

Halting Jumū'ah Service Due to COVID-19

Question:

Some governments have declared that it is not suitable for people to gather in large numbers and at public places due to the spread of the coronavirus. Keeping this in mind, would it be permitted to stop people from gathering for Jumū'ah prayers in such circumstances or would it still be mandatory to gather for Jumū'ah prayers? Is there any similar occurrence in Islamic history? If so what did Muslims do?

Answer:

Jumū'ah in General

Jumū'ah prayers are farḥ (mandatory) upon all sane, adult, resident, healthy muslim males. Gathering for Jumū'ah prayers is amongst the hallmarks of Islam. It is not permissible to forgo or halt the Jumū'ah as long as gathering [for it] is possible and there are no government imposed restrictions for it.

Jumū'ah and General Sickness

Jurists have not regarded the mere possibility of unconfirmed spread of sicknesses amongst the valid excuses to relinquish congregational prayers.

Jumū'ah and Confirmed Virus Transmission

Yes, if the virus has become wide spread in a confirmed manner, death toll has increased, and a pandemic situation [due to the virus spread] has intensified, then it is permissible to perform Jumū'ah in homes with small congregations. The minimum requirement to conduct a Jumū'ah is to have three adult males behind the imam.

Medical experts have stated that a peculiar element of this coronavirus is that it is not possible to recognize the transmission of this virus. In fact, it is transmitted from one to another without any sign, indication or symptom. Symptoms only appear after five days to a two weeks period. In these situations, it is imperative for the khatīb [leading the congregation] to suffice on the minimum requirements of the sermon and also lead the prayers with short surah recitations. People praying together in small congregations should not remain in the place of prayer, rather quickly exit.

Epidemics in Islamic History

There have been plagues in the history of Islam such as the Amwās, Jārif and other known outbreaks. Despite that, believers still prayed together.

(References: Al-Badā'i Al-ḥanā'i, Fatāwā Al-Hindīyyah, Dur Al-Mukhtār, Nūr Al-Iḥāṣ , Marāqī Al-Falāḥ , Hashīyat Al-Shurunbulāliyy, Fatāwā Dār Al-Ulūm Zakariyyah, Aḥṣān Al-Fatāwā, Al-Hidāyah, Al-Nujūm Al-Zāhirah, Al-Mustadrak 'Alā Al-ḥaṣṣ ayn, Riḥlah Ibn Baṭṭūah, Mir'āt Al-Jinān, Al-Mawsū'ah Al-Tārīkhīyyah)

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Rendered into English by Yūsuf Badāt

And Allāh Knows Best