

King Picks Up Tab For Iraqi Conjoined Twins' Surgery

(AP) Iraqi conjoined twins will be flown to Saudi Arabia to undergo separation surgery after the Saudi king offered to pay for the operation. The two-week-old twins Zainab and Ruqqaya Naseer, from the Shiite holy city of Najaf in southern Iraq, are joined at the hip and have problems with their digestive and reproductive systems.

Salim Mohammed, spokesman for Najaf Health Authority, told The Associated Press that the family was waiting for passports to be issued to allow the girls to travel. "The conjoined twins are in good health and they are expected to leave for Saudi Arabia within the coming three days," he said.

Saudi King Abdullah offered to fly the twins to Riyadh and to pay for the separation surgery, according to a statement by chief surgeon Abdullah al-Rabia at the King Abdul-Aziz Medical in Riyadh. Al-Rabia has performed nearly 30 successful surgeries for conjoined twins from 16 countries. Those included another set of Iraqi conjoined twins who were separated after 20 hours of surgery in 2006.

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