

Response from the Office of His Eminence Sayyid Ali Husayni Sistani to Questions on the Coronavirus

Bismillahir rahmanir rahim.

Assalamu alaykum wa rahmatul lahi wa barakatuh.

Q1. With the of spread of the Coronavirus, what is the duty of believers?

Answer 1:

- a) Praying and pleading to God's Grace for this affliction to be removed from everyone. Hopefully, the prayers of the believers will be accepted by God Almighty.
- b) Adhering to the health guidelines as much as possible.
- c) Striving to help others keep safe from the virus, and if possible, attending to those infected by it to help them recover.

Of course, in certain cases and circumstances, some levels of the last two duties will be wajib.

Q2. When would it not be mustahabb or wajib to establish daily jamaat and Friday prayers?

Answer 2:

Wherever such a gathering has been prohibited in order to prevent the spread of the aforementioned virus, the prohibition must be taken seriously. If there is no prohibition, then there is no problem [in attending such a gathering] as long as the health guidelines are observed. Of course, if someone fears that as a result of attending he may become infected by the virus and suffer significant harm, or it may lead to his death, then that person must avoid attending.

Q3. If doctors advise to keep a distance of 1 to 2 meters from others, would jamaat prayers with such gaps be valid?

Answer 3:

There is no problem if the gap is approximately one meter. However, if the gap between those praying in one row, or between the place of the feet of those in the row in front and the place of the turbah/mohr in the next row, is approximately two meters, then the formation of the jamaat prayer is problematic [i.e. based on obligatory precaution, it is not valid].

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Q4. If one is visited by a believer, is it allowed to refuse him entry into the house if he reasonably suspects the visitor may be infected with the Coronavirus?

Answer 4:

There is no problem provided that the way he deals with the visitor does not belittle or disrespect him.

Q5. If one fails to adhere to the precautionary health guidelines, would this be considered a sin? If one causes another to become infected, would he be liable to pay for the person's medical expenses?

If, God forbid, it resulted in the death of the other person, would he be liable to pay blood money?

If the other person was unable to work, would he be liable to pay for his loss of earnings?

Answer 5:

Adhering to the health guidelines with regard to oneself is definitely necessary when there is fear of becoming infected with the virus and there is a serious possibility that were one to become infected, it would lead to death or significant harm.

In the event that one does not adhere [to the health guidelines] and what he deemed a possibility actually transpires, then he will not be legally excused [i.e. he will be culpable].

If someone is infected with the virus and does not adhere to the health guidelines in his interactions with others and the other party is unaware [that the person is infected], then he will be liable for any harm that the other party suffers. If it leads to the other party's death, he must pay blood money. And if the other party is a worker who makes a living by working, then during the period of his treatment and his inability to work, he is liable to pay him [for loss of earnings] at the standard rate.

Q6. What is His Eminence's advice on going for mustahabb ziyarat in Iraq, Iran, and Syria, and for mustahabb Umrah, and later for wajib or mustahabb Hajj?

Answer 6:

See the answer to question 2.

Q7. With reference to Ruling 656 and 657 in Tawdih al-Masa'il Jami' and the wajib and mutahabb acts concerning a dying person, if doctors advice not to touch someone infected with the Coronavirus, what would be the ruling?

Q8. With reference to Ruling 662 in Tawdih al-Masa'il Jami', would the mustahabb act of transferring a dying person in pain to the place where he used to perform his prayers, become a makruh or haram act if he was infected with the Coronavirus?

Q9. Would the disapproval of leaving a dying person alone be lifted in a Coronavirus infected case?

Q10. With reference to Ruling 664 in Tawdih al-Masa'il Jami', would it be mustahabb to close the eyes and mouth of a dead body that is infected with the Coronavirus?

Answers 7, 8, 9, 10:

If someone fears they will suffer harm, then what was wajib no longer remains obligatory, and what was mustahabb or makruh must be avoided. In cases other than these, the act can be performed.

Q11. With reference to Ruling 706 in Tawdih al-Masa'il Jami', if performing ghusl on a dead body that has been infected with the Coronavirus poses a risk for the person doing the washing, can tayammum be performed instead?

Answer 11:

Yes, if there are no means for performing ghusl without risk, then tayammum must be performed.

Q12. If it is harmful to perform tayammum on a dead body infected with the Coronavirus – either with the hands of the person performing the tayammum or with the hands of the dead body – how would tayammum be performed?

Answer 12:

Tayammum on a dead body must be performed by the hands of the one performing tayammum, and in case performing it without wearing gloves poses a risk, then there is no problem in wearing gloves.

Q13. If performing tayammum on a dead body becomes wajib but there is a high risk of contracting the Coronavirus, is it permitted to bury the dead body without ghusl and tayammum?

Answer 13:

If there is fear of harm in performing ghusl or tayammum, then the dead body must be buried without ghusl and tayammum.

Q14. With reference to Ruling 728 in Tawdih al-Masa'il Jami', if it is not possible to apply wajib camphor to a dead body that is infected with the Coronavirus, is it possible to leave it out, and is there any replacement act?

Answer 14:

In case of fear of harm, it is not required and there is no replacement.

Q15. With reference to Ruling 755 and 757 in Tawdih al-Masa'il Jami', is it allowed to bury a dead body infected with the Coronavirus in a coffin?

Answer 15:

There is no problem in placing the dead body in a coffin. If the coffin is buried in the ground, then of course the dead body must be laid on its right side in a way that the front of the body faces qibla.

Q16. With reference to Ruling 756, in Tawdih al-Masa'il Jami', if based on obligatory precaution it is not allowed to keep a dead body in cold storage, then is there permission to keep a body infected with the Coronavirus in cold storage until it is safe to bury it?

Answer 16:

If it is required to keep the body in cold storage for a relatively long period of time so that the wajib acts of burial can be performed, then there is no problem; in fact, in such a case, it is necessary [to keep it in cold storage].

Q17. With reference to Ruling 758 in Tawdih al-Masa'il Jami', if someone dies on a ship, the burial must be delayed until the ship reaches land. So that the wajib acts of burial can be performed on a dead body infected with the Coronavirus, should the burial be delayed until the infection is controlled?

Answer 17:

There is no problem [in delaying the burial] as long as the dead body does not decompose and there is no issue with it staying in cold storage.

Q18. What should be our duty towards non-Muslims who are affected by the Coronavirus locally and globally?

Answer 18:

Helping them to recover and get better is an admirable thing to do.

Q19. What should be our belief about such afflictions?

Answer 19:

The belief should be that there is profound wisdom behind all the tribulations and afflictions that happen, even though we may not know what that wisdom is.

Q20. What spiritual acts does His Eminence recommend for averting this affliction?

Answer 20:

The recommendation is to read the Glorious Qur'an and the duas that have been reported from the Infallible and Pure Ahlul Bayt (as).

May Allah keep away all evil and affliction from everyone.

Was salamu alaykum wa alas sa'iril mu'mineen wal mu'minat wa rahmatul lahi wa barakatuh.

[Stamped with the Seal of His Eminence's Najaf Office]

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