

On April 24, an expert meeting was held in Dushanbe with the representatives of the main religious faiths, where was discussed their readiness to work under the threat of the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, COVID-19 in Tajikistan.

The meeting was attended by a representative of the Committee of Religion, Regulation of Traditions, Celebration and Ceremonies under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and leaders of the three largest religious faiths represented in the country.

Participants of the meeting noted that, despite of the official confirmation (at that time) of coronavirus infections in Tajikistan, however, all religious institutions across the country take the necessary precautions to prevent the spread of this dangerous disease that has affected the planet.

The representatives of the religious faiths, Afzalsho Sharifzoda, chief imam-khatib of the suburban to the capital Hissar district, representative of the Russian Orthodox Church in Tajikistan, hieromonk Vasily Telekhov, Pedro Rodriguez, head of the mission of the Catholic Church in Dushanbe, as well as a specialist of the Committee of Religion, Regulation of Ceremonies and Rituals, Muidinjon Tukhtahojaev, talked about the measures taken within their authority to protect parishioners.

Afzalsho Sharifzoda, chief imam-khatib of the Hissar district, informed that at the moment all mosques in the district are closed and all parishioners are recommended to pray at home.

Sharifzoda stated that even before the closure, in all mosques, necessary sanitary and hygienic procedures recommended by the sanitary and epidemiological services, were carried out.

“In addition to disinfection and treatment of the territory with antiseptics, all the spiritual mentors actively conducted awareness-raising sessions with parishioners, explaining to them the danger of the new virus, its rapid spread, the danger of people gathering in crowds and preventive measures. If at the beginning many people did not pay attention to the information that was disseminated in the media, now the population takes their health very seriously,” said imam-khatib.

At the present, almost all the imam-khatibs of the mosques in the district have smartphones with applications, and there are groups in social networks where imams conduct sermons and conversations with parishioners, remarked Sharifzoda.

“We are consulting our parishioners in social networks such as Viber, WhatsApp and IMO. If necessary, we will try to switch our work to an online mode,” he said.

Hieromonk, Vasily Telekhov, also informed about the measures to reduce the threat of the spread of coronavirus among the parishioners of the Russian Orthodox Church. He said that despite the fact that there is no quarantine in Tajikistan, they have followed all the recommendations for reducing the risk of infection since the very beginning of the pandemic, and they have also recommended to their parishioners, especially the elderly, not to attend church services but to pray at home.



*Hieromonk, Vasily Telekhov. Photo: CABAR.asia*

“Even during the festive service for Easter in the church, this year there were far fewer people than in previous years,” he said.

The church is currently closed for public services. Also, all activities for provision of social assistance to the parishioners have been temporarily suspended.



*Pedro Rodriguez. Photo: CABAR.asia*

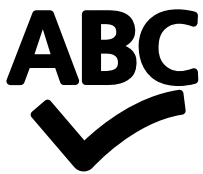
The representative of the Catholic Church in Tajikistan, Pedro Rodriguez, spoke about the measures taken in the Catholic Church in Dushanbe. He also mentioned that the church is being treated with antiseptics several times a day. “Now we recommend our parishioners to pray at home and we conduct services online,” noted father Pedro.

Representative of the Committee on Religion, Regulation of Ceremonies and Rituals, Muidinjon Tukhtahojaev, told about the measures which were undertaken by the Committee. In particular, Ulema Council of the Islamic Center of Tajikistan has banned any religious events, collective prayers and

other religious rituals in main mosques since April 18 due to the threat of the spread of coronavirus. The decision will remain in force until the situation stabilizes.

During this period began the holy month of Ramadan in the Muslim world, and Muslims are adhering to strict fasting. Based on the decision of Ulema Council, it is prohibited to perform in mosques collective prayers as well as conducting prayer “taraweeh” (recited only in the month of Ramadan), “iftar” (an evening meal at the end of the daytime in days of fasting after sunset), and “ idgardak” (children’s holiday celebrations).

All the representatives of the religious faiths, who participated in the meeting, said that they will pray for the speedy recovery of all those who have fallen ill, and for the humanity to get rid of this dangerous infection.



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