

ICRC REGIONAL DELEGATION TO INDONESIA AND TIMOR-LESTE

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

TO CHRISTIAN MINISTERS, CONGREGATION, 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 the Association of Churches of Indonesia (PGI) 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 OR CREMATION

- The burial shall be done in sites designated by the government.
- If there is an opportunity to perform a funeral service, it should be done briefly in a special room away from the body handling room.
- Forms of ecclesiastical service at the funeral or cremation should be adapted to government and hospital protocols to ensure there is no risk of infection.
- Funerals or cremations should be attended by a limited number of mourners (next of kin and clergy accompanied by an elder).
- During the funeral or cremation process, provisions regarding the coffin and the number of people attending are determined by the medical team.
- If regular (physical) service is prohibited, a remote service or online service/by streaming can be done.
- The body must be buried at least 1.5 meters deep.
- The burial site must be at least 50 meters away from water sources and 500 meters away from housing/residential areas.
- The funeral should be conducted within 4 hours of the time of death.
- Everyone involved in the funeral should be in good health and not belong to vulnerable groups at higher risk of COVID-19. Everyone involved must pass a body temperature scanning protocol.

AFTER THE BURIAL OR CREMATION

- 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.
- Church ministers/congregation should follow up by providing special pastoral care for bereaved family members.

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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