

Delaying the Funeral and Performing the Sunnah Salaah before it

Q: Janaa'iz-77: (1) It is a requirement here in Britain for the body of the deceased to be brought to the hospital, where it is stored in a cold room. If the day happens to be a public holiday or a weekend, the burial is further delayed because the graveyards are closed. The Muslims in Bartley have built a cold room in the basement of the Masjid, where the dead bodies are stored instead of going to the hospital.

It is a custom here for people to visit the bereaved family to offer their condolences, but they then start to engage in worldly discussions. Now that the bodies are stored in the cold room, many people go directly to the Masjid where they recite Qur'aan and confer the rewards to the deceased. Is this permissible?

It also happens that people who live far from the Masjid cannot be with the deceased and leave the body all alone in the cold room. Is this permissible?

(2) When the time for the Janaazah salaah is fixed for after the Zuhr salaah, will it be performed immediately after the Fardh salaah or after the Sunnah and Nafl salaahs?

Answer: Preparations for the bathing, shrouding and burial of the deceased should be made as soon as death is confirmed. The preparation and burial is to be hastened because of a narration in Abu Dawood. The narration states that after Rasulullaah SAW. visited the ailing Hadhrat Talha bin Baraa RADI. Rasulullaah SAW. remarked, "Death has already started to overtake him. Inform me as soon as he passes away so that I may perform the Janaazah salaah for him. Do hasten because it is improper to hold the dead body of a Muslim back amongst yourselves.

It is therefore improper to delay the burial without a reason valid in the Shari'ah. This is a sin and causes harm to the deceased. It is also disrespectful to the deceased and should the body start to decompose, it will not be worthy of the Janaazah salaah. The government needs to be informed about this injunction of the Shari'ah so that permission can be granted to have the deceased buried as soon as possible. Every effort should be made in this direction even if means spending some money in the process.

However, if permission cannot be secured after exhaustive efforts, then people will have no option. In such a case, people may recite Qur'aan in another nearby room for the Isaale Thawaab since reciting in the same room is Makrooh when the Ghusl has not yet taken place.

While it is wrong to have a cold room in the basement of a proper Masjid, there will be no harm in the place is an Ibaadah Khana (place of salaah that is not an official Masjid). A place will have to be secured to store the bodies, where people can be with the body since it should not be left alone. If people cannot sit close by they may sit a distance away. engaging all the time in recitation of the Qur'aan, Tasbeeh and making du'aa for the forgiveness of the Deceased. This should be done at the hospital as well. It must however be ensured that women experiencing Haidh or Nifaas and people in the state of Janaabah should not be with the deceased.

(2) Although the Janaazah salaah should be performed after the Fardh salaah and before the Sunnah salaah, it may be delayed for after the Sunnah salaah if it is feared that people will then leave out the Sunnah Mu'akkadah salaah. And Allaah knows best what is most correct.

Fatawa Rahimiyyah vol.3