



# Federation of Islamic Medical Associations

## **Shariaah Guidelines on religious congregations, including communal prayers in Masajid and physical distancing in the pandemic of Corona Virus**

**Abstract:** The issue of religious congregations and communal prayers (*Salah with Jamaat*) is being widely discussed with some difference of opinion in the COVID-19 pandemic. It allows praying (*Salah*) at home and suspension of religious congregations in present situation to ensure physical distancing in light Islamic teachings. The guidelines are primarily based on references primarily from Qura'n and Sunnah of the Holly prophet that are the original sources guidance. Few references from books of Islamic jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) are also included.

This issue is addressed on basis of three major paradigms in Islam.

### **1. Value and sanctity of human life:**

Islam has the highest respect for human life. Qura'n equates saving of a single human being (irrespective of faith) to saving of the whole mankind<sup>1</sup>. The prophet (S.A.W) declared the same<sup>2</sup> and also narrated that human life is more sacred than the Kaa'ba<sup>3</sup>. It is for the same reason that Qura'n allows the use of absolutely forbidden things and actions to save human beings in life threatening situations<sup>4</sup>

### **2. Avoiding harm and discomfort to others:**

Allah has declared in Qura'n that He does not create difficulties for you<sup>5</sup> and does not burden you beyond your strength<sup>6</sup>. It also says that do whatever is possible for you to do<sup>7</sup>. The same was narrated by the prophet also<sup>9</sup> <sup>8</sup> It is forbidden for Muslims to attend communal prayers in Masjid if they become a source of discomfort to others. It is evident from many sayings of the prophet (*Hadith*). He forbids going to Masjid even when minor conditions that create discomfort for others e.g. foul smell from mouth after eating onion<sup>11</sup> <sup>10</sup>, praying at home while it is raining<sup>13,12,15,14</sup>, forbidding people to take spear inside Masjid because of the fear of hurting others<sup>16,17</sup>. People are allowed not fast in journey and also pray half of normal prayers. The legal maxims of Shariaah includes preventing harm to others<sup>18</sup>, mitigation created in constraints<sup>19</sup>, non-maleficence to take priority over beneficence<sup>20</sup> and tolerating personal harm to prevent harm to community<sup>21</sup> It also prohibits even those allowed actions that may ultimately lead to harm.<sup>22</sup>

### **3. Stance of Islam in infection diseases:**

The prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) has strongly forbidden mixing up of people with infectious diseases with healthy ones and advised that in plague (pandemic) people should observe personal and communal Quarantine<sup>23,24</sup>. He ordered people to keep a distance of one spear (approximately six feet) from an infectious person<sup>25</sup>. He even forbade mixing of diseased animals with healthy ones<sup>26</sup>.

Based on same rulings the Islamic scholars have enumerated nineteen different conditions to offer prayers at home and avoid going to Masjid<sup>27</sup>. It includes simple condition like old age, severe cold and even being the attendant of a patient. The prophet (S.A.W) said that “a hard time may come when it would be better for the standing ones to sit, for the walking one to stop and for the running ones to walk only. Those who come across such time better take shelter in any place that they may find”.<sup>28, 29</sup> He also declared that if any one stays at home in plague (pandemics) he will be considered as martyred<sup>30</sup>. When the prophet (S.A.W) was asked what is way of salvation he said “control your tongue, stay at your home and repent on your sins”<sup>31</sup>

In these Ahadith the prophet did not differentiate between healthy and the sick. Islam also advises for asking opinion of knowledgeable people while taking decisions in doubtful situation<sup>32</sup>. The Islamic scholars also advise to draw conclusion in such situations by looking at the specific signs of the problem and getting opinion and experience of competent (professional) people<sup>33</sup>.

**It is therefore concluded from the above that in the present pandemic of Corona Virus**

- **Physical distancing should be practiced**
- **Religious congregation including communal prayers should be temporarily suspended to prevent spread of the disease to others. Azan should be said and Imam should pray in congregation with Moazzan and khadim who are living in the masjid, maximum five in number but standings at least one meter away from each other. No other person should be allowed to come in the Masjid.**
- **Advice of Health Professionals should be followed.**

**References:**

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8. Bukhari:1869
9. Muslim: 1869
10. Bukhari: 817
11. Muslim: 1281
12. Abu Daud:1061
13. Al-Nisai:652
14. ibid:163247
15. Ibni Majah:936
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19. Majallah Alahkam Vol:1;p39, 2016 Maktabah Rasheediah;Nowshehra Pakistan (Urdu)
20. Ibid;p44
21. Ibid; 46
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31. Al-Thirmizi: 2406
32. 16:43
33. Ibne Abidin Al Shami, Muhammad Amin bin Umar, "Radd ul Muhtar Ala' Al Durar ul Mukhtar", Darul Fikr: Beirut, 1992 AD, Vol.2, P.422