

COVID-19 GUIDELINES

ON MANAGEMENT OF THE DEAD (FOR SIKH FUNERALS)

The Sikh funeral – *Antam Sanskaar* (final rite of passage) – focuses not on loss and grief, but on celebrating the soul's opportunity to re-join *Waheguru*. Often, the bereaved family, close relatives and friends attend the cremation. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, last rites might be adapted to minimise the possible risk of further infection.



THE ICRC GUIDANCE AIMS TO ENSURE SAFETY OF HEALTHCARE WORKERS AND THE COMMUNITY, ALONG WITH THE DIGNITY OF THE DECEASED

- ✔ Apart from physical distancing and avoiding contact, ICRC advocates caution with respect to handling of COVID-19 dead bodies, since it remains unclear for how long the risk of infection from the dead body or bodily fluids persists.
- ✔ If family members wish to see the body, they should use PPE to do so before the body is bagged.
- ✔ PPE must be used by body handlers and the dead body must be completely wrapped in a leakage-proof body bag (or double-bagged) before being moved to the mortuary.
- ✔ The body bag(s) should not be opened again prior to cremation.
- ✔ Bodies should not be embalmed or injected with preservatives. The process can result in unnecessary manipulation of the body that may expel fluid from the body's cavity and/or result in aerosolisation leading to an increased risk for those performing such procedure.
- ✔ Non-essential complete autopsies need not be performed.
- ✔ Every effort should be made to ensure reliable documentation, identification and traceability of the dead so as to avoid misidentification and trauma for loved ones.
- ✔ While dead body management and funeral rites should be adapted to maintain social and physical distancing, hasty and careless disposal of the bodies must be avoided.
- ✔ Irrespective of whether the body is infectious or not, there is a chance that family members of the deceased are infected. Gatherings at home, hospitals, mortuary and funerals are inadvisable regardless of how the dead body is handled and have sometimes been banned.
- ✔ Those who attend the funeral must safely dispose of the PPE and properly practice hand hygiene by washing themselves with soap, water or alcohol-based sanitiser.

