

Congregational prayers in the mosques and the risk of spread of COVID-19

Muhammad Hanif Shiwani¹, Imam Sajid Barber²

1. Consultant General Surgeon, Barnsley General Hospital, Honorary Senior Clinical Lecturer, University of Sheffield. UK

2. Aalimiyyah (Islamic Dawah Academy) Imam and Headteacher Masjid Zakaria, Wakefield, UK

BACKGROUND

Congregational prayers, particularly the Friday prayer (Jumu'ah), is a key Islamic obligation and Islamic symbol (1). In accordance with the Shari'a rules, when Muslims gather in the mosques for congregational prayers, five times a day, they set the rows in order, stand shoulder to shoulder, and close the gaps in between two individuals (2).

AIM

The aim of this analytic study is to assess the importance of preventative measures to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 infection in the during congregational prayers.

METHODS

The risk factors of the transmission of COVID-19 were examined in the mosque setting.

Risk assessment of spread of the disease was carried out.

The recent comprehensive deliberations by

- Representatives of Wifaqul Ulama (3)
- Muslim Council of Britain (4)
- Decree (fatawa) from other Islamic jurists (5) on this issue were analysed.



RESULTS

- With physical distancing, the transmission of the COVID-19 reduces to about 3% when people keep a distance of at least one meter from others, compared with 13% when people keep a distance of less than one meter.
- With face masks, the chance of transmission was 3% with a mask compared with 17% without a mask (6).
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, to minimize the risk of transmission of viral infection during congregational prayers, the recommended formation of closeness has been modified and a zig zag formation has been adopted.
- Using such a formation resulting in the vertical distance between two persons are more than one meter and horizontal distance is just under one meter.
- Whilst praying, attendees do not face each other.
- All the attendees perform ablution before they enter the mosques, wear a face mask and use personal prayer mats. Therefore, when they are prostrating in their prayers, they potentially contaminate their own mats which they take with them after finishing prayers.
- The attendees follow a well guided one-way entrance and exit pathways, maintain proper distancing and spend minimum time in the mosque.

To conduct the practice of religious obligation of congregational prayers the Islamic legal maxims allows modifications to follow the lesser of two evils (7), and to take measures to protect oneself and prevent greater harm and overlook the lesser harm (8).

Narrated Abdullah ibn Umar:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: Set the rows in order, stand shoulder to shoulder, close the gaps, be pliant in the hands of your brethren, and do not leave openings for the devil. If anyone joins up a row, Allah will join him up, but if anyone breaks a row, Allah will cut him off.
Abu Dawud said: The name of Abu Shjrah is Kathir b. Murrah.

حَدَّثَنَا عَيْسَى بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْعَاقِبِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ وَهَبٍ، ح وَحَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا اللَّيْثُ، - وَحَدِيثُ ابْنِ وَهَبٍ أَثَمٌ - عَنْ مُعَاوِيَةَ بْنِ صَالِحٍ، عَنْ أَبِي الرَّاهِرِيِّ، عَنْ كَثِيرِ بْنِ مَرْثَةَ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عُمَرَ، - قَالَ قُتَيْبَةُ عَنْ أَبِي الرَّاهِرِيِّ، عَنْ أَبِي شَجْرَةَ، لَمْ يَذْكُرْ ابْنَ عُمَرَ - أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " أَقْبِمُوا الصُّفُوفَ وَحَادُوا بَيْنَ الْمَتَاكِبِ وَسُدُّوا الْحَقْلَ وَلِينُوا بِأَيْدِي إِخْوَانِكُمْ " . لَمْ يَقُلْ عَيْسَى " بِأَيْدِي إِخْوَانِكُمْ " . " وَلَا تَدْرُوا فُرُجَاتِ لِلشَّيْطَانِ وَمَنْ وَصَلَ صَفًّا وَصَلَهُ اللَّهُ وَمَنْ قَطَعَ صَفًّا قَطَعَهُ اللَّهُ " . قَالَ أَبُو دَاوُدَ أَبُو شَجْرَةَ كَثِيرُ بْنُ مَرْثَةَ . قَالَ أَبُو دَاوُدَ وَمَعْنَى " وَلِينُوا بِأَيْدِي إِخْوَانِكُمْ " . إِذَا جَاءَ رَجُلٌ إِلَى الصَّفِّ فَدَهَبَ يَدْخُلُ فِيهِ فَيَنْبَغِي أَنْ يُلَيِّنَ لَهُ كُلَّ رَجُلٍ مِنْكِنِيهِ حَتَّى يَدْخُلَ فِي الصَّفِّ .

Grade : Sahih (Al-Albani)

Reference : Sunan Abi Dawud 666
In-book reference : Book 2, Hadith 276
English translation : Book 2, Hadith 666

حكم : صحيح (الألباني)

Report Error | Share

CONCLUSION

Adherence to the guidelines for congregational prayers in the mosques is important for safety of health and to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 infection.

REFERENCES

1. Al Qur'an, Surah Al-Jumu'ah (62:9).
2. Abu Dawood, Hadith No 666.
3. Wifaqul Ulama and Islamic Council of Europe. Coronavirus briefing for Mosques (v0.9 - 09/09/2020). 2020.
4. Muslim Council of Britain. 9 Steps to Re-Opening Mosques Safely. 2020.
5. Maulana Naieem Mohammad. Pandemic Advice – Adopting Social Distancing Regulations in the Masjid (Fatwa ID: 03946). 2020.
6. Chu DK, Akl EA, Duda S, Solo K, Yaacoub S, Schünemann HJ, et al. Physical distancing, face masks, and eye protection to prevent person-to-person transmission of SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19: a systematic review and meta-analysis. Lancet. 2020 Jun 27;395(10242):1973–87.
7. Qawaaid Ul Fiqhiyya pg.32 #19.
8. Qawaaid Ul Fiqhiyya pg.32 #20.