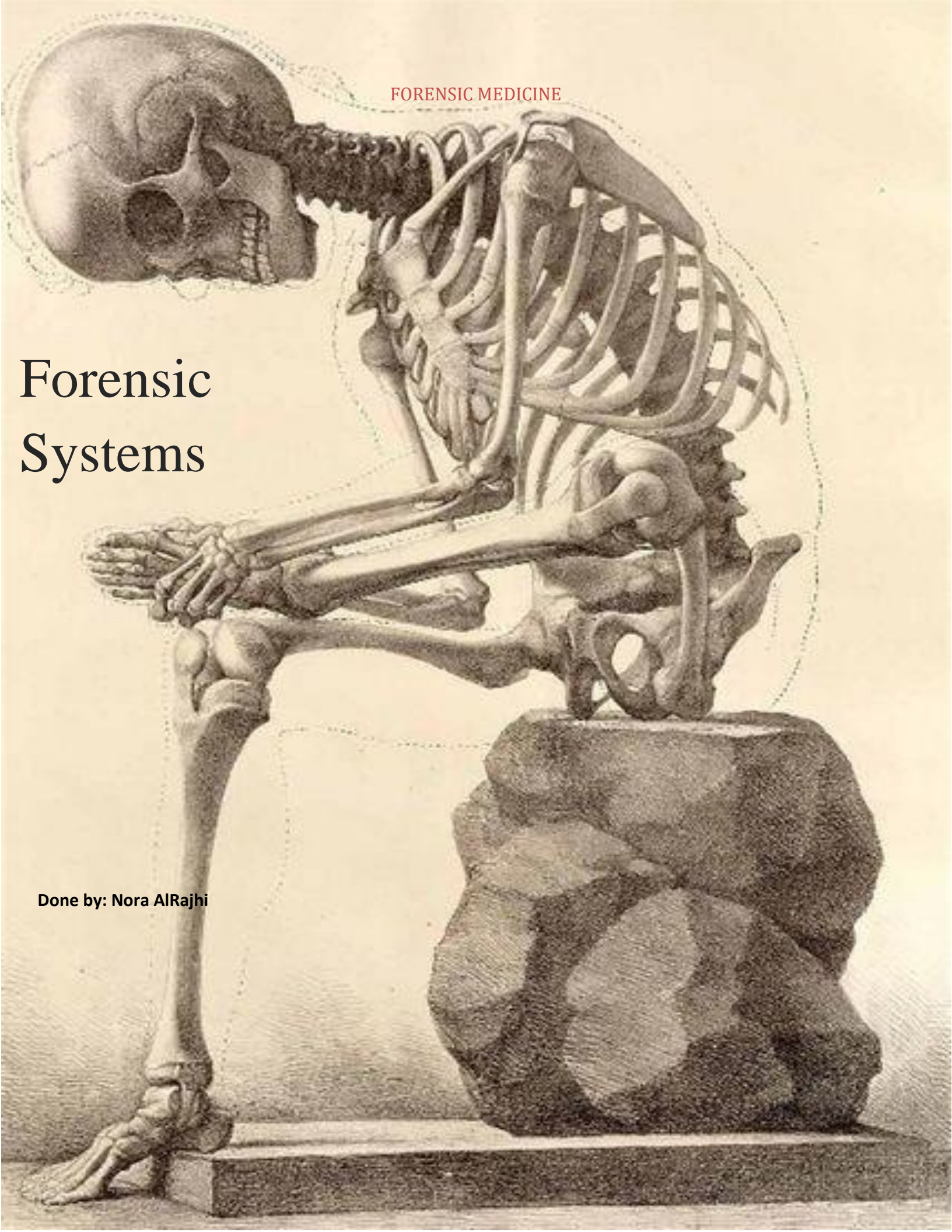


FORENSIC MEDICINE



# Forensic Systems

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## FORENSIC SYSTEMS

In the United States, the medicolegal investigation of unusual, suspicious, sudden and unexplained, violent, and non-natural deaths, including those deemed a possible threat to the public health, is usually performed by a coroner system or a medical examiner (ME) system. Such systems may be organized at a county, regional, or state level, depending upon the laws of particular states.

	<b>Coroner System</b>	<b>ME System</b>
<b>Definition</b>	An officer of a county, district, state, or municipality; originally, in medieval England, an official who upheld the monarch's rights of private property. From the 16th and 17th centuries on, the chief duty of the coroner was to hold inquests* on the bodies of those believed to have died by violence or accident, or who suffered grievous bodily harm. In modern times, in the United States, the coroner is an <b>elected</b> official.	An <b>appointed</b> medically qualified officer whose duty is to investigate deaths and bodily injuries that occur under unusual or suspicious circumstances, to perform post-mortems, and sometimes to initiate inquests.
<b>Origin</b>	England, 12th century; brought to North America in the 1600s.	France and Scotland; brought to the United States in the late 1800s.
<b>How to get the position</b>	In Britain, either elected or appointed by the Crown, until 1888, when it was made appointive by local council. In the United States, an elected local official; runs for office, often as a member of a political party.	Appointed local or state official; expected to be unbiased.
<b>Term of office</b>	two to four years (in the US).	Serves continuously; can only be removed for cause.
<b>Qualifications</b>	Citizenship, residence; no medical training required.	Medical degree, with training and certification in forensic pathology.
<b>Duties</b>	To convene an inquest or inquisition with a jury, to investigate the death of a person; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that occurred due to criminal violence, poisoning, suicide, accident, negligence, disease constituting a public health threat, or</li> <li>• that occurred unexpectedly, in suspicious circumstances, or</li> <li>• that occurred while that person was in government custody, undergoing a medical procedure, or unattended by a physician, or</li> <li>• whose body is to be cremated, dissected, or buried at sea.</li> </ul>	

*\* An inquiry by a Coroner or medical examiner, sometimes with the aid of a jury, into the cause of a violent death or a death occurring under suspicious circumstances. Generally an inquest may result in a finding of*

*natural death, accidental death, suicide, or murder. Criminal prosecution may follow when culpable conduct has contributed to the death.* West's Encyclopedia of American Law, edition 2.

*\*Another definition: An investigation and/or a hearing held by the coroner (a county official) when there is a violent death either by accident or homicide, the cause of death is not immediately clear, there are mysterious circumstances surrounding the death, or the deceased was a prisoner. Usually an autopsy by a qualified medical examiner from the coroner's office is a key part of the inquest. In rare cases a jury may be used to determine the cause of death.* Gerald N. Hill and Kathleen T. Hill.

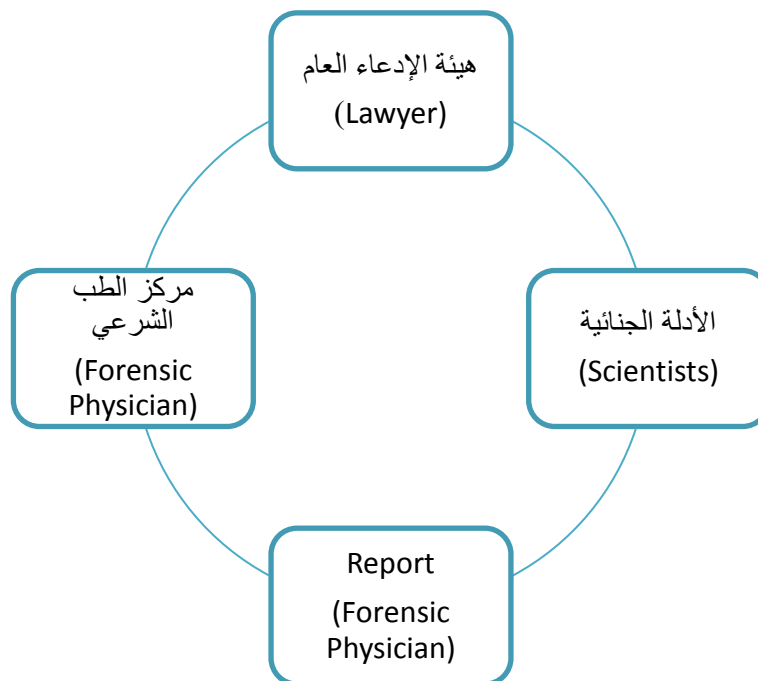
### **Further Explanation:**

In most areas having a coroner system, coroners are elected officials and do not need to be physicians. Should an autopsy be warranted, the coroner will often consult with a pathologist or forensic pathologist. Medical examiners (MEs) are usually appointed and are physicians, although they may not necessarily be mandated to have special training in pathology or forensic pathology.

In cases that come under the purview of the coroner or ME, the need of the jurisdiction to determine the cause of death (the underlying event leading to death) and the manner of death (homicide, suicide, accident, natural, or not determined) overrides objections the next-of-kin may have regarding autopsy. Coroner and ME offices also work hand-in-hand with law enforcement, regulatory, security, and other agencies to explain and monitor biologic and chemical threats, deaths due to consumer products and medical devices, drug-related death, and infectious diseases such as influenza and others.

The ME does history and examination and produce recommendations and initiate inquests as a result. While the coroner orders the ME to do the paper work and pronounce the person as dead. So being a coroner is just a political position. If the death is ruled as a homicide, etc. the DA will prosecute and pursue a lawsuit (the District Attorney represents the public). And in that case the forensic pathologist will be an expert witness.

However, the system in **Saudi Arabia** is a bit different. In case of a suspicious death (هيئة الإيداع العام) will ask for an autopsy from (مركز الطب الشرعي), which goes under the Ministry of Health, with the help of (الأدلة الجنائية). Any person who works in (مركز الطب الشرعي) has to be a forensic physician and that same person will write the report. And then (هيئة الإيداع العام) will prosecute.



### References:

- <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/visibleproofs/galleries/cases/examiner.html>
- <http://emedicine.medscape.com/article/1785357-overview>