



# MUSLIM JUDICIAL COUNCIL (SA)

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## FATWA COMMITTEE



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### THE CORONA VIRUS AND OUR RELIGIOUS OBLIGATIONS

The outbreak of the Corona virus pandemic, and the preventative measures adopted by our government as announced in the President's speech on 15/03/2020, have necessitated that the manner in which Muslims conduct their religious obligations align with the universal imperative of containing the spread of the virus.

Muslims, as much as they carry the obligation of certain religious observances, also share with all other South Africans and citizens of the world the civil responsibility of ensuring safety and preserving life.

The Muslim Judicial Council, after due internal and external consultation and deliberation, in full cognisance of the imperatives that govern this situation, and with due acknowledgement of alternative points of view, therefore issues the following directives:

#### 1. JUMU'AH

As much as the preservation of life and ensuring safety of the community is our collective responsibility, we recognise the role of Jumu'ah as one of the most important *sha'ā'ir* (public motifs) of Islam. As long as it remains feasible to observe both these obligations—Jumu'ah as well as the civil duty to preserve life and health—neither should of necessity have to be sacrificed for the sake of the other.

## 1.1. JUMU'AH AT MASĀJID

- 1.1.1. As such, the **masājid should not be completely closed**, neither for Jumu'ah nor for the congregational ṣalāh. Rather, the observance of Jumu'ah should happen within the parameters that follow.
- 1.1.2. Jumu'ah congregations at masājid where Jumu'ah regularly takes place must be restricted to a **maximum of 100 individuals**.
- 1.1.3. Committees managing the masājid should adopt measures to specifically identify, list and regulate the individuals who will make up the group of 100.
- 1.1.4. This can be done by asking individuals who want to attend to submit their names, and thereafter select a group of 100 persons per week from the list of names submitted.
- 1.1.5. In order to avoid confusion the list of persons attending Jumu'ah at a particular masjid should be made publicly known well in advance of Friday. At the masjid only these 100 persons will be allowed to enter the masjid.
- 1.1.6. As far as possible, wuḍū should be made at home. Wuḍu facilities at the masjid must be regularly disinfected, and provision should be made for paper towels instead of cloth towels.
- 1.1.7. People are encouraged to bring along their own muṣallas to the masjid.
- 1.1.8. Any ṣalāh other than the farḍ should preferably be made at home, and individuals attending the masjid should not linger after completion of the farḍ.
- 1.1.9. Jumu'ah at the masjid should be brief, not exceeding the basic integrals of Jumu'ah, and not going over 10-15 minutes. The customary lecture should be suspended till further notice.
- 1.1.10. As long as the non-attendance of Jumu'ah at the masjid is motivated by the intention of contributing to community health and safety, **it is in no way less meritorious than actual attendance**.

## 1.2. ALTERNATIVE JUMU'AH VENUES

- 1.2.1. The truncation of Jumu'ah at the masājid leaves out a considerable number of people. Alternative Jumu'ah venues should be arranged for those left out of Jumu'ah at the masjid.
- 1.2.2. Groups such as masjid committees, people in the same vicinity, or employees at the same company should, with the help of the imām of their area, identify suitable spaces (eg. classrooms, empty areas, parking lots) where they could gather at midday on a Friday for the performance of Jumu'ah.
- 1.2.3. Jumu'ah performed at such ad hoc locations should be limited to the integrals, not exceeding 10-15 minutes. Specimen khuṭbahs will be available from the MJC.
- 1.2.4. Four persons—i.e. an imām and three followers—will suffice for a valid performance of Jumu'ah, in line with the position espoused by the Shāfi'i jurists al-Muzanī, Ibn al-Mundhir and al-Suyūṭī.
- 1.2.5. The MJC is willing to assist with identifying suitable persons to conduct Jumu'ah at these ad hoc locations. For assistance in this regard, call Ml Siraaj Girie at the MJC Fatwa Department at 021 6844600.

### **1.3. THOSE WHO CANNOT PERFORM JUMU'AH**

- 1.3.1. Those whose circumstances preclude them from attending Jumu'ah should perform Thuhr ṣalāh instead.
- 1.3.2. People who experience a serious degree of fear and apprehension of contracting the virus are exempted from Jumu'ah.
- 1.3.3. People who due to circumstances cannot perform Jumu'ah, and perform Thuhr instead, should note that they **are not sinful**.

### **1.4. PERSONS WHO SHOULD NOT ATTEND JUMU'AH**

- 1.4.1. In the interests of minimising numbers at Jumu'ah, females and children should not attend.
- 1.4.2. To minimise the risk of spreading the virus the following categories of people are strongly discouraged from attending Jumu'ah:
  - 1.4.2.1. The elderly.

1.4.2.2. Persons with chronic medical conditions such as asthma, hypertension, diabetes, and cancer.

1.4.2.3. Persons who suffer from compromised immunity on account of conditions such as TB, HIV, or AIDS.

1.4.2.4. Persons presenting with flu or cold symptoms.

1.4.2.5. Persons who recently travelled overseas.

## **2. JAMĀ'AH**

2.1. For awqāt at which congregations in excess of 100 persons are expected, it is advised to restrict the jamā'ah in the masjid to 100.

2.2. Arrangements should be made to accommodate numbers above 100 in alternative spaces on the same premises, eg. classrooms, halls.

2.3. Those who will make ṣalāh at home are encouraged to pray in congregation with their families. They will receive the same reward as making ṣalāh with jamā'ah in the masjid.

2.4. The same considerations pertaining to wuḍū and sunnah ṣalāh will apply to ṣalāh in jamā'ah as apply to Jumu'ah. (See 1.1.6, 1.1.7 and 1.1.8 above)

2.5. Imāms are encouraged to uphold the sunnah of the Qunūt Nāzilāh in Fajr.

## **3. OTHER COLLECTIVE SOCIAL ACTIVITIES**

3.1. Gatherings in the masjid for occasions such as Mi'rāj and mid-Sha'bān are discouraged and should ideally be suspended for the present.

3.2. Alternative measures such as lectures over radio or electronic means should be adopted.

3.3. Other social gatherings or occasions such as nikāḥs, janāzāhs, dhikr sessions, classes etc. should be restricted in terms of numbers.

## **4. SOCIAL ETIQUETTE**

4.1. Minimise or avoid handshaking. Encourage salām.

- 4.2. All unnecessary physical contact should be avoided. Physical contact is the chief means through which the virus spreads.
- 4.3. Distancing oneself from others, especially in ṣalah, is not specifically required. Maintain normal ṣaffs in ṣalāh.
- 4.4. The sunnah of washing the hands is emphasised. Hands should ideally be washed with soap, preferably liquid, for at least 20 seconds.
- 4.5. The use of hand sanitizer is acceptable, even the types that contain the alcohols isopropanol and ethanol.

## 5. TEMPORARY MEASURES

- 5.1. The adoption of each of the above measures is motivated by the serious need to contain the spread of the Corona virus. We hope and pray that, through measures such as these, Allah brings the situation into control.
- 5.2. The MJC, together with all its sister organisations, and in consultation with the authorities, will continue to monitor the situation.
- 5.3. When a change for the better occurs by the permission of Allah, the required changes to these regulations will be made known to the public.
- 5.4. As long as the status quo prevails, however, all Muslims are earnestly requested to willingly cooperate in the struggle to contain the Corona virus.

والله تعالى أعلم

*And Allah knows best.*



**MT Karaan**