Embassies and Consulates do not have the capacity to give legal advice and as such should direct persons to seek independent legal counsel where required.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff at every station seeks to treat persons in situations of distress and their family members with courtesy and respect. Our aim is to make every effort to provide guidance and sound advice to resolve consular matters.