



Islamic Teachings and WHO Guidelines for COVID-19 Pandemic: Do the Conflicts Exist?

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Islamic teachings and WHO guidelines for COVID-19 pandemic: Do the conflicts exist?

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Abstract:

The coronavirus (COVID-2019) has been declared as a global pandemic by world health organization (WHO) on March 8, 2020. Globally, there are more than 199 countries and territories confronting the COVID-19 and almost all the Islamic countries are in the list of infected countries. Islam is the second largest religion in the world with 1.8 billion (24.1% of total population 7.3 billion) Muslims living in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries. The mainstay in prevention of COVID-19 pandemic is adoption of precautionary measures and guidelines issued by WHO. After the super spreader event in the city of Qom, Iran, a general perception established that religions including Islam accelerated the spread of coronavirus. So, it is being imagined that Islamic teachings are against in the adoption of preventive measures. In this short brief, it has been clarified that Islamic teachings are not in contravene with the WHO guidelines regarding COVID-2019. The myths and misinformation about Islamic teachings are being nullified as the acts of Prophet of Islam and his companions are very much in support of today's experts and health organizations issued guidelines and instructions.

Key Words: Religion, Islam, Covid-19, WHO

The coronavirus (COVID-2019) has been declared as a global pandemic by world health organization (WHO) on March 8, 2020. As of April 06, 2020, there are 199 countries and territories confronting the COVID-19 and the number of confirmed cases has reached to 1,136,862 while 63,025 casualties have been ratified ("Coronavirus Cases" 2020a). Islamic world, without any exception, is also encountering this pandemic and almost all the Islamic countries are in the list of infected countries. Islam is the second largest religion in the world with 1.8 billion (24.1% of total population 7.3 billion) Muslims living in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries (World's largest religion by population is still Christianity | Pew Research Center.). Amidst of Muslim world,

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Islamic Republic of Iran emerged as an epicenter of COVID-19 outbreak and it comes at seventh number in the world with 58,226 cases after France (67,757 cases), China (82,930 cases), Germany (91,714 cases), Italy (124,632 cases), Spain (124,736 cases), USA (273,808 cases) (“Coronavirus Cases” 2020a). Besides Iran, the other Islamic countries with highest number of cases are Turkey (23,934) followed by Malaysia (3,483), Pakistan (3,059), Saudi Arabia (2,385), Indonesia (2,273) and Qatar (1,325) (“Coronavirus Cases” 2020a). Apart of these numbers, a large population of Muslims is also living in non-Muslim countries as 1.6 Million Muslim (• Italy: resident Muslims by country of origin 2019 | Statista.) are in Italy which is an epicenter in Europe with highest number of COVID-19 associated deaths (15,362) in the world (“Coronavirus Cases” 2020b). The mainstay in prevention of COVID-19 pandemic is adoption of precautionary measures. WHO issued guidelines and precautionary measures that states washing hands in a thorough way, covering of nose and mouth with face masks, and more importantly social distancing are the helpful precautions to avoid the dissemination and transmission of this pandemic (Strategic preparedness and response plan for the novel coronavirus). Due to severity of disease and seriousness of the situation at the global level, health organizations and centers are asserting on the adoption of robust preventive measures to the public and authorities as well. Religion has great influence in tuning of mindset of people and shaping of their beliefs, hence in making of perception and demonstration of an attitude towards any situation, and phenomenon. Each religion has some kind of guiding principles for its followers to tackle the confronted issue and problem. Islam, being a religion, also provides unique teachings to its followers i.e. Muslims for living their lives. It is important to know that what kind of teachings Islam provides to tackle any pandemic. Moreover, it is also necessary to clarify that wither Islamic teachings are in conflict or in support of adoption of preventive measures during the spread of pandemics as the case of COVID-2019 (Delener 1994; Lapin 2014). After the super spreader event in the city of Qom, Iran (Sadrzadeh 2020), a general perception established that religions including Islam accelerated the spread of coronavirus. So, it is being imagined that Islamic teachings are against in the adoption of preventive measures. The reality is other way around. Islamic teachings are in support of the measures and precautions announced by WHO and other organizations. In addition to this, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself adopted robust measures when there was a spread of pandemic in his times. Self-distancing or self-quarantine is the most suggested and recommended measure by the experts to the public to stop and reduce the spread of COVID-19. The plague is one of the epidemic diseases occurred in

the period of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and hundreds of people were due to that disease. To stop the transmission of plague, the prophet instructed to its followers to stay away from the infected area and keep stayed at their homes. He clearly said that “whoever hears that there is an outbreak of plague in some land, he should not go to that land, and if the plague breaks out in the land where one is already present, one should not run away from that land, escaping from the plague”. The companions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) were also used to adopt precautions whenever they had faced such issues in their times. For example, Umar bin Al-Khattab left for Sham, and when he reached a placed called Sargh, he came to know that there was an outbreak of an epidemic (of plague) in Sham. Then `Abdur Rahman bin `Auf told him that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said, "If you hear the news of an outbreak of an epidemic (plague) in a certain place, do not enter that place: and if the epidemic falls in a place while you are present in it, do not leave that place to escape from the epidemic." So `Umar returned from Sargh (Sahih al-Bukhari 6973) (Khan 2009). It is clearly mentioned in the WHO guidelines one should keep away from the infected person of COVID-2019 (self-isolation). The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also asked the people to not accompany with the leper (who suffered in leprosy) as he said: “one should run away from the leper as one runs away from a lion” (Sahih al-Bukhari 5707) (Khan 2009). He strictly disallowed to sit with the infected person so that it may not transmit to others. In another tradition he says: “The ill should not be taken to the healthy” (Sahih Muslim 2221) (Siddiqui.). It is also stated in the WHO guidelines that one should wash his or her hands with the soap for 20 seconds and also not touch unwashed hands to even his or her own eyes and nose. The Islamic teachings regarding cleanliness, ablution and bath are very clear. For every Muslim, it is compulsory to make ablution for five times prayer in a day and also clean himself for any kind of dirt in regular days. The Prophet also emphasized on cleanliness by saying “Cleanliness is half of faith” (Sahih Muslim 223) and he also said God loves cleanliness (Muslim 2799). It is also recommended to the public by experts to cover the nose with tissue paper or any other covering while sneezing. The Prophet used to do this whenever he sneezed as one of his companion reports “when the Prophet (PBUH) would sneeze, he would cover his face with his hand or with his garment, and muffle the sound with it” (al-Tirmidhi 2745) (Khaliyl 2007). Muslim clerics and Muslim organization around the globe have also played their pivotal role in departing the information on the adoption of precautionary measures among masses. The famous global Muslim clerics deliberately convinced their million followers by addressing through social media and YouTube on taking preventive

measures and act upon the guidelines and instructions of WHO and also their local authorities. They are of the view that by doing so, Muslim will actually follow the Islamic teachings.

In a nutshell, it has been clarified that Islamic teachings are not in contravene with the WHO guidelines regarding COVID-2019. The myths and misinformation about Islamic teachings are being nullified as the acts of Prophet of Islam and his companions are very much in support of today's experts and health organizations issued guidelines and instructions.

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Research involving human participants and/or animals

Not Applicable

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Not Applicable

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