

Gatherings at our Centres and Mosques

The World-Federation COVID-19 Task Force recognizes the fact that many of our jamaats and communities are seeking guidance on whether their respective centres should suspend all programs, close the religious gatherings in their centres and masajids and suspend all gatherings including social events and weddings etc. as a result of the spread of COVID-19.

The Task Force fully recognizes that many centres have taken the proactive step of closing their centres based on their own unique situations and advice from medical professionals, Public Health officials, Islamic Scholars and community leaders. The Task Force is supportive of decisions that are made to protect the well-being of individuals and is confident that such decisions have not been taken lightly. They have also been done through extensive consultations and have been made with respect to challenges faced by each of our communities related to COVID-19. In fact, as per the guidance given by our Marja, Ayatullah Sistani, we have a moral and ethical Islamic duty to do whatever we can to contribute towards controlling the spread of this virus within the believers. However, the Task Force also recognizes the importance of not only protecting the physical body but also to ensure that we manage and nurture the spiritual heart and soul of the believers as this is also of critical importance for the existence of our individuals. With this in mind, the Task Force has put together the following recommendations as guidelines.

With the global spread of COVID-19 across all our communities, The Task Force strongly urges all centres to have extensive consultations with the medical professionals and public health experts within their community to consider the temporary closure and cancellation of regular programming (including Jamaat and Juma'a Salaat) within their communities. We strongly urge communities to engage their Regional Federations to provide guidance and support to implement this.

As per our previous guidelines, Social Isolation and infection control practices is the key to minimize the spread of this virus. The closure of centres and cancelling of regular programs means that the community leadership should develop extensive plans through their Regional Federations to address the social, psychological, emotional and spiritual needs of the community. The Task Force recommends the following measures:

- Develop a robust system of volunteerism to take care of and address the needs of members of the community (especially the elderly);
- Develop an extensive mental health support system for the community (virtual social visits, hotlines etc.);
- In consultation with medical professionals and public health experts, Regional Federations to develop criteria for a GRADUAL re-opening of centres and programming when deemed safe to do so;
- The WF Task Force in full collaboration with Regional Federations will develop an economic plan to address the economic needs of the communities during this outbreak;

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- The Task Force wishes to emphasize the importance of developing on line platforms to continue spiritual programs virtually. However, it recognizes that many (such as elderly) may not have resources or knowledge on how to access such programs on an on line platform. We urge communities to explore strategies on how such vulnerable members in the community can be connected seamlessly to on line platforms.

The WF COVID-19 Task Force wishes to emphasize that the decision to restrict, modify or close the programs and centres lies with the individual jamaats and the regional federations based on informed advice from medical professionals, Islamic scholars and community leaders of that area. In this document, we have attempted to provide broad guidelines and strategies to ensure that whilst we adhere to our Islamic duty to minimize the spread of this virus and avoid potential harm to others, we also do not ignore the need to nurture our spiritual hearts and souls as we immerse ourselves in these spiritual months preparing for the beautiful nights of Qadr in Shahru Ramadhan.

The World-Federation COVID-19 Task Force.