

Op Talla | Operational Daily Briefing

To: Chief Constables, Staff Officers, COVID19 SPOCs

Date: 08 April 2020

ACTION: FAITH BASED ISSUES, NPCC LEAD FOR RELIGION AND BELIEF – ACC ANGELA WILLIAMS

I would like to highlight a few Faith based issues which many of you may already be sighted on and responding to:

- The Coronavirus Act 2020 is now in force and deals with the transportation, storage and disposal of dead bodies and human remains. This legislation saw the inclusion of the ability of a local or national authority to direct whether a deceased person must be buried or cremated. The Act specifies that any local or national authority exercising this power (if it is activated) must “have regard to the desirability of” disposing of a dead person’s body in accordance with the person’s wishes, or otherwise in accordance with the person’s religion or beliefs, if known. The Government has stressed that it is not the intention of the legislation that somebody who wished to be buried would have to be cremated. This has caused some concerns with our Muslim communities and our Jewish communities as cremation is forbidden in both Islam and Judaism.
- The Police Chaplaincy, with the support of our national Faith Based Support Networks, have kindly produced the attached reference guide regarding burials/cremations relating to most faiths (**Religious Requirements at the time of death chart**). The United Synagogue, have also produced a useful reference guide which is supported by the National Jewish Police Association. (**Coronavirus Guidance - Community and Rabbinic Issues**)
- Ramadan - This commences on Thursday 23rd April, until Saturday 23rd May (these dates are approximate and may vary based on the sighting of the moon) and with social distancing measures in place, there are broad concerns that our Muslim communities may still wish to move around the country and celebrate during Ramadan. We are conscious that many modelling estimates would see the heaviest number of infections coinciding with the Ramadan period. Our National Association of Muslim Police (NAMP) have attached very useful reference guide (**The impact of COVID-19 on Ramadhan**). Rizwan Mustafa (MA, PhD Cand), Lecturer in Policing at University of Huddersfield, has also produced guidance to support Muslim colleagues balance their faith needs/obligations with the demands of operational policing during Covid-19 (**Fasting guidance Covid-19**)
- Finally, as Places of Worship being closed due to Social Distancing, this is a good opportunity to ensure our Faith Rooms within our Police estate are available for use by our Officers and Staff and contain the relevant prayer materials.

As the strands of Faith and Hate Crime often overlap, work continues between the NPCC Race, Religion and Belief Group (led by CC Garry Forsyth) and the NPCC Hate Crime Group (led by DCC Mark Hamilton).

The National Community Tensions Team (NCTT) are creating an Advisory Document to Chief Officers to collate intelligence and threat assessments to inform their local policing decisions.

The document will consider all advice received to date, including the contribution of IAGs, Tell MAMA and Muslim Police Support Networks.

Freedom of Information Act Disclosure

During this period of COVID-19 many rituals and practices may have been changed or altered, the hyperlinks will take you to faith groups own guidance

<u>Religion</u>	<u>Main Points</u>	<u>Cremation / Burial</u>	<u>Funeral Requirements</u>	<u>PM's</u>	<u>Organ Donation</u>	<u>Ritual</u>	<u>Noteworthy Points</u>	<u>COVID-19 Links</u> <i>Not all faiths have published guidance</i>
Christianity	Christianity is an Abrahamic monotheistic religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Its adherents, known as Christians, believe that Jesus is the Christ, whose coming as the messiah was prophesied in the Hebrew Bible, called the Old Testament in Christianity, and chronicled in the New Testament	Either	Nothing specific	Y	Y	Nothing specific	May request a priest for 'Last Rites'	Church of England Methodist Church Roman Catholic Church The Baptist Union United Reform Church

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Islam	The word Islam means submission to the will of God and its followers are Muslims. They believe in one God (Allah) and regard the religion's founder Mohammed as the prophet of Allah. The Koran (Quran), is Allah's word consists of the teachings of Islam. This, along with recorded sayings of Prophet Mohammed and his acts, constitute the Islamic legal system (Sharia)	Burial	Within 24hr of death	N	N	Face Makkah (the Qibla) It is an important religious duty to visit the sick and dying, so a large number of visitors may arrive at all hours. It is customary among Pakistanis and Arabs to express their emotion freely when a relative dies. Whenever possible you should give them privacy to do so; and explain gently but firmly the need to avoid disturbing other's by their mourning.	Ideally only male Muslims should handle a male body, and female Muslims a female body.	National Muslim Burial Council
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Judaism	Judaism is based on the belief in one God. The love of God and the wish to carry out the Ten Commandments as given in the 'Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament) And also based on laws and regulations developed after the Hebrew Bible was finalised'. Religion and culture are inextricably mixed. The Jewish Sabbath begins before nightfall on Friday and ends with the first sighting of three stars on Saturday night (i.e. sunset' to sunset). -'In addition please note that all Jewish Festivals start with sunset and end the next day with sunset (when you see the first stars appearing)	Both Liberal & Reform Judaism allows for cremation, whereas Orthodox Judaism prohibits it	Within 24hr of death but not on Shabbat (Saturday) or , Jewish Festivals such as First two days and last two days of Passover (lasts 7/8 days) Shavuot (Lasts 2 days) and Succoth (lasts 7/8 days) apart from Minor Festivals such as Purim and Chanukah	N	Y	When a Jewish person dies, the following guidelines apply: 1. Do not touch the body until 20 minutes after death. 2. Do not wash the body (clean crevices if required to preserve the dignity of the deceased). 3. Do not remove false teeth or other prostheses. 4. Close the eyes. 5. Straighten the body out, laying it flat with the feet together and arms by the side. Fingers should be straight. 6. Cover the body with a plain white sheet without emblems. 7. The body should be placed with the feet towards the doorway.	Identification of a Dead Male is particularly important for the position of a widow in Jewish law. Jewish Undertakers should be contacted when a person dies and they will perform ritual washing.	United Synagogue Masorti Judaism Liberal Judaism Movement for Reform Judaism Chabad Judasim
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Hinduism	Hinduism embraces a way of life and a social system which involves the worship of numerous gods, all of them manifestations of the one Supreme Being. In Hinduism, there is no supreme church authority and no hierarchy.	Cremation preferred	Ideally, Hindus are cremated on the day of death but the formalities required in Britain make this impractical.	N		The dead body should be placed with the head facing north and the feet facing south. The arms should be placed to the sides and the legs should be straightened. The face should be pointed upwards with the eyes closed and the whole body must always be covered with a white cloth. Any detached body parts must be treated with respect as if they were a complete body. Sacred objects should not be removed.	Gloves should be worn by non-Hindus when touching the body. The family normally wish to perform Last Offices themselves	Hindu Council UK

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Sikhism	The word Sikh means disciple or follower, and they believe in one God whose message is revealed by Guru Nanak, the 16th Century founder of the religion.	Prefer cremation, although burial is permitted if cremation is impossible	As soon as possible after death, and friends and relatives will prepare the body the night before the cremation at the funeral parlour.	N	Y	It is vital for staff to ensure that none of the five symbols of Sikhism are disturbed. It is also important not to trim the hair or beard, and the hair on the head should be kept covered. These symbols are: KESH – uncut hair (and beard) KANGHA – a semi-circular comb fixing the hair in a bun. KARA – a steel or gold bangle worn on the right wrist. KIRPAN – a symbolic dagger. KACHI – shorts/underpants. The five Ks should be left on the dead body, which should if possible be cleaned and clothed in clean garments before being placed in a coffin or on a bier.	After death and identification, the body or parts of the body should be covered with a plain white sheet or shroud. If the condition of the body permits, the eyes and mouth should be closed and limbs straightened with arms placed straight beside the body. According to Sikh etiquette comforting a member of the opposite sex by physical contact should be avoided unless those involved are closely related	City Sikhs

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Baha'i	The Bahá'í faith is one of the youngest of the world's major religions. It was founded by Bahá'u'lláh in Iran in 1863. Iran was then mainly a Muslim country, and the faith was proclaimed by a young Iranian, who called himself The Báb. He said that a messenger would soon arrive from God, who would be the latest in a line of prophets including Moses, Muhammad and Jesus Christ	Burial - no embalming (but temporary acceptable)	At some point before interment a special prayer for the dead is said for deceased aged 15 or over.	Y	Y	A special ring may be placed on the deceased's finger –do not remove. Body wrapped in plain cloth or silk.	Baha'i Law prescribes that burial should take place at a distance of not more than one hour's journey from the place of death.	Email Bahai UK
Buddhism	The Buddhist faith centres on the Buddha who is revered as an example to his followers of a way of life. Buddhahood is realised within the person through prayers, purifications, retreats and virtuous conduct.	Either (though cremation is more usual in the country of origin of many Buddhist families	When a Buddhist dies special prayers usually take place for a period of time. This period depends on the lunar calendar and varies between three to seven days in most schools of Buddhism	Y*	Y	An experienced Buddhist practitioner may perform the special Buddhist practice of Powa or ejection of consciousness. They may wish for a Buddha figure close by and may use a candle or incense stick.	*Technically, Buddhists should not have any issues with carrying out a postmortem because the body is not held in great reverence once its consciousness has departed. However, some Buddhists believe that it takes at least three days for consciousness to leave a body and that no disturbance or movement should take place during that time, so a quick post-mortem could endanger this process	The Buddhist Society

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Paganism	Paganism describes a group of contemporary religions based on a reverence for nature. These faiths draw on the traditional religions of indigenous peoples throughout the world	Either	Most Pagan funerals will take place outdoors, either in an established memorial site or a location of significance to the deceased, such as a natural place which the individual shared an affinity with or where they regularly held or took part in ceremonies.	Y	Y	Most Pagan funerary rituals will involve some sort of singing, chanting and/or the reading of text; this may be accompanied by the partaking of wine or mead and the consumption of food such as bread. It is common for Pagans to cast a ritual circle and call on the four directions of the compass or the four elements during a ceremony. The ritual may consist of periods of meditation and reflection and will sometimes involve the burning of incense or oils and a ritual fire. Given the British climate and the comparative rarity of the practice, it is unlikely that Pagans will be naked at funerary rituals.	Pagans believe in reincarnation. Most pagans believe in some form of reincarnation, viewing death as a transition within a continuing process of existence. Pagans accept death as a Natural part of life and will wish to know when they are dying so that they may consciously prepare for it.	
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Humanism	Humanism is a philosophical and ethical stance that emphasizes the value and agency of human beings, individually and collectively, and generally prefers critical thinking and evidence (rationalism and empiricism) over acceptance of dogma or superstition.	Either	Nothing specific	Y	Y	The shell, the body, should be treated with respect because it has been the recognisable form of the person who has died.	Humanism UK
Jehovah Witness	Jehovah's Witnesses are members of a religious organisation that originated in the U.S.A. in 1872. They attach great importance to Christ's second coming with the ensuing Armageddon and Last Judgement entailing the destruction of all but the faithful.	Either	Nothing specific	No	No	Nothing specific	They refer to death as "passing over" and having led a blameless life, have nothing to fear from it. This means they may not demonstrate the emotions our society usually expects

[JW Website](#)

**United Synagogue Guidance on Coronavirus
Community and Rabbinic Issues: 25 March 2020**

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Please note: As the situation is fluid and government restrictions and advice are changing every day, this advice will be updated online regularly. Please ensure that you are reading the latest version. You can see all United Synagogue updates at www.theus.org.uk/coronavirus

Principles

One of the most fundamental principles in Jewish practice is the concept of community. We celebrate together, we grieve together, we mark moments of transition in each other's lives together, we pray together, and we eat together. Our sages even warned us not to separate ourselves from the community (Pirkei Avot 2:4). Yet sadly, during this period of social distancing and self-isolation, it is necessary for us to adapt our lifecycle events and to explain why we are doing so to our members, family and friends.

This document outlines the key social distancing principles, which apply to all the occasions outlined below. Given the Prime Minister's announcements of 23/3/2020, there are very limited circumstances where it is possible to proceed with a lifecycle event. Where these have been permitted, attendees must be asymptomatic, not subject to the requirement to self-isolate and not be in an 'at risk' category such as being 70 years old and over and/or those who have underlying medical conditions.

All attendees at events should wash their hands regularly according to best-practice, should stand at least 2 metres apart and should refrain from handshaking, hugging or kissing. Ceremonies should be as short as possible.

Please note that a Rabbi retains the right to decline to carry out such lifecycle events if he is concerned about his own health or that of others.

Bereavement

Bereavement is one of the most difficult experiences we encounter. Jewish burial and mourning practices often provide enormous comfort to those who are grieving. However, while we must do what we can to afford the greatest of respect to our dearly departed, we must also apply the fundamental Jewish principle of *pikach nefesh* – the preservation of life. This means that some of our practices must change during these deeply troubling times.

It is important to understand the fundamental *mitzvot* are *levayat hameit* (the funeral) in which the mourners, together with their family and friends accompany the deceased to their final resting place) the *kevelah* (the actual burial) and *nichum aveilim* (the comforting of the mourners). The idea of "sitting shiva" actually describes the period of seven days following the burial, which is observed by the mourners. The shiva period

President: Michael Goldstein
Treasurer: Maxwell Nisner
Trustees: Andrew Eder, Claire Lemer, Fleurise Lewis, Nicola Rosenfelder, Barry Shaw, Saul Taylor, Jacqui Zinkin
Chief Executive: Steven Wilson



exists even if there are no formal services held or *kaddish* is not recited. The *azkarah* (memorial prayer) may still be recited even without a *minyan*.

Levayas (lit. accompanying [the deceased]) The Funeral

In order to avoid the potential spread of the virus, attendance at levoyas will be limited to immediate family only. In these circumstances, a minyan is not required. Mourners should speak to the Burial team or their Rabbi for more information. Individuals might consider livestreaming funerals in order to allow others to be included.

All funerals will be held outdoors and people will be asked to stand some distance apart from one another. No transport will be provided. Only mourners will be asked to put in earth.

United Synagogue cemeteries will be closed to the public until further notice.

Shivas

Mourners (*aveilim*) must sit shiva in their own homes.

At this time, a gathering of people in a shiva house does not comply with government social distancing requirements. Therefore, no shiva visits can take place. No minyanim can be held at shiva houses and the Rabbi and Rebbetzen will not visit the shiva house. Community members are encouraged to fulfil the mitzvah of *nichum aveilim* (comforting the mourners) in other ways, such as through phone calls and email.

Stonesettings (matzevot)

The stonesetting ceremony itself is an important tradition, but not entirely essential. It is customary to hold this ceremony within the first year after the burial of the deceased, but if this is not possible, it may be held at a later date. However, to the extent permitted by Government restrictions, the tombstone itself should be erected as usual.

Until the social distancing requirements have been relaxed, **all stonesetting ceremonies have now been postponed**. As long as stonemasons are able to do the work, families should arrange for tombstones to be erected. This reflects the halachic imperative to correctly mark a grave.

Members saying Kaddish

The recital of Kaddish is an ancient tradition but can only take place in the presence of a *minyan*. For a minyan to take place 10 men over the age of Bar Mitzvah need to be present in the same place. A virtual gathering whether by phone or tele-conferencing does not constitute a minyan and kaddish cannot be said.

As the mourner recites these passages which relate God's greatness and splendour, he or she elevates the soul of their loved one. It is therefore very unsettling not to be able to say Kaddish. However, a worthy alternative is to study a Mishna for each service at which you would otherwise say Kaddish. On a weekday that would mean one Mishna in the morning, one in the afternoon and one in the evening. On Shabbat, you would study a

further Mishna corresponding to Musaf. We suggest you study the Mishna of Pirkei Avot, which is found in the green siddur starting on page 524.

Communities might be set up a virtual group for such study. Otherwise, please look at the US Facebook page for Mishna study with one of our rabbis.

Vidui

Where possible, with the facilitation of a family member or friend, end-of-life prayers should be said over the phone with the Rabbi.

Rabbinic hospitality

In order to protect both Rabbinic families and members, there can be no Rabbinic hospitality. This means that, until further notice, Rabbis and Rebbetzins cannot invite people to their homes for meals, for any food or drink, or for a meeting or private conversation. Social and communal conversations can take place over the phone or online.

Rabbinic visits

Until further notice, Rabbis and Rebbetzins are not able to visit members in their homes either as a pastoral visit or in order to have a meeting or conversation. Instead, these conversations can be had over the phone or online.

Smachot

Joining together to celebrate smachot is core to community life and a mitzvah in itself. However, as gatherings are no longer permitted, we will have to adjust our practice and devise new creative ways of marking significant moments together, whilst apart.

The Rabbi or community should not facilitate, support or publicise any minyanim or smachot in members' homes. Sifrei Torah should not be loaned for these purposes. The Rabbi or Rebbetzen cannot visit a Bar/Batmitvah child nor make a presentation to them in person.

As an alternative, they might record or write a message or sermon in advance and arrange for it to be shared online. On a weekday they might also use videoconferencing to hear a Batmitvah girl give a Dvar Torah or to see a Barmitvah boy put on tefillin for the first time or leyn some of his sedra. Communities are already devising creative ways of celebrating smachot online and ideas will be shared over the coming weeks.

Weddings

It is not possible to conduct weddings at this time.

Mikvah

The observance of *Taharat Hamishpacha* (the laws of family purity) is a fundamental mitzvah. Mikvaot remain open for women. Best-practice guidelines on hygiene and social distancing are in place at local Mikvaot in North London. As each mikvah operates independently, women should contact their mikvah for detailed information. Men who have the tradition to go to the mikvah should refrain from doing so at this time.

Brit Milah

The Initiation Society is revising their Covid-19 Guidelines to ensure that Brit Milah can continue. Only Mohelim who are registered with the Initiation Society should be used. Please contact your Rabbi if you have any questions.

Naming of a baby girl

There is a custom to name a baby girl in Shul when Kriat Hatorah (reading from the Torah) is performed. Whilst this will no longer be possible, a baby girl can be named at home, using the service on page 816 of the Green siddur. During the week, this could be facilitated online by a Rabbi.

Pidyon Haben

There is a mitzvah to 'redeem' every firstborn son who is born to parents who are both Yisraelim (not kohanim or leviim), provided the birth was natural (i.e. not a caesarean) and provided other criteria are met. (see Exodus 13:13–15 and Numbers 18:15-16). A rabbi should be consulted to ascertain whether a pidyon haben is necessary. If it is, it should take place on the 31st day after the birth of the child inclusive of the day of birth (regardless of whether it was possible to perform the bit milah or not).

In the current circumstances, the pidyon haben should take place as usual on the correct date. However, it should be performed without a minyan. Only the father and the Kohen should be present and there is no absolute need for the baby to be with them. The father should have a seudah at home which again should be celebrated without a minyan.

Shalom Zachor

It is customary to hold a Shalom Zachor on the Friday evening immediately following the birth of a baby boy. A Shalom Zachor should not take place whilst restrictions on public and social gatherings are in place.



The impact of COVID-19 on Ramadhan 2020

Mosque Closures / Congregational Gatherings & Prayers

We are in unprecedented times and the current situation has seen the closures of many mosques across the country. Muslims are urged to refrain from attending any mosques and are advised to observe their prayers at home.

If this position remains unchanged (pending any further guidelines from the government), then during Ramadhan it is unlikely we will see gatherings at mosques for congregational prayers such as Jummah (Friday) prayers or Taraweeh prayers (night prayers observed during Ramadhan). These prayers will be observed at home by the majority.

However, if the COVID-19 situation changes for the better and normal life starts to resume, then we may see mosques re-opening and resuming normal activities.

Each mosque will have a trust / committee board responsible for their own decisions when responding to the COVID-19 situation as it unfolds. Many mosques are aligned to national Muslim organisations and may take directive from them in deliberating their decisions. The respective decisions are then communicated into the communities.

There is a potential risk that some individuals may disregard guidance and still gather within the community to perform congregational prayers whether it be within smaller mosques, parks or inside households. This has been reported to happen recently in a number of locations where individuals have gathered for Friday prayers.

Unless circumstances change, Muslim officers and staff are reminded to abide by government guidance and to remain at home during Ramadhan. This includes refraining from attending community and family gatherings such as for Iftar (breaking fast) and congregational prayers.

Eid-ul-Fitr prayer

Eid marks the end of Ramadhan and is estimated to be around 22/23/24 May 2020, depending on the sighting of the new moon. The position of Eid prayers taking place or not, is a scholarly decision, which will be taken in due course as we near the time. No decision has been taken at this stage, as the entire country anxiously awaits to see how the following critical weeks unfold. If the situation resumes back to normality by this time then please revert back to the original guidance for Ramadhan as there will be the expected large gatherings at mosques and dedicated locations for the observance of Eid prayer. If the situation remains unchanged by this time then it is anticipated that the scholars / mosque committees / boards will not be holding Eid prayers and be asking Muslims to observe these at home.

Bereavement / Burials

This subject has already posed a significant challenge for the Muslim communities as within Islam the deceased must undergo a religious ritual which involves the washing of the body and burial as soon as practical after this. Cremations are not permitted within Islam. At this time we have already seen the mobilisation of many Muslim burial organisations, helping and provide guidance to the Muslim communities. Most cities with large Muslim populations have respective Burial Councils (acting as a SPOC with their local authorities), including Coroners, Muslim funeral directors, Police, NHS and Muslim scholars to address some of the key points as highlighted below:

- Funeral attendance – social distancing guidance, this varies from across the country. Restriction of numbers who attend to immediate family only.
- Travelling to and from funerals – to observe social distancing guidance as set out by government.
- Hygiene guidelines – washing of hands / personal contact / shaking of hands / hugging people etc. – COVID-19 rules apply.
- Ritual washing of deceased – guidance in place around dedicated locations to carry out these obligations coupled with hygiene rules.

It is advised that each Police force seeks to have key community representation and internal AMP representation on any critical / Gold / Silver meetings in respect of COVID-19 and staff / community impact.

Abstraction / Annual leave / Workplace adjustments for Ramadhan

Many Muslim officers and staff will have already submitted requests for either leave / workplace adjustments for Ramadhan in advance and prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Clearly this pandemic has now put a significant strain on staffing levels. Some of our colleagues affected by COVID-19 are either self-isolating or in more unfortunate circumstances, taken ill due to the virus. In many forces the abstraction levels are the highest in years and may continue to increase as we approach the peak of this pandemic. There are clearly some core critical functions within the policing business that must continue and such areas of business are struggling in meeting their basic objectives, posing a great risk to all Police services. NAMPP would urge Muslim officers and staff who work in such critical areas to revisit / refresh any prior adjustments with line managers / supervisors and support their respective organisations to play their part in helping to continue to deliver a quality of service to our communities. We have seen how the nation comes together to support the NHS where around 750,000 have signed up. A call for retired police officers to come back and support the police service is now also being considered by NPCC / Government / CoP.

There may be local agreements that some of these core functions can be delivered via home working. It is urged that where possible the workplace adjustments agreed are honoured. Ideally reaching an agreed compromise between parties is the best outcome.

Fasts

If 12 hours shifts are implemented, NAMP respectfully request that Muslim officers and staff are allocated set refreshment times to open or close their fasts (depending on shifts worked) with a separate set refreshment time to rest.

The set refreshment time to rest should be agreed between the line manager and staff and not just allocated. Each person will be very different in how their body adjusts and deals with fasting, therefore line managers should take into account their specific needs. This will help staff remain focused, refreshed and motivated.

The other factor for consideration is for Muslim personnel to be allocated duties where they have food and water readily accessible.

Muslim personnel are advised to take home-prepared food as shops and food outlets will either be closed or running low on food.

Therefore supervisors should avoid allocating duties where staff won't have access to their home prepared food i.e. stood at crime scenes or sending them to work to a different location mid-shift without first allowing them to collect their food and drink.

Ramadan this year will be 16 to 17 hours long, therefore missing the opportunity to have sufficient food and water could have an immense impact on staff welfare.

Covid-19: Guidance For Muslim Personnel In The Police & Broader Emergency Services Regarding Fasting During Ramadhan.

By Rizwan Mustafa (MA, PhD Cand).

Director & Head of Research.

Khal Marina.

Question:

Can you seek a position around Muslim officers or staff working long extended shifts (12 hour days, cancelled rest days) throughout Ramadan. We are facing serious challenges and the situation is unprecedented, so anything that could be clarified in advance around any possible dispensation would make it easier and clearer for staff during these testing times.

Answer:

This response is written with a full understanding and experience of operational policing.¹

For clarity, it is necessary to elaborate in brief on the current context in which this question is framed.

Covid-19 has had a substantial impact on policing resilience. Having spoken with a number of colleagues from one metropolitan service it was highlighted that approximately 1,000



¹ The author has served as an operational police officer for over 10 years. He is also a qualified Islamic cleric trained in the classical understanding of Islam.

operational staff (10%) were at present self-isolating due to Covid-19. As the UK moves deeper in to the peak of the pandemic this number is expected to rise meaning that less operational officers will be available to deal with frontline policing matters. As a result, all remaining Front Line personnel will be required to manage operational demand and keep the general public safe during this time of uncertainty and potential unrest. One of the consequences of doing so (as highlighted in the question) will be long working days for police personnel who are still active, cancellation of rest days (days off) and annual leave entitlement. Furthermore, lunch breaks which historically have been utilised as an opportunity for *suhoor* and *iftar* will also be compromised meaning that operational officers may not be able to close or open their fast within the prescribed times. The implications of inadequate sustenance alongside the disruption to 'normal' sleep patterns that Ramadhan can create is a point of consideration in the wellbeing and safety of police personnel. Alongside this are the emotional and psychological pressures associated with operational policing under such a heightened demand further compounded by the risk to life/infection that frontline personnel expose themselves to every day whilst on duty. Therefore the question being asked must be reconciled against this background. What dispensation(s) is/are available for Muslim officers regarding obligatory fasts during the month of Ramadhan?



IBN RUSHD CENTRE

INDEPENDENT MEDIA MONITORING AND ANALYSIS

Khal Marina 

The decision as to whether an individual wishes to fast during the month of Ramadhan remains his/her privilege despite operational policing pressures. However, given the current circumstances it is fully appreciated that police forces may be unable to provide the reasonable adjustments for Ramadhan that are normally offered; for example, annual leave,

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protected times for *suhoor* and *ifatr* etc. In such circumstances Muslim staff should be aware that shariah affords them the opportunity to postpone their fasts until such a time where they are not physically compromised.² The sanctity of life is the foremost imperative of Islam³ as is the theological mandate to remove difficulties and hardships in the performance of ones' religious duties.⁴

On Monday 23rd March the Prime Minister issued a statement introducing stringent social distancing measures.⁵ Government enacted legislation giving the police powers to close premises, restrict movement & gatherings and impose punitive measures in cases of non-compliance.⁶ Furthermore, Public Health England (PHE) has declared the risk level posed by Covid-19 as HIGH as the Department of Health & Social Care has announced 1,019 Covid-19 related deaths (as of 28.03.2020) and confirmed that 17,089 people have tested positive for the virus.⁷ The accumulation of these realities means that that the risk of infection to Front Line staff is a 'viable concern' as also reflected in the recent cases reported in the media.⁸ It also means that as front line police personnel become effected by the virus and their numbers decrease that demands will increase upon any remaining operational staff who will be under greater pressure to resource emergency calls and safeguard the public.

² Al-Sarakhsi. *Kitab al-Mabsut*. Volume 3, pp 151.

فمن كان منكم مريضاً أو على سفر فعدة من أيام أخر {البقرة ١٨٤} وهذا مريض لأن وجع العين مرض. إلى قوله. كما تؤتي عزائمه

³ Quran (5: 32) فكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا

⁴ Quran (2: 185) يريد الله بكم اليسر ولا يريد بكم العسر

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-address-to-the-nation-on-coronavirus-23-march-2020>

⁶ <https://www.college.police.uk/News/College-news/Pages/Health-Protection-Guidelines.aspx>

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public#number-of-cases>

⁸ <https://metro.co.uk/2020/03/31/top-police-officer-ventilator-icu-coronavirus-symptoms-12488515/>



Therefore given the operational context: the unprecedented demands on Front Line policing coupled with the threat, risk and harm that Covid-19 poses, Shariah provides concessions for individuals to postpone their fasts until a later date if they believe observing them will compromise their health and wellbeing⁹ or that of others to whom they have a statutory safeguarding responsibility. This ruling is based upon the sanctity of life and the provision of ease in religious matters as detailed above. It is also principled upon the recognition in Islamic Law of 'viable concern'¹⁰; that being the risk to health and well-being posed by Covid-19 to Front Line policing personnel.

It should, however, be noted that these dispensations are not the default position. Thus, if within the month of Ramadhan, operational resource capabilities increase/stabilise to a point where the considerations raised above are no longer a concern, Muslim police personnel will be religiously obliged to observe their fasts. In turn there would be an expectation of the police service to accommodate reasonable requests for fasting as they have done historically. Furthermore, if individual officers feel they are able to manage the current policing demands alongside fasting during the month of Ramadhan they retain the privilege to do so. They also have the option to break their fast(s), without penalty,¹¹ should operational pressures impede upon their personal safety and well-being.¹²

⁹ Ibn Abidin. *Rad al Muhtar ala Durri Mukhtar*. Volume 2, pp 126.

أن الحر الخادم أو الذاهب لسد النهر. الى قوله. فله الإفطار

¹⁰ Al-Nasafi. *Al-Bahrul al-Ra'iq*. Volume 2, pp 492.

ثم معرفة ذلك باجتهاد المريض والاجتهاد غير مجرد الوهم بل هو غلبة الظن عن أمانة أو تجربة

¹¹ Individuals will be required to make-up the fast at a later time when they are able to. However, there will not be any penalty associated with breaking the fast in such circumstances.

¹² Al-Nasafi. *Al-Bahrul al-Ra'iq*. Volume 2, pp 492.

لمن خاف زيادة المرض الفطر



Finally, given the current circumstances as outlined above, the broader service cannot be criticised for failing to provide adequate support to its Muslim staff members who choose to fast during this period. In the same vein, Muslim police personnel cannot be compelled not to fast solely based upon operational policing demands. The concession argued within this ruling (fatwa) is principled upon the individual observant. It accounts for the threat, risk and harm posed to the individual and those with whom they engage and have a responsibility for.

This dynamic will vary across policing and force areas therefore this fatwa is not intended as a blanket judgement for all police services across the country. Rather it is a support guide for Muslim staff who are deliberating their position as the month of Ramadhan approaches.

N.B: Front Line personnel are considered as all police officers and police staff who work in:

1. Response Policing.
2. Neighbourhood Policing.
3. Force Support.
4. FCID & Investigation.
5. Custody.
6. Control Room, Contact Centre & Front Office.
7. Forensics.

All personnel who are medically RESTRICTED and unable to perform Front Line duties (in any capacity as defined above) do not fall within the purview of this judgement.



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