

Funeral Prayer and Burial Procedures in case of an Epidemic Disease

One of the primary religious duties to be fulfilled by Muslims for their deceased brothers and sisters in religion is to wash their body (perform ghusl), shroud them, and perform funeral prayer for them (*salat al-janazah*). Performing their funeral prayer after washing and shrouding them is a collective duty (*fard al-kifayah*), meaning that if this obligation is fulfilled by some Muslims, it would suffice and thus the remaining Muslims are not held responsible for it before Allah (swt). There is no specific time determined for the funeral prayer. It is essential that once the washing and shrouding of the deceased has been completed, the funeral prayer is performed and the deceased is buried as early as possible.

When there is a risk of an epidemic disease, the funeral prayer should be performed immediately by the minimum available people. Moreover, in order to prevent the spread of the disease all the necessary precautions and measures should be taken duly, such as leaving sufficient distance among the attendees of the funeral prayer. If there is more than one funeral, a single funeral prayer would be sufficient for all. The funeral prayer of a deceased person, if required to be buried immediately by the authorities, due to the risk of transmitting the disease, can be performed later at his/her grave by a few people.

Only after taking the necessary precautions to avoid infection in compliance with the directives of the experts, the deceased must be washed, shrouded, and buried according to the Islamic norms and rituals. If, despite all precautions, there is still a risk of (causing or spreading) infection by washing and shrouding the deceased according to the religious procedures:

1. The washing process is carried out by hosing or sprinkling water from a distance.
2. If this distant washing is still risky, then *tayammum* (i.e. the symbolic washing) is performed to the deceased by wearing protective suits and following the instructions of the authorities.
3. In cases where performing *tayammum* to the deceased poses a risk, this type of symbolic washing, too, is dismissed, as dictated by the rule of *darurah* (i.e. strict necessity), and then right after the funeral prayer, the deceased body is directly buried without being washed.

Should there is a risk for burying the deceased body within shrouds as defined in the traditional form, then it is permissible for the deceased to be buried in a wooden casket or coffin or a bag.

During all these exceptional circumstances and excusable practices, arising out of necessity, we should behave and act with the full awareness that we have carried out and completed our last religious duty to our deceased Muslim brothers/sisters.