

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

8 April 2020

Transmitted by email: ...

The National Spiritual Assembly of
the Bahá'ís of ...

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

The Universal House of Justice has received your email letter of 5 April 2020, sent to one of its members, in which you seek guidance on the application of Bahá'í burial law in light of the coronavirus health crisis. We have been asked to convey the following.

In relation to the current health crisis, the House of Justice advises that public safety must be diligently and thoroughly observed by all believers. Although Bahá'í law concerning the burial of the dead is clear, yet in case of serious and contagious diseases, whatever advice the health authorities provide must be followed. In a Tablet that addresses the question of whether cremation of bodies is permissible in the event of contagious diseases, 'Abdu'l-Bahá confirms that hygiene and protection are the highest priority. Thus, for example, believers from Bahá'í communities in the East who have customarily washed and shrouded the bodies of the deceased may refrain from such observances in relation to a Bahá'í who has died from the coronavirus disease, in order to avoid exposure. Even should authorities mandate cremation of the deceased, there would be no objection to observing such a requirement in light of the guidance of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. As to the Prayer for the Dead, there is no stipulation that it must be recited at the graveside—only that it be said before the interment of the body takes place. It may even be recited in a private setting.

If government health authorities have not provided advice on the handling of remains during this health crisis, or the advice is not sufficiently specific as it bears on the application of Bahá'í law, the National Spiritual Assembly may, following consultation with medical experts and seeking the advice of the Counsellors, provide guidance to believers about how the principles set forth above may be applied.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Department of the Secretariat

cc: International Teaching Centre

...