



COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS TO BE TAKEN DURING RELIGIOUS EVENTS, NATIONAL HOLIDAYS, CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS AND UN CEREMONIES

This guidance reminds all UN personnel and managers of the necessary precautions that must be implemented to avoid the spread of COVID-19 during any religious events, national holidays, cultural celebrations or UN ceremonies.

For duty stations in countries with community transmission of COVID-19, the WHO recommends that serious considerations should be given to postponing or reducing mass gatherings that bring people together and have the potential to amplify disease. The recommended best practice of physical distancing should be supported in such a context, and any decision to restrict, modify, postpone, cancel, or proceed with holding a mass gathering should be based on a risk assessment done by the UN management, using WHO risk assessment tools available [here](#). If cancelling gatherings for religious events, national holidays, cultural celebrations and UN ceremonies, virtual alternatives using platforms such as television, radio, digital, and social media can be used instead.

If such in-person gatherings are allowed to proceed, the following measures to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission should be strictly implemented and enforced.

- To prevent local transmission within your mission or the host country population, all UN personnel should be reminded to limit and minimize activities that require close contact with the local population where possible. Practice physical distancing by strictly maintaining a distance of at least 2 metre (6 feet) between people at all times.
- Use culturally sanctioned greetings that avoid physical contact, such as waving, nodding, or placing the hand over the heart.
- Avoid large numbers of people gathering in indoor venues, including places such as entertainment venues, markets, cafeterias etc.
- Whenever gatherings cannot be avoided, they should be held outside to the extent possible. Indoor gatherings must have appropriate ventilation and air flow.
- Adhere to physical distancing always, both when seated and standing, through creating and assigning fixed places.
- Regulate the number and flow of people entering, attending, and departing from worship spaces, or other venues to ensure safe distancing at all times.
- Use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) at all times. For guidance on appropriate PPE, including cloth masks, for use in non-healthcare settings, see https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/ddcoronavirus_ppeforwardfacingstaff.pdf
- All UN personnel must be reminded to practice frequent hand washing with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub. Sufficient hand hygiene stations must be positioned throughout the duty station, especially in ablutions, outside/within dining areas, during the celebration. Monitor and ensure availability of items for hand hygiene stations (water, soap, alcohol-based hand rub). Do not wait until the last minute to order additional supplies of hand soap/alcohol-based hand rub.



- Conduct regular sensitization to create awareness on how to prevent COVID-19 transmission (e.g. using texting, flyers, loudspeaker announcements, posters) and remind personnel to stay 2 meters apart from other individuals, wash their hands, and cover their cough with elbow/sleeve.
- Meals in the dining area during religious events, national holidays and other cultural celebrations should be taken in small groups, and meal times staggered at different times, with a 2 metres distance between chairs.
- Ensure regular cleaning and disinfecting of common spaces (ablutions/toilet, kitchen, dining hall) regularly and pay special attention to frequently touched surfaces. More information on cleaning/disinfection can be found at [https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/home-care-for-patients-with-suspected-novel-coronavirus-\(ncov\)-infection-presenting-with-mild-symptoms-and-management-of-contacts](https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/home-care-for-patients-with-suspected-novel-coronavirus-(ncov)-infection-presenting-with-mild-symptoms-and-management-of-contacts)

All personnel who are feeling unwell or have any symptoms of COVID-19 must avoid attending such mass gathering events and immediately notify the UN medical hotline for follow up and management.

All personnel categorized as high risk for COVID-19 must avoid such mass gatherings or any events that may expose them to infection.

For any clarification and additional information, please reach out to DHMOSH's Public Health unit at dosh-public-health@un.org