

The beginning of the holy month of Ramadan for Muslims in Kyrgyzstan will be held in the state of emergency and self-isolation. In this regard, the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims (SAM) has amended the rules for its observance.

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In particular, believers will read the night prayer at home with their families, and it is recommended that no one be invited to iftar - when breaking the fast. The Mufti of Kyrgyzstan recorded a special appeal, where he urged Muslims to comply with quarantine rules during Ramadan.

The coronavirus pandemic had also made adjustments to the Easter celebration, which this year fell on April 19th. As they said in the Diocese, for the first time the festive service was held online.

In the Host Resurrection Cathedral of Bishkek, a service (sacred worship) was held with the participation of five people, which was broadcast on social networks and on television.

“People connected to the live broadcasting, stood and prayed at the same time, listened to the words of worship. Such a phenomenon occurs for the first time, churches have never been closed, and therefore, the celebration of Easter in the new regime was held for the first time,” says Archpriest **Alexei Syromyatnikov**, assistant secretary of the Bishkek Diocese for public affairs .



Photo taken from the official page of the Bishkek and Kyrgyz diocese on Instagram

Churches and cathedrals of the Russian Orthodox Church of Kyrgyzstan suspended their activity on March 24 from the date when state of emergency was introduced in certain territories of the country.

As Archpriest Alexei Syromyatnikov, assistant secretary of the Bishkek Diocese for public affairs, said, services are not held in churches and cathedrals, they are closed to parishioners.

“In places where there is no state of emergency, services are held by priests who live in parishes, but the churches themselves are closed to parishioners,” Syromyatnikov said.

“The health of people is the most important thing”



Alexey Syromyatnikov. Photo: CABAR.asia

A 55-year-old Bishkek resident **Rahman** visited a mosque in his free time. He said that in the last weeks before the introduction of the state of emergency, during the sermons, the imams raised the topic of coronavirus and urged believers to observe personal hygiene.

One day during a sermon after Friday prayers, he learned that the mosque was being quarantined, and all services were being terminated due to the threat of an outbreak of coronavirus. On March 17, Friday, prayers, and other events in mosques were stopped in the country.

“I stopped attending the mosque as soon as the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims announced the cessation of their activities. I think that the closure of mosques and other religious institutions is the right decision because the health of the people is the most important thing,” says Rahman.

The Spiritual Administration of Muslims itself is now working in remote mode. According to the press secretary of the muftiyat **Maksat Atabaev**, all meetings are held online.

“Together with the local authorities, we continue to conduct awareness-raising events, disseminate information through social networks. Mosques have been closed, starting from March 17 and since then, employees have been working from home, and will do so until the epidemiological situation stabilizes” Atabaev said.

According to him, since the entry into force of the order to terminate the activities of mosques, violations by religious leaders have not been recorded. What cannot be said about the parishioners.



Illustrative photo. Photo: CABAR.asia

Quarantine violators

Even despite the closure of religious institutions, on March 23 the SAM almost all mosques in the country came to Friday prayers.

“The imams explained the situation to people and carried out awareness-raising events. We ask believers to refrain from visiting crowded places, stay at home and observe personal hygiene rules,” the muftiyat noted (quoted at 24.kg).

The mass media also reported that the imam of one of the mosques in Bishkek, despite the state of emergency, gathered people for Arabic language courses.

In early April, it became known that two residents of the Naryn region went to *daavat* (preaching Islam - *ed.*) in Osh and Batken regions in the second half of March. Both were placed on observation upon return, and later coronavirus infection was confirmed.

Two more residents of the same region returned on March 15 after a four-month of *daavat*. For some time, they were under observation under the supervision of doctors, and after they were released into home quarantine. However, they violated isolation conditions

and visited the mosque.

Solitary instances

According to the State Commission for Religious Affairs, as of April 14, 3348 religious institutions were registered in Kyrgyzstan. According to the deputy head of the department **Zakir Chotaev**, work with them began back in March, when the world situation with the spread of coronavirus began to worsen. The State Commission sent recommendations that religious institutions should reduce the number of people involved in worship or other activities.



Zakir Chotaev. Photo: CABAR.asia

“A few days before the introduction of the state of emergency, we agreed that religious institutions would begin to close, suspend their activities, and reduce the number of participants in worship to a minimum,” said Chotaev.

With the intensification of measures by the authorities, the State Commission for Religious Affairs continued to suspend the activities of religious organizations. According to Chotaev, all institutions located on the territory of cities and regions where the state of emergency was introduced were closed.

“Since the introduction of the state of emergency, we have reported and explained to religious organizations that it is necessary to suspend activities as part of the introduction of such a regime. Religious organizations issued relevant orders to suspend activities,” said Chotaev.

According to him, after the introduction of restrictions on the work of religious institutions, there were those who opposed such a decision. So, for example, a religious figure in Osh Oblast opposed the closure of the institution and was removed from his position for this action.

“He opposed the requirements that were fulfilled as part of the imposition of a state of emergency. We monitored this situation, but this is an isolated case of non-compliance with the rules of the regime. If such actions on the part of religious leaders occur, then we take measures. However, the question is more about citizens who ignore the rules of the state of

emergency,” said Chotaev.

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