

**Providing solutions &
guidance**



**Guidance on
aspects of end
of life care for
patients of
Covid-19**



C.A.L.M
(Covid-19 Advice Line for Muslims)
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الحمد لله والصلاة والسلام على رسول الله وعلى آله وصحبه ومن تبعهم بإحسان إلى يوم الدين
ALL PRAISE BELONGS TO ALLĀH AND MAY ALLĀH'S PEACE AND BLESSINGS BE UPON HIS
MESSENGER, HIS FAMILY, COMPANIONS AND FOLLOWERS UNTIL THE LAST DAY

Fatwā and Guidance

The Islamic Council of Europe has previously issued guidance for the preparation of the body for burial and the *Ghusl* (washing) of the body. The Islamic Council of Europe would like to extend this guidance to aspects of end of life care for Muslims who are either in care homes or hospital receiving critical care.

It is clear from the quarantine measure in place at hospitals across the UK that due to the contagious nature of Covid-19 and for the protection of family members of patients as well as staff, hospitals have restricted access to families to their loved ones.

It should be stressed that this is being applied more restrictively in some NHS trusts than others. These restrictions pose a number of obstacles for the normal practices of Muslims at the end of life stage.

Taking into consideration these current limitations, the Islamic Council of Europe would like to issue the following guidance in view of the current restrictions.

The key principle that needs to be considered from the outset in the matter of end of life considerations is the statement of the Prophet (ﷺ):

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ عَنِ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ صَخْرٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ: "مَا تَهَيَّئْتُمْ عَنْهُ فَأَجْتَبُوهُ، وَمَا أَمَرْتُكُمْ بِهِ فَأَتُوا مِنْهُ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ، فَإِنَّمَا أَهْلَكَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ كَثْرَةُ مَسَائِلِهِمْ وَاخْتِلَافُهُمْ عَلَى أَنْبِيَائِهِمْ". رَوَاهُ الْبُخَارِيُّ وَمُسْلِمٌ

On the authority of Abū Hurayrah (may Allāh be pleased with him): "I heard the Messenger of Allāh say, "What I have forbidden for you, avoid. What I have ordered you [to do], do as much of it as you can. For verily, it was only the excessive questioning and their disagreeing with their Prophets that destroyed [the nations] who were before you." [Bukhārī & Muslim]



In any given command from the *Sharī'ah*, striving our utmost to fulfil the command to the best of our ability is required. This is extended to the guidance that we are issuing here.

There are a number of critical directives from the *Sharī'ah* at the end of life stage that Muslims adhere to.

1. Testimony of Faith

The first and most important of these is the exhortation of the dying person to say “*Lā ilāha illa Allāh*”.

عن أبي سعيد الخدري رضي الله عنه قال : قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ : لَعْنُوا مَوْتَاكُمْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

It was narrated that Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī (may *Allāh* be pleased with him) said: “*The Messenger of Allāh said: ‘Exhort your dying ones to say Lā ilāha illa Allāh.’*” [Narrated by Muslim]

This exhorting or encouraging for the dying person or one who is expected imminently to die is in the hope that those words will be the last uttered by him in this world.

سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ : مَنْ كَانَ آخِرُ كَلَامِهِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَجَبَتْ لَهُ الْجَنَّةُ

It was narrated that Mu‘ādh ibn Jabal (may *Allāh* be pleased with him) said: “*I heard the Messenger of Allāh say: ‘If a person’s last words are Lā ilāha illa Allāh, Paradise will be guaranteed for him.’*” [Narrated by Aḥmad, 21529]

It is for the aforementioned narrations that the Islamic Council of Europe directs families to do the utmost within their power to fulfil the guidance presented in the *Ḥadīth*.

It is our assertion that this can be achieved in these circumstances over the telephone or via a pre-recorded message on a device that can be played by healthcare professionals at the stage where they believe that death is imminent. This applies to all cases where family members cannot be there themselves in person which we add, is still permitted at the discretion of some trusts.

It is disliked to exhort the dying person in a repeated and continuous way that may cause distress or cause hardship. If the dying person utters “*lā illāha illa Allāh*” they should not be asked to say anything thereafter.

We encourage all families with loved ones admitted to critical care that they firstly see what chaplaincy provisions exists at the hospital for Muslims. We further encourage families from the point of admission to discuss these matters with the care team lead delivering care for their loved ones. We ask families to voice record the following statements or alternative statements that fulfil the exhortation of the dying person to say the testimony of faith by saying: “Say ‘*Lā illāha illa Allāh*’”. They may also add “*Muḥammadur Rasūl-Allāh*”. If the person cannot pronounce these Arabic words, then he/she can utter the translation of them: “*There is no God but Allāh and Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh*” in English or any language familiar to them.

Families may also wish to play recordings of the *Qur’ān* to their dying loved ones, especially in cases where sedation means that patients are unconscious and unable to pronounce the testimony at this time.

We remind our brothers and sisters, that *Allāh* (*‘azza wa jalla*) has taken it upon Himself to give strength and keep firm those who believe with the words that stand firm in this world and in the Hereafter. *Allāh* (*‘azza wa jalla*) says:

يُثَبِّتُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِالْقَوْلِ الثَّابِتِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ وَيُضِلُّ اللَّهُ الظَّالِمِينَ وَيَفْعَلُ اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ

Allāh will keep firm those who believe with the words that stand firm in this world and in the Hereafter. And Allāh will cause to go astray those who are wrongdoers and Allāh does what he wills [Sūrah Ibrāhīm 14:27]

Families who are unable to be present at the death of their loved ones and those who were not able to exhort them with the saying of “*lā ilāha illa-Allāh*” to their loved ones should draw comfort in the firm conviction that *Allāh* (*‘azza wa jalla*) will not let the belief and deeds of their loved ones go to waste. *Allāh* (*‘azza wa jalla*) is gentler on their loved one than themselves.

2. *Qiblah* Direction

If possible, the dying person is to be positioned on his right side and his face towards the *Qiblah* (which is South-East from the UK). If he cannot be placed on his side, then he/she can be put on his/her back with feet closer to the *Qiblah*.



3. Closing the eyes

If *Allāh* (*‘azza wa jalla*) has decreed upon your loved one death, then you may wish to instruct the healthcare professionals to close the eyes of the deceased as Abū Bakr (may *Allāh* be pleased with him) did so with our beloved Messenger (ﷺ).

4. Preparing the body after death

They may also be asked to remove jewellery and gently straighten the limbs (if not already done so) and cover the body in preparation for washing, shrouding and burial.

Most NHS trusts have guidance already in dealing with Muslims patients at end of life stage and understand the sensitivities of these acts. We expect that healthcare professionals are more than willing but require the direction of families to undertake these acts. Existing guidelines for end of life care mention many of these acts but specify that they are to be left to be done by the family. These have not been updated to take into consideration the limitations arising from the Coronavirus Pandemic.

The Islamic Council of Europe recommends that Muslim chaplains and those who are responsible for end of care guidelines update them in line with the recommendations outlined in this guidance document to reflect the challenge posed by the Coronavirus Pandemic and to ensure Muslims are able to provide these religious rites leading up to death for their loved ones. For Muslims, knowing that they have done the most within their power for their loved ones is an important part of the mourning process.

We ask *Allāh* (*‘azza wa jalla*) to give us all life so long as life is better for us and that if He decides upon us death that he takes us upon firm belief and with our last words being “*Lā illāha illa Allāh*”

MAY ALLĀH’S PEACE AND BLESSINGS BE UPON THE MESSENGER OF ALLĀH AND ALL PRAISE
BELONGS TO ALLĀH

وصلى الله وسلم على نبينا محمد، والحمد لله رب العالمين

Allāh (*‘azza wa jalla*) knows best.

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