

Joint Statement from the National Muslim Task Force on Covid-19 and the National Black Muslim Covid Coalition on the COVID-19 Surge

October 29, 2020

Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic continues on throughout our country and around the world. Many places are seeing a second wave, as cases increase. In the United States we continue to break records for the largest number of daily COVID-19 cases. In accordance with recommendations from public health and religious authorities, the National Muslim COVID-19 Task Force and National Black Muslim Covid Coalition implore Muslim American communities to follow the recommended public health guidelines as it accords with the duty to preserve life. We thus strongly recommend:

1. **Households, community organizations, and individuals follow local and national public health and state authority guidance.** Specifically they should continue the practice of physical and social distancing, wearing face masks, and adhere to restrictions on public gatherings.
2. **Mosques and Islamic centers similarly adhere to local regulations about public gatherings.** Prayers can be performed safely in the masjid if guidelines are followed. Families and individuals may continue to perform prayers in their own residences, in case of official and/or medical restrictions or hardship.
3. **Obtaining the influenza (“flu”) vaccine.** Given COVID-19 mainly affects the respiratory system, it is concerning that influenza can lead to a very severe illness.
4. **Individuals and corporations volunteer and donate** to organizations that are working on the front-lines to support those impacted, directly or indirectly, by the pandemic both within the United States and abroad.
5. **Engaging in routine wellness and mental health care.** The continued stresses of the pandemic are significantly impacting individuals’ overall well-being, psychological and mental health. To combat these stressors make regular use of adhkar and dua, reach out to family members and colleagues to maintain fulfilling connections,
6. **Exercise your right to vote.** Voting and fulfilling civic duties is extremely important.

Recommendations

1. Households, community organizations, and individuals should continue to follow public health and state authority guidelines guidance. Specifically they should continue to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by practicing social distancing and adhering to restrictions on public gatherings.

This means that if shelter-in-place and stay-at-home orders return, as well as the shuttering of non-essential businesses and restrictions on public gatherings for social, religious, or civic events, these must be adhered to. The Assembly of Muslim Jurists of America (AMJA) explicitly states that *“its legal stance hinges on the government mandates and the guidance of the relevant public health agencies...AMJA requires Muslims to follow the updates of the CDC and comply with its instructions.”* Similarly, the Fiqh Council of North America emphasizes *“that masajids and Islamic centers shall strictly follow the health and state official guidelines for social gatherings and distancing.”*

2. Mosques and Islamic centers should adhere to local regulations about public gatherings.

Community and religious leaders should continue to work on creating safe spaces for those who come to the mosque during this pandemic period by following local public health guidelines. Friday (Jumua) prayers are significant culturally, socially, and religiously. Yet they are obligated upon certain portions of

the community, and even then, there are many precedents and rationale for exempting individuals. Moreover, this communal rite can be fulfilled by minimal gatherings (as small as three, four, or five people) and with minimal sermonizing (*hamd, salawat, tilawat* and *dua*). At the same time, when a state authority temporarily prohibits such gatherings due to concerns of harm, mosques should comply and suspend the public service of jumuah. When it is infeasible to establish Jumuah in such a way as it adheres to recommendations of such authorities, the obligation is lifted. Jumuah is then replaced by the obligation to pray Dhuhr. Please refer to our prior Task Force and Coalition statements.

3. Consider taking the influenza (“flu”) vaccine.* Flu will still be a problem during the winter and the risk of infection with COVID-19 can lead to a very severe illness. Although COVID-19 is causing many problems, other health conditions still exist. As winter approaches, flu season is starting as well. You can be infected with COVID-19 **and** the flu at the same time. As such the flu vaccine takes on greater importance. Getting your flu shot/vaccine can help to prevent the flu which will help to keep lung function stronger. Even with the hope of a vaccine at the end of this year, a COVID-19 vaccine will not be available to everyone all at once. We strongly recommend continuing to follow public health guidelines during this time: wearing a mask, social distancing, washing your hands. *Please consult with your doctor if you can’t take the flu vaccine and if you are concerned the vaccine is not halal. The following formulations which are free of porcine gelatin or other najis (ritually impure) substances: Fluvad™ Trivalent, Fluvad™ Quadrivalent, Fluzone High-Dose™, Afluria™, Fluarix™, FluLaval™, and Fluzone™ Quadrivalent.

4. Individuals and corporations should volunteer and donate to organizations that are working on the front-lines to support those impacted, directly or indirectly, by the pandemic both within the United States and abroad. With current politics around a stimulus bill that has led to more economic hardships for our communities, especially those most vulnerable, we are seeing our neighbors struggle. We applaud our communities that remain strong and care for their neighbors.

5. Engaging in routine wellness and mental health care. Self-care and mental health awareness are essential.

In difficult times such as these, it is natural to experience feelings of distress, anxiety, and loneliness due to social isolation. As the weather turns colder in some parts of the country, as others are affected by natural disasters made worse by climate change, and as other communities try to cope with the economic and social losses associated with COVID-19, mental health care and illness are critical issues to address. Coping with and addressing these feelings while getting appropriate mental health support can aid in you and your loved ones recovery. The Family and Youth Institute’s [Coronavirus toolkit](#), the [American Muslim Wellness Foundation’s toolkit](#), and the Khalil Center’s [informational mental health videos](#) can be used to help address anticipated issues: how parents talk to their children about the anxiety, pre-existing conditions, tips and tricks for working/studying from home and avoiding conflict, and activities to strengthen relationships during social distancing. If you are looking for a peer-to-peer experience to talk with others who have had similar mental health struggles, you can visit [nami.org](#) which offers an educational program for individuals with mental health conditions.

6. Exercise your right to vote. Voting and fulfilling civic duties is extremely important. From the City of Chicago:

“You don’t have to choose between your health and voting. As a voter, you can minimize the risk of COVID-

19 transmission at polling locations by using personal prevention practices. This includes wearing a mask and maintaining at least six feet of distance from people who don't live with you. You can also:

- If possible, apply online to Vote By Mail – and then skip the line and turn in your signed Ballot Return Envelope at any drop box at any Early Voting site in the city.
- Check voting locations and requirements before going to vote because these may have changed due to COVID-19.
- Use in-person early voting, if available.
- Vote at off-peak times, such as mid-morning.
- If driving to the polls and your schedule allows, monitor the voter line from your car and join it when it is shorter.
- Bring an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol to use before and after voting.
- Check your local county elections website.
- Ask poll workers what options they offer for casting your ballot if you have symptoms of COVID-19.

For more information, see the [Considerations for Elections Polling Locations and Voters](#) and these [Tips for Voters](#) from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to help stay safe during the pandemic.”

We pray that Allah (swt) protects everyone and grants success over this pandemic.

For more information, visit <https://amhp.us/national-muslim-task-force> or <https://www.blackmuslimcoalition.com>.

For additional community resources, visit <http://www.imana.org/covid-19> or email covid@amhp.us

Respectfully,

National Black Muslim Covid Coalition
National Muslim Taskforce on Covid-19 Taskforce

Organizations:

American Muslim Health Professionals (AMHP)
Islamic Medical Association of North America (IMANA)
Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)