

Joint statement by major national Muslim medical associations, and the Fiqh Council of North America:

The Islamic Medical Association of North America (IMANA), American Muslim Health Professionals (AMHP), Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) and Fiqh (*derivative laws*) Council of North America (FCNA) strongly recommend the Muslim community to take precautions, including but not limited to suspending daily congregational prayers, Sunday school, Jumuah (*Friday*) prayers and other gatherings in your communities and mosques temporarily.

The above organizations are making these recommendations after careful shared discussions, review of relevant fiqh, and targeted advice from local, state and national public health authorities, local and national Muslim leaders, and Muslim public health experts who live in our communities.

Protecting human life is one of the fundamental objectives of Islamic Shari'ah (*Islamic laws*). This concept takes precedence over all other objectives of Islamic faith as life represents the foundation of our existence. Therefore, at times, preservation of human life and human rights is far more significant than continuity of even essential practices of devotion.

The Prophet (SAW - *peace and blessings of Allah be with him*) gave us specific guidelines to navigate threats to the community such as epidemics. Quarantine, social isolation, travel bans and restriction of select movement, visitations, congregation and socialization are among the precautionary and preventive measures specified in authentic hadith. Fear for one's safety is a genuine Islamic reason to forgo some of the fundamental Islamic actions and rituals. The Prophet (SAW) relinquished the oath of Islam from a member of Banu Thaqi'f tribe who suffered from Hansen's disease (leprosy). Therefore, devotional acts such as daily and weekly congregational prayers, including those for funerals, Taraweeh (*Night prayers during Ramadan*) and Eid can be temporarily halted to avoid life-threatening, widespread dangers such as pandemics.

According to FCNA (Fiqh Council of North America), "it is our moral duty as Muslims that we take all steps necessary to safeguard ourselves and others around us from this terrible disease. One's personal desire to do obligatory prayers at the masjid or fulfill other religious duties comes secondary to ensuring the common health of the larger community. Masjids should be protected from bacterial or viral transmissions."

The global coronavirus pandemic (also known as SARS-CoV-2 or COVID-19) is a serious threat to public health. It has the potential to spread rapidly and impact large populations. For vulnerable individuals (elderly, existing conditions like diabetes, heart disease, lung disease, immunocompromised state), this disease also has a potentially high mortality rate.

From both an Islamic and public health perspective, it is totally reasonable for the community to take aggressive measures temporarily to reduce transmission of the virus, including temporarily:
Canceling congregational prayers
Canceling "Sunday school" or halaqas
Limiting meetings or utilizing web conferencing

Canceling conferences and social gatherings

Social distancing is one of the key concepts to reduce the spread of this potentially deadly disease, and hence, we advise individuals to observe the following measures to contain the spread of the virus:

Those who are sick and have any symptoms of illness must avoid going to crowded public places.

Frequent hand-washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Use hand sanitizers.

Cover your nose and mouth with a single-use tissue (throw out after using and wash hands immediately afterwards) or use your flexed elbow when coughing and sneezing.

Mosques should take extra precautions, like the availability of sanitizers, frequent scrubbing, and disinfecting areas of worship.

Avoid close contact with anyone with cold or flu-like symptoms.

Do not shake hands, embrace, or kiss others, especially those who are sick and if you are sick.

The organizations referenced here who have developed this statement do not take lightly the seriousness of these recommendations. It is only in the most extreme circumstances that we would demand these measures be taken. We agree that the current situation with the novel coronavirus is one of those circumstances.

IMANA, AMHP, ISNA and FCNA will meet regularly to consult key medical, public health, and fiqh experts to support our communities. We are working together to compile the most pertinent and essential information. Please visit <http://www.imana.org/covid-19> for additional resources, our latest recommendations, and full statement from Fiqh Council of North America. You can email covid@amhp.us for questions and concerns.

Last but not least, we are reminded of trials and tribulations from Allah (SWT - *Glory be on Him*) and must continuously pray to Him for safety and protection from all illness, for guidance to follow His way, and for success in this life and the next. During these stressful times, all believers should find comfort in this verse: “Say: Nothing will happen to us except what Allah has decreed for us! And He is our Protector; let the believers put their trust in Him!”

Sincerely,

Islamic Medical Association of North America (IMANA)

American Muslim Health Professionals (AMHP)

Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)

Fiqh Council of North America (FCNA)