

ICRC REGIONAL DELEGATION TO INDONESIA AND TIMOR-LESTE

GUIDELINES ON MANAGEMENT OF THE DEAD WITH COVID-19 FOR CATHOLICS

DEAR BISHOPS, PRIESTS, NUNS, BROTHERS, AND CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS,

The Regional Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to Indonesia and Timor-Leste in Jakarta has provided support to the Government of Indonesia along with both governmental and non-governmental agencies in efforts to manage COVID-19.

On this occasion, the ICRC wants to extend its gratitude and appreciation to religious leaders, traditional leaders and community leaders who have actively participated in delivering important messages related to COVID-19, including management of the dead, whether in positive confirmed cases, people under monitoring, and patients under supervision.

To clarify some of the key messages that have been circulated, below is the summary of information related to management of the dead for victims of COVID-19 compiled by the ICRC based on references from authorities, international agencies, the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Directorate General of Catholic Community Guidance and recommendations from the ICRC's forensics experts. This message needs to be disseminated in order to uphold human dignity, both for the living and for the dead.

MANAGEMENT OF THE DEAD

- In funeral rites during the COVID-19 pandemic all dead bodies must be treated as COVID-19 positive and considered to be contagious. Therefore the handling of the body should follow government regulations and medical protocol.
- The body should only be treated by trained health personnel or those who are authorized to use standard personal protective equipment.
- All components of the protective suits should be kept in a place separated from ordinary clothes.
- All cavities in the body such as ear holes, nose, the mouth and others should be covered in cotton to avoid the discharge of liquid.
- The body must be kept in appropriate clothes then wrapped in a double layer impermeable body bag and put into a sealed coffin. The family is not allowed to attend during this process nor to touch the body.
- Once sealed, the coffin must be sprayed with disinfectant before being taken to the burial site.
- The coffin should not be re-opened once the body has been placed inside except for vital procedures such as an autopsy. Reopening the coffin can be done only by authorized personnel.
- Bodies that have been put in a coffin or casket are not allowed to be laid to rest in a funeral home and should be directly transported to the burial site.
- While waiting at the hospital, the family member or church officers who accompany the bereaved family must always wear an appropriate face mask and follow hospital protocols.



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COVID-19 is transmitted through direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person (generated through coughing and sneezing), and touching surfaces contaminated with the virus. There is also a possibility of transmission through feces. Since this is a new virus where the source and how it develops is not yet entirely clear, the risk of transmission from the body can be caused by the fluid coming out of the body. This is the reason why it is paramount for personnel who handle dead bodies to protect themselves by wearing adequate personal protective equipment.



(WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION / WHO)

PRAYER AND BURIAL

- Burial shall be done in the sites designated by the government.
- The transport of the body to the grave must follow the procedures regulated by the government. Church officers in charge of the funeral rituals must follow these procedures.
- Funeral rituals organised by officers of the church according to the regular funeral liturgy must include only a limited number of family members as representatives in accordance with instructions from health personnel.
- During the funeral, both church officers and family representatives must follow health protocols on sanitation, safety distance and other measures that are mandated in order to prevent COVID-19 infection.
- The body must be buried at least 1.5 meters deep.
- The burial site must be at least within 50 meters from water sources and 500 meters from residential complexes.
- The funeral should be conducted within 4 hours from the time of death.
- If you are healthy and allowed to go out of the house it is safe for you to visit the grave of your beloved family without protective equipment.

AFTER THE BURIAL

- Wash hands with running water and soap.
- Once you get home, all clothing, footwear and items that are attached to your body or clothing (such as eyeglasses, rings, watches) must be immediately disinfected or cleaned with disinfectant. Immediately take a shower before resting, touching objects in the home or meeting with other family members.
- Immediately get a test for the patient's next of kin (husband, wife, children) to ensure they are not exposed to COVID-19.

These are the key points related to the handling of the COVID-19 bodies that we can share.

DISCLAIMER:

We will update this information whenever there are new findings related to COVID-19.

Should you have any questions regarding the above information, please contact the ICRC Team at 021 7396756



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