

# THE ISLAMIC ADVISORY GROUP

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## IAG partnership, WHO fully engaged in addressing COVID-19 pandemic



Dr Al-Tayyeb (right) confirmed to Dr Al-Mandhari support for the COVID-19 response

The Islamic Advisory Group (IAG) has been fully engaged in global efforts to curb the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic by leveraging its partner organizations and eminent scholars on raising public awareness about personal hygiene, physical distancing and other best practices.

The virus has inflicted more than 4.4 million people around the world, claiming the lives of nearly 300 000 individuals and leaving many fighting for their lives.

The lockdowns, curfews and other forms of movement restrictions to curb the spread of the virus have wreaked havoc on different aspects of life, where complete sectors and businesses have been paralyzed and millions of jobs lost.

Out of its moral obligation towards the Muslim *ummah* and humanity at large, the IAG, which has a long history in supporting health issues, sprang into action leveraging its partner organizations and engaging eminent scholars on best practices to prevent spread of the virus and mitigate its social and economic repercussions.

The IAG has been in close consultation with relevant international organizations, such as UNICEF, and the World Health Organization (WHO), which is leading the global response to COVID-19.

In this respect, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Dr Ahmed Al-Tayyeb, the co-chair of the IAG, held a virtual consultation with WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, who is leading WHO's engagement with religious organizations and scholars in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr Al-Mandhari has sought the support of Al-Azhar in promoting awareness about COVID-19 and health recommendations to curb its spread, including physical distancing, handwashing and limiting mass gatherings.

Dr Al-Tayyeb has reaffirmed his personal commitment and that of Al-Azhar to supporting all protective and precautionary health measures against COVID-19, asserting that they are compliant with Islamic *shariah*.

Al-Azhar has issued comprehensive guidance addressing the different aspects of COVID-19 from a religious perspective.

Similar consultations are being planned between the WHO and other IAG partner organizations: the International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA), the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB).

Dr Al-Mandhari and other WHO colleagues have also held virtual consultations with eminent scholars of the national Islamic advisory groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Scholars have reiterated their commitment to raising awareness about COVID-19 and advising Muslim communities to practise personal hygiene, including regular handwashing, as ordered by Islam.

### About the IAG

The Islamic Advisory Group (IAG) was launched in 2013 after consultations between Al Azhar Al Sharif, the International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA), the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) who make up the core membership of the group along with other religious scholars, technical experts and academics. It aims to align correct religious teachings with technical information on priority health issues and communicate that to concerned communities by leveraging local religious scholars.

### IAG secretariat

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## IIFA organizes COVID-19 webinar, issues key recommendations



Sheikh Dr Bin Humaid said IIFA addresses the COVID-19 pandemic from religious and health perspectives

The International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA) has organized a webinar on the health and religious aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sheikh Dr Saleh Bin Abdullah Bin Humaid, IIFA President and Royal Diwan Advisor, confirmed the IIFA's role in dealing with health emergencies, including the COVID-19 pandemic, from an Islamic perspective based on available technical information.

Dr Yousef Al-Othaimeen, Secretary General of the OIC, said the objective was to reach consensus among medical and

*shariah* scholars for a synchronized position to support decision-makers in Member States.

The discussions involved members of the IIFA Council, prominent medical experts and religious scholars.

An eight-member drafting committee chaired by IIFA Secretary General Dr Abdul Salam Al Abadi finalized a series of key recommendations based on the discussions and submitted researches.

*Shariah* obliges Muslims to protect themselves from disease and seek treatment when infected.

Cleanliness is a part of Islam and the use of disinfectants containing alcohol is permissible.

Mosque closure for congregational prayers, Jumaa, Taraweeh and Eid prayers are permissible to avoid mass gatherings. It also includes suspending umrah and hajj.

Health and security workers can, during this pandemic, combine prayers in the same way as is permitted for travelers.

Ramadan fasting does not make individuals more susceptible to

## Polio update

So far, 60 wild polio cases type 1 have been reported in 2020:

- 12 in Afghanistan
- 48 in Pakistan

COVID-19, but health workers who may be weakened or feel preoccupied can abstain from fasting and make up for those days later.

The burial of those who have died as a result of COVID-19 should be done by specialists using protective gear and funeral prayers can be performed anywhere.

Doctors can prioritize which patients are put on a ventilator and who is removed from ventilation.

Marriage contracts can be done through telecommunications, as long as religious requirements are met.

## NIAG scholars, medical experts lead COVID-19 response

The IAG national groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan have been mobilized at different levels to help deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

They are holding advocacy meetings with religious leaders, imams and community elders to support the COVID-19 response and address stigma against patients.

They continue to advise community on best health practices, including personal hygiene, and avoiding

mass gatherings to curb the spread of the virus.

NIAG scholars recorded video messages on handwashing, physical distancing and other *shariah*-compliant precautionary measures and disseminated them through social media platforms.

NIAG members have conducted several TV and radio interviews to raise awareness about the COVID-19 response from an Islamic point of view.

In Pakistan, NIAG

members and two of the biggest *madrassas* in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province – Jamia Darul Uloom Usmania Peshawar and Jamia Darul Uloom Haqqania Akora Khattak – have offered their buildings as quarantine facilities.

Alkhidmat Foundation has offered its fleet of ambulances, hospitals and medical teams to help in the COVID-19 response.

Many scholars are members of committees formed at district levels to ensure implementation of

the government's precautionary measures on congregational prayers in mosques during the holy month of Ramadan.

In Afghanistan, the NIAG assisted with the translation of the WHO guideline on handling dead bodies and disseminated among religious scholars and mosque imams.

It is also coordinating consultation between the relevant ministries and Shura Council of Ulama.