

South Africa

Disaster Management Act, 2002

Directions Relating to Norms and Standards for Religious Gatherings Government Notice 1052 of 2020

Legislation as at 1 October 2020

FRBR URI: /akn/za/act/gn/2020/1052/eng@2020-10-01

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PDF created on 27 June 2022 at 03:24.

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Directions Relating to Norms and Standards for Religious Gatherings
Contents

1. Definitions 1

2. Purpose 1

3. Limitations at places of worship 1

4. Health and safety measures at places of worship 2

5. Social distancing 2

6. Personal protection 3

7. Health protocols for places of worship 3

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Published in [Government Gazette no. 43762](#) on 1 October 2020

Assented to on 1 October 2020

Commenced on 1 October 2020

[This is the version of this document as it was from 1 October 2020 to 2 October 2020.]

I, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, hereby, in terms of regulation 4(10) read with regulation 69(1) and (3) of the Regulations issued in terms of the Disaster Management Act, 2002 ([Act No. 57 of 2002](#)), issue directions in the Schedule hereto relating to norms and standards for religious gatherings.

Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, MP

Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs

1. Definitions

In these Directions a word or expression bears the meaning assigned to it in the Regulations and unless the context otherwise indicates—

"**place of worship**" means any place or premises used for religious purposes; including churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, faith based institutions and other recognized places of worship;

"**Regulations**" means the Regulations made in terms of the Disaster Management Act, 2002 ([Act No. 57 of 2002](#)) and published by Government Notice No. R. 480 of 29 April 2020, as amended;

"**religious gathering**" means a gathering at a place of worship for religious purposes; and

"**religious leader**" means a person recognized by a religious body as having some authority in that body.

2. Purpose

- (1) The purpose of these directions is to provide for the norms and standards for religious gatherings that are permitted under the Regulations to address, prevent and combat the spread of COVID-19.
- (2) These Directions apply to all religious gatherings and persons attending a place where those gatherings are held.

3. Limitations at places of worship

- (1) Religious gatherings are limited to 250 persons or less in the case of an indoor gathering and 500 persons or less in the case of an outdoor gathering, provided that not more than 50 percent of the capacity of the venue is used, with persons observing a distance of at least one and a half metres from each other, and subject to the conditions outlined in these Directions.

- (2) Religious organisations should, where possible, convene services through virtual platforms, including online and social media, to avoid large gatherings and to continue to reach those individuals who are self-isolating or particularly vulnerable to COVID-19.
- (3) Religious gatherings may be conducted in succession either indoors or outdoors or both indoors and outdoors simultaneously, provided there is at least one hour between services.

4. Health and safety measures at places of worship

- (1) All religious leaders or persons in charge of places of worship must ensure that every person entering a place of worship complies with the general measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 as provided for in regulations 5(1) and 69(1) of the Regulations, which require the wearing a face mask and the maintenance of a distance of at least one and a half metres from another.
- (2) Every place of worship must implement the following health and safety measures:
 - (a) Screen every person entering the place of worship for symptoms associated with COVID-19, such as: fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, difficulty in breathing or malaise;
 - (b) require every person to report whether they suffer from any of the following additional symptoms such as body aches, loss of smell or loss of taste, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, weakness or tiredness; and
 - (c) require every person to immediately inform the religious leader or person in charge of the service if they experience any of the symptoms referred to above while at the place of worship.
- (3) If a person presents with those symptoms, or advises the religious leader or person in charge of the service of these symptoms, the religious leader or person in charge must—
 - (a) not permit the person to enter the place of worship;
 - (b) where a person is already at the place of worship and shows symptoms consistent with COVID-19, immediately isolate the person, and assist the person, to make arrangements to be transported, in a manner that does not place other persons or members of the public at risk, for a medical examination and testing; and
 - (c) a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 must immediately inform the religious leader of any gathering in which they previously participated in the past 10 days, and he or she may not attend any gathering within 10 days from the date of receiving the positive test.
- (4) A person may not enter a place of worship if they have any of the symptoms of COVID-19 referred to in subparagraph (2)(a) and (b) above.
- (5) In the case where a work place also serves as a place of worship, it is the responsibility of employers under existing health and safety laws and protocols to ensure that employees and volunteers are not exposed to the risk of COVID-19 and that their health and safety is not compromised.

5. Social distancing

- (1) Every religious leader or person in charge of the place of worship must ensure that there is no physical contact between persons at the place of worship, including handshaking and hugging.
- (2) Where an activity, such as preaching or leading worship cannot be performed with face masks, the distance between persons must be increased to two and a half meters.

6. Personal protection

- (1) Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 5(2), wearing of face masks is compulsory for the duration of any religious activity.
- (2) Any religious ritual that requires personal contact may not be performed during any religious activity.
- (3) Any person counting offerings or gifts must sanitize their hands before and after the counting of offerings or gifts.
- (4) Donations and collections must be done using on-line and other contactless methods where possible. Cash should be collected in a receptacle that is set in one place and handled by one individual and not passed around.

7. Health protocols for places of worship

- (1) Religious leaders and persons in charge of places of worship must ensure that seating arrangements are compliant with social distancing norms.
- (2) In the case of an indoor gathering, religious leaders and persons in charge must ensure that the place of worship is well ventilated while in use.
- (3) A place of worship must keep a register which must be retained for a period of not less than one month after the gathering, with the following details of each person in attendance—
 - (a) full names;
 - (b) residential address;
 - (c) cell number, telephone number or e-mail address; and
 - (d) contact details of persons living in the same residence as the person attending the religious gathering.
- (4) All attendees should be informed about the dangers of COVID-19 and how to prevent it.
- (5) No substance or liquid may be shared between persons.
- (6) Any person over the age of 60 and persons with co-morbidities are encouraged to continue worshipping at home
- (7) All funeral services conducted in places of worship must be limited to 100 persons in line with regulation 68 (1) of Alert Level 1 Regulations.