

## CORONAVIRUS DECLARED A NATIONAL DISASTER

All praise is due to Allah and may His choicest salutations continue to descend upon our Master and Leader Mohammed (saw).

“And if Allah touches you with harm, there is none who can remove it but He...” (10:107)

We normally stand in awe of giant threats like earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, and volcanic eruptions. However, the coronavirus spreads from something so small, so miniscule like respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Glory be to Allah Who can immobilize millions of people around the globe simply by means of tiny droplets invisible to the eye.

As Muslims our response to the pandemic is premised on five fundamentals:

1. **Nothing happens without the will of Allah:** *"Nothing shall ever happen to us except what Allah has ordained for us. He is our Protector. And in Allah let the believers put their trust."* (9:51) A pandemic conjures up images of an indiscriminate, uncontrollable and irrepressible virus that swiftly sweeps across continents. As Muslims we believe Allah is the Master of the universe, He is in absolute control, no virus spreads outside the control of Allah. Nothing happens ‘naturally’, without measure, purpose or design.

2. **Act Responsibly** - *"Do not cause harm, nor harm yourself"* (Malik) Our dual social responsibilities gleaned from this hadith are:

- Do not harm others by exposing them to the virus if you are affected
- Do not harm yourself by neglecting to adopt adequate measures to protect yourself from those affected

3. **Adopt adequate precautionary measures** - *"...flee from the leper as you would run away from a lion."* (Bukhari) This hadith implies that we should respond to communicable diseases with absolute urgency and use all our resources and energies to protect ourselves in the same way we would, if we were pursued by a lion. Just as we cannot run away fast enough from an approaching lion, in the same way we will not be over reacting in the measures we adopt to protect ourselves.

4. **Remain positive and optimistic that a cure will be found** - *'Allah has sent down both the disease and the cure, and He has appointed a cure for every disease, so treat yourselves medically, but use nothing unlawful.'* (Abu Dawood) Islam encourages society to conduct research and discover remedies for diseases that afflict human beings. The concept of incurable diseases is thus alien to Islam.

5. **Guard against becoming paranoid** – *"And whosoever is conscious of Allah, He will make a way out for him (from every difficulty). And He will provide him from (sources) he never could imagine. (65:2-3)* The fear of contracting the virus should not drive us to act irrationally, or to lose hope in the mercy of Allah. Always adopt a

positive outlook regardless of the situation you are in. *“Amazing is the affair of the believer, verily all of his affairs are good and this is not for no one except the believer. If something of good/happiness befalls him, he is grateful and that is good for him. If something of harm befalls him, he is patient and that is good for him.”* (Muslim)

It is within the context of the five fundamentals that we suggest the following with regards to the Masjid:

#### **Introduce Hygiene Protocols:**

Although we do not precisely know how long the virus can linger on surfaces a recent analysis suggests that the virus can remain viable in the air for up to 3 hours, on copper for up to 4 hours, on cardboard up to 24 hours and on plastic and stainless steel up to 2 to 3 days. Even though the U.S. Centre for Disease Control and Prevention says: “Transmission of coronavirus occurs much more commonly through respiratory droplets than through contact with contaminated surfaces,” we rather err on the side of caution by:

- Ensuring that the ablution facilities and toilets are sanitized before and after each salaah. Encourage people to make wudhu at home. The use of ablution facilities must be reserved for unavoidable circumstances.
- Providing sanitizing wipes in both the toilet and ablution areas so that the taps and door handles may be wiped clean before use
- Placing hand sanitizers within easy reach of the congregation
- Avoiding the use of communal towels.
- Ensuring that the carpets are cleaned more regularly

- Encouraging performance of wudhu at home
- Placing appropriate signage alerting people to use sanitizers, etc.

**Reduce Contact Time and numbers in the masjid to no more than one hundred:**

- By encouraging people to read their Sunnah salaats at home
- By encouraging the aged, those with symptoms, or those suffering from chronic illnesses to perform salaah at home
- By facilitating multiple venues for fardh salaah where possible, so that numbers do not go beyond the mandatory limitation of one hundred per venue.
- By facilitating multiple venues for Jumma Salaah and by arranging more than one Jumma salaah at a venue to remain within the one hundred requirement.
- By dispensing with the Friday lecture and shortening the duration of the Jumma salaah
- Postponing all additional programs/lectures in the masjid that attract crowds larger than one hundred.
- By shortening the duration of the interval between the Azan and the fardh salaah.
- By reducing the length of the fardh salaah

**Maintain Social Distancing**

- Maintain at least 1 metre distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing. When someone coughs or sneezes they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets, including the COVID-19 virus if the person coughing has the disease.

- Avoid shaking hands or hugging – under the circumstances a verbal salaam will suffice.

### **Personal Hygiene**

- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth - Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and can make you ill.
- Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.

It is imperative for Muslims to fully comply with the contingency measures put in place by government. They are put in place as part of the national disaster protocols aimed at containing the spread of the virus. These are certainly difficult limitations, however we are a community of balance, we take sensible precautions; we tie our camel and trust Allah. We turn to Allah in hope, longing, patience and prayer.

Yusuf Patel (MI)

Secretary General

15 March 2020