



## CANADIAN COUNCIL OF IMAMS

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### CCI Statement of Cremation of Covid-19 Muslim Victims in Sri Lanka

May 28, 2020

The Canadian Council of Imams (CCI) is appalled to hear the forcible cremation of Muslims and other minorities who died of Covid-19 in Sri Lanka against their religious and cultural norms.

In its fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, the Sri Lankan government have decided to cremate everyone who die of the disease, despite World Health Organization, International Committee of the Red Cross, and other international bodies that have specialized expertise in crisis management and emergency response, stating that burial constitutes no risk of contamination of soil or water and that there should be no preference for cremation over burial.

Sri Lanka is the only country in the world to enact such a rule during this pandemic disregarding the universal fact that every culture and community has its own set of rituals to help ease the pain during a funeral.

CCI affirms this is a clear violation of the Islamic guidelines on the management of dead bodies. In Islam, the cremation of the dead is considered mutilation and is thus prohibited. Muslims believe, per their religious tenets, the deceased have an inviolability similar to that of the living. The Prophet Muhammad said, "Fracturing the bone of a corpse is like fracturing it while they were alive" while the Qur'an honours each and every human being in this verse "We have indeed honored the children of Adam."

Thus, honoring the dead and the giving the dignity it rightly deserves for being part of the human family is a collective obligation (*farḍ kifāyah*) upon the Muslim community. This obligation includes a proper burial and the funeral prayers to respect the stature of the deceased and the emotions of the family, friends and relatives who lost their loved one.

The Canadian Council of Imams (CCI) also made aware that the members of the Sri Lankan diaspora in Canada are concerned that their loved ones in Sri Lanka could also be cremated against their wishes should they become victims of Covid-19.



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The Canadian Council of Imams calls upon the Sri Lankan authorities to cease the cremation of Muslims and other minorities who dies of Covid-19 and ensure that religious rites and practices of other religions and cultures are respected in line with international health guidelines. CCI also calls upon the Canadian government to intervene in this matter to protect the rights of minorities in Sri Lanka and give assurance to the Canadian-Sri Lankan Muslim community who are alarmed and helpless in this situation.

**Canadian Council of Imams**