

Islamic rules and regulations regarding the funeral of covid-19 patients

At present the whole world is facing the pandemic of coronavirus and this has led mankind to numerous challenges. Among them one of the problems faced is the funeral of these patients. In the Kashmir Valley so many people are asking the questions to the jurists about the methodology used for their funeral. There have been numerous newsreports regarding the extreme disregard shown to the body of these patients and many of them are deprived of any decent funeral. Some are being thrown into pits like animals and some are being buried along with the coffins as seen in many non- Muslim communities. Some are even being denied burial in their respective graveyards. This all amounts to a great sin and extremely uncivilized behaviour.

On analysing the gravity of the problem faced by the community some jurists and medical professionals deliberated on the issue. They used the guidelines of renowned medical bodies along with the established sharia principles to formulate the guidelines for the funeral of these patients.

Common instructions

1. The Covid pandemic has ravaged the world so the people must take complete precautions to save themselves and others.
2. As soon as a person gets the symptoms of disease he must contact medical authorities.
3. The patient must not get depressed but must be courageous and have patience. This will make the disease a source of wiping out of his sins.
4. Once someone gets infected he should be provided all the medical care and compassion as is used in any other patients
5. One must make efforts to make the patient happy. In case he becomes healthy he should not be discriminated against and if he dies then one must pray for him and spend something in charity on his behalf.
6. The person who has died because of this pandemic must not be considered as bad or sinful but he will get the reward of a martyr .Considering him bad means making oneself answerable to the Allah (swt) for this misdeed.
7. The funeral and burial of these patients has to be done as per the religious injunctions.
8. Precautions have to be taken as described by the medical authorities but there should not be any unjustified fear.

9. The disease is also sent by the Lord hence one must show humbleness to Him and ask help from Him.

Instructions for the medical professionals

Instructions regarding management of the bodies of these patients

1. The external surface of the body may be considered as contaminated.
2. The natural orifices are a source of contamination and special precautions must be taken from their discharges.
3. In the hospital before handing over the body to the relatives maximum efforts must be taken to clean the body so that there are hardly any chances for infecting others. However the people responsible for the funeral must take adequate precautions despite all this.
4. At present there is no evidence to suggest that anybody has got infected with coronavirus by performing the last rites of the dead body
5. One must not try to dispose of the body hurriedly
6. While taking the adequate precautions for the handlers, the dead body must be shown the due respect.

Instructions for the hospital staff before handing over the dead body to the relatives

1. All the medical equipment attached to the patient like tubes, cannulas and catheters must be removed
2. All the natural orifices should be plugged with cotton soaked in 0.1% (1000 ppm) sodium hypochlorite (bleach)
3. The medical professionals may pour this chlorinated water over the body with the intention of bathing the body and if this is done then the body need not to be bathed again at home.
4. The body must be surrounded with cloth soaked in 0.1% (1000 ppm) sodium hypochlorite (bleach)
5. The body must be cleaned by chlorinated water before sealing in a plastic bag which must be completely waterproof.

6. The surrounding places might have been contaminated so must be cleaned with bleach

Instructions regarding shifting the dead body from hospital

1. The body can be shifted in any vehicle however all the people present in the vehicle must be wearing masks and maintain a distance of one metre amongst them and the windows panes must be open.
2. Those people who are carrying the dead body on stretcher or trolley must wear surgical masks and gloves and when they take off the gloves they must wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Another option is to use a sanitizer for hands containing 70% alcohol.
3. The trolley and the inside of the vehicle must be cleaned with 0.1% (1000 ppm) sodium hypochlorite (bleach)

Instructions just before the burial

1. The people who have to wash the body and do the shrouding must be less than 60 years of age and healthy. The people who are above 60 years of age and have any kind of illness must stay away from this job
2. Everybody must have the clear instructions about his role so that there is no confusion
3. The disinfectant solution must be prepared on the same day when it is to be used
4. Hands must be frequently cleaned with disinfectant solutions

Instructions for the relatives and the people who are performing the last rites (Use of personal protection equipment-PPE which must include following)

1. Thick gloves or a pair of double gloves which have not been used beforehand
2. Disposable plastic gown
3. Mask for face along with face shield
4. Disposable shoe covers

Bathing the dead body

1. Bathing of the dead body of any Muslim is compulsory
2. The bathing must be done on priority
3. In case the medical professionals have not bathed the body then the relatives will have to do the job
4. The number of people involved it must be as minimum as possible and all must wear the personal protection equipment
5. After wearing the PPE the body must be bathed as per the sunnah
6. Special care must be taken while cleaning the face, eyes and natural orifices and precautions must be taken to prevent the unnecessary discharge from them
8. All the natural orifices must be plugged with cotton or wool
9. After the bath the body must be dried and turned side to side so that the bathing trolley too becomes dry
10. In case in case the body is washed with 0.1% (1000 ppm) sodium hypochlorite (bleach) in place of conventional water, it too is permissible
11. As per the World Health Organisation guidelines the dead body can be washed with proper precautions. In case the local authorities do not allow bathing of these bodies then the funeral prayers can be offered without bathing as a last resort.

Instructions for shrouding of the body

1. Unnecessary crowding must be avoided and the people who have done the bathing of the body must do the shrouding as well. Shrouding may be done at the same place where bathing was done instead of shifting the body to some other room to reduce contamination
2. Shrouding must be done using the sunnah method
- 3 After shrouding it is better to use the disinfectant solution over the body and then the body may be sealed in a plastic bag which is waterproof. The coffin too should be cleaned with 0.1% (1000 ppm) sodium hypochlorite (bleach) both inside and outside
4. The dead body may then be transferred to the graveyard
5. The place must be cleaned with the disinfectant solution along with the trolleys used
6. After the burial PPE must be carefully taken off

7. The handlers must take a bath themselves before interacting with other people, this is hygienic and the sunnah method as well
8. All the disposables must be considered as contaminated and must be put in a sealed disposable bag and then burnt

Glimpse of dead body

1. In case the relatives want to see the face of the dead body they can do so however nobody is allowed to touch the body
2. As per available information till date nobody has got affected while performing the last rites of these patients

Cleaning the home and surroundings

1. All the rooms of the house and the places which have been contaminated by the the patient must be cleaned with soap and water and then 0.1% (1000 ppm) sodium hypochlorite (bleach) water must be sprayed
2. Special attention must be given to the places which have been contaminated by body fluids like blood sputum urine and feces.
3. All the items which have been used by the deceased like utensils must be cleaned with soap and water and finally cleaned with 0.1% (1000 ppm) sodium hypochlorite (bleach)
4. Ahe personal belongings of the deceased like clothes, bedding and other personnel things may be washed with hot water and soap and then cleaned with the disinfectant solution and if this is not possible and all of them may be put in a disposable bag and burnt off

Instructions in graveyard

1. Funeral prayer (Namaz e Janaza) is compulsory for muslims. The deceased must be buried in his graveyard
2. The people who carry the coffin must wear gloves
3. Funeral prayers are are the same as in any other person
- 4 The people who are wearing the gloves should lower the the body into the grave slowly

5. The burial must be done as per the sunnah method
6. Relatives and the acquaintances must be allowed to fill the grave with clay
7. All the people who have participated in carrying and lowering the body into the grave must use hand sanitizers
8. All the people who have participated in the funeral must take bath on returning home

Request for the mosque and local committees

1. The local communities must participate in the funeral and burial of the coronavirus patients as they have been doing in any other person but the instructions given by the local authorities must be taken into consideration.
2. A group of local young volunteers with a religious bent of mind must be ready for this job beforehand.
3. By the grace of Allah (swt) we do not have the shortage of selfless young people who are ready for the job
4. Every committee must make an arrangement for the PPE which is required for the the last rights of these patients
5. The NGOs must come forward in the current crisis to help the relatives of deceased in the funeral and follow the safety instructions

Conclusion: "The dignity of the dead, their cultural and religious traditions, and their families should be respected and protected throughout,"World Health Organization

References

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Numerous Guidelines prepared by various Muslim bodies around the globe-----

The above work is possible only because of the contribution of following experts:

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