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As South African Muslims: The Corona Virus and Our Duty Regarding Our Masaajid

In the Name of Allah The Entirely Merciful, The Especially Merciful.
By Allah's Help, The Gifting Master. O Allah Guide To That Which Is True And Precise!

15 March 2020

As Muslims living in South Africa, we have a duty Firstly to Almighty Allah in following the teachings of the Glorious Quraan and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in regard to the public well-being especially with the Covid-19 pandemic on our doorstep which was declared as a national disaster by the South African President. In addition, this virus is of a contagious nature which has infected thousands and as a result many have died. Countries are even on lock down trying to contain this disease.

After careful discussions with our religious leaders and health scholars, we have taken the following dictum in the best interest of our Musallies and the broader public. This step in our view is a proactive precautionary step which is in line with the objectives of the Quraan and Sunnah to "Preserve life" and to contribute to the public good, by minimizing the risk of spreading this Covid-19 virus.

FOUNDATION

Quraan: The Decree of Allah: *"And do not contribute to your own destruction"* (Quraan 2:195)

Hadith: The Prophet's ﷺ Decree: *"Do not cause harm nor incur harm"* (Ibn Majah, 2340)

Jurisprudence: Legal Maxims:

"Harm should be eliminated/avoided"

"Difficulty must be alleviated"

"Averting harm is more important than gaining benefits"

(Al Qawaid,42 and Al-Ashbah, 25)

MAIN CONCERNS

Our scholars came to the following decision regarding **three main areas**, which will serve as a temporary measure for our Masaajid in this time of emergency.

1. Athaan (Call to Prayer)
2. Salaatul Jama'ah (Five daily Salaah in congregation)
3. Salaatul Jum'ah (Friday Prayer)

1. The Athaan:

- Based on the Prophetic teachings, we will request the Mu-athin (Caller) to give a special Athaan by adding "Salloo Fi Buyootikum" which is **to inform the community to perform Salaah at home** instead of coming to the Masjid.
- Evidence: 'Abdullah bin Al-Harith رضي الله عنه said: Ibn 'Abbas رضي الله عنه addressed us on a rainy/muddy day and when the Mu-athin (caller to prayer) said: "Hayya 'alas Salaah" Come for the prayer". Ibn 'Abbas رضي الله عنه ordered him not say that but instead say: "Pray at your homes." The people began to look at one another with disapproval. Ibn 'Abbas رضي الله عنه said, "It seems that you disapprove of this order, BUT no doubt it was DONE by one who was better than me (i.e., the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم). Surely the prayer should be observed (and according to Imaam Muslim's Narration the Jum'ah should be observed) but I also dislike to bring hardship to you."

Ibn 'Abbas رضي الله عنه narrated the same as above, but he said, "I did not like you to suffer hardship and to come (to the mosque) covered with mud up to the knees.").

(Al-Bukhari and Muslim, Chapter to the Call of Prayer)

Points To Be Noted: Rasoolullah صلى الله عليه وسلم gave this concession (of performing Salaah at home) to make it easy for the Muslims in bad weather (rainy and muddy) conditions and Ibn 'Abbas رضي الله عنه followed.

Allah عز وجل says: *He has chosen you and has not placed upon you in the religion **ANY** difficulty.* (Quraan: 22:78).

The Covid-19 Virus is a health hazard which is worse than bad weather conditions and it is definitely going to cause harm let alone difficulty, if proactive precautionary measures are not adhered to. It could also be a potential harm to you if you are weak or even contribute to harming others if you are only a carrier of the virus.

2. Salat al Jama'ah (Five daily Salaah in congregation)

- All the Imaams of Jurisprudence have agreed that Salaah is Fardh (compulsory) but then differed as to whether the Jama'ah is compulsory or highly recommended. In each school (Hanafi, Maliki and Shafi'ee) we have scholars who observe that Salaah in Jama'ah is not compulsory on every individual nor collectively, however their view is, that it is highly recommended. Some base it on the Hadith of Jaabir which mentions: The Messenger ﷺ prevented us eating of onions and garlic. When someone ate it, the Prophet ﷺ said: He who eats of this offensive food must not come to our masjid, for the angels are harmed by the same things as men. (Sahih Muslim,1146)

Point To Be Noted: Although onions and garlic are Halaal to consume and they are both not Harmful, The Prophet ﷺ still forbade them from coming to the Masjid because the smell was offensive. This virus is harmful and we do not know who is infected and who is not. So the **large Jama'ah in the Masjid** can be limited in hope of protecting ourselves and the larger community which is of utmost importance.

The minimum quota for a Jam'ah is two people as per the directive of the Prophet ﷺ when he said: "Two or more people are Jama'ah" (Bukhari)

Point To Be Noted: Salaah in Jama'ah is highly recommended or even compulsory according to some. Nonetheless, Jama'ah can be easily done at home or elsewhere with one friend or family member in order to receive the rewards or to fulfil the obligation accordingly.

- Sayyidina Ibn Abbas ؓ said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: Whoever hears the call (for prayers) and does not respond, his prayer void, **except those who have an excuse.** They asked: what is an excuse? He said: **Fear or illness.**
(Abu Dawood (551), Ibn Majah (793) and by Ibn Hibbaan 2064).

Points To Be Noted: Although the prayers in congregation in the Masjid is important under normal circumstances, **the Prophet ﷺ gave special concession if there is fear or if someone is sick.** The congregational prayer can be made at home and you will be rewarded like performing congregational prayer in the Masjid because you are only refraining based on your fear of being infected or due to sickness in which cases the Prophet ﷺ allowed you to pray at home.

- **Important:** Due to the community performing Salaah at home (alone or in Jama'ah with their family/friends) as per the concession of the Prophet ﷺ **only the Imaamat will observe the Jama'ah in the Masaajid** so that we don't have full closure of our Masaajid.
- Thus, Salaah in Jama'ah is NOT being suspended OR abandoned BUT rather performed in alternative ways, due to the seriousness of this contagious virus.

3. Salaatul Jum'ah

- Jum'ah is only Waajib (compulsory) if all its conditions are met. If any condition cannot be met due to circumstances, the Thuhr Salaah will be performed.

Point To Be Noted: There is an agreement of the four schools of Fiqh **that Jum'ah is NOT obligatory upon someone who fears for their life**, honour or wealth.

(Fiqh according to the four schools, chapter on the conditions of Jum'ah, 296)

- Our stance regarding Jum'ah is the same as that of the congregational prayers. It will be observed in the Masaajid only by the Imaamat. This is a temporary measure due to the fear of safety until Allah opens our way.
- As for the **general Muslim community**, based on the **practices of the Prophet ﷺ** mentioned above, especially the hadith of Ibn 'Abbas رضي الله عنه where he ordered the companions of the Prophet ﷺ to make **Jum'ah at home**, is sufficient evidence for us to request our people to perform Salaah at alternative venues (at home).
- In the unlikely event of people still wanting to perform the Jum'ah Salaah at their homes or alternative venues instead of the Thuhr Salaah, we request that they make sure that all the other conditions of Jum'ah are observed including the minimum quota for Jum'ah which in itself is a matter of disagreement between scholars. Imaam Shafi'i holds the view of 40 people but Imaam Abu Hanifah say that 3 people inclusive of the Imaam will be enough. The reason for difference of opinion is because there is no authentic Prophetic command regarding the minimum quota.

HADITH ABOUT PRECAUTION

"The Messenger ﷺ said: There is no 'Adwa (disease that transmits without the will of Allah) ... but **run away from the leper as you would run away from a lion.**" (Al-Bukhari)

Points To Be Noted: Everything only happens with the will of Allah BUT we must take the necessary precautionary measures. **One does not wait for a lion to harm him before they react**, likewise we must be **proactive** regarding preventing the spread of this virus and use the maxim: **prevention is better than cure**. One death is too many for us to then realize.

IMPORTANT POINTS

- Our Masaajid are acting in accordance to the Shari'ah by social distancing and limiting our gatherings as much as possible.
- We also advice that you self quarantine and remain home bound as much a possible.
- Our Imaams are NOT weak in Imaan. They are following the injunctions of prevention set out by the Quraan and Hadith, which means their Imaan is not in question.

- You do NOT need to feel guilty if you perform all your Fardh Salaah at home alone or in congregation. There is NO SIN upon you.
- Part of the excellent character of the Prophet ﷺ was choosing the easier of two options, as long as it was not a sinful option. (Al-Bukhari 3560) He done this: out of concern for people – not desiring to put them through hardship (Tirmidhi).
- By acting upon the concession given by the Prophet ﷺ you are contributing to the well-being of society.
- We note that there will be a range of varying guidelines given by the different scholars and organisations. We should not criticise the different approaches as our intention is only to refer to Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ as He says: “If you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you believe in Allah and in the Last Day, That is better and more suitable for final determination.” (Quraan 4:59)

CONCLUSION

1. Our Muslims should observe the **Five Daily prayers and Thuhr Salaah on Friday instead of Jum’ah AT HOME**, preferably in Jama’ah and our Imaamat will observe it in the Masaajid under specific guidelines.
2. You will not be guilty of committing a sin by doing this but will be rewarded as performing Salaah in congregation in the Masjid.
3. Thus, **Salaah in Jama’ah in NOT being suspended OR abandoned BUT** rather performed in alternative ways and venues, as taught to us by the Prophet ﷺ in drastic circumstances (like the seriousness of this contagious virus).
4. Act upon the religious, social and hygienic guidelines given to you by your local scholars as well as by our medical practitioners based on the law of the land to **limit this virus**. For further information on Covid-19 visit www.nicd.ac.za
5. Make sincere Dua to Allah to keep us all safe from this trail and other trails. We ask Allah to keep us firm when He tests us with anything. And as the Prophet ﷺ said: **“Tie your camel, then trust in Allah”**.

Allah Knows Best !

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