



## Hastening to prepare the deceased for burial and covering the body

The first, second, third, and fourth questions of Fatwa No. 1705

**Q 1, 2: What is the ruling on leaving the face of the deceased uncovered unnecessarily for more than one day to be recognized by strangers? What is the ruling on viewing the body, whether a male or female daily? Does leaving the face uncovered contradict Islamic teachings?**

**A 1,2: Firstly,** According to the Sunnah, if a person dies, all his body including his face should be covered. It was reported that `Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said, [\( When the Messenger of Allah \(peace be upon him\) died, he was covered with a green square decorated garment. \)](#) Related by Ahmad, [Al-Bukhari](#), and [Muslim](#). Shrouding and covering the dead was a well known practice among the Sahabah (Companions of the Prophet) and is based on the established observance during the lifetime of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Al-Nawawi said in his commentary on [Sahih Muslim](#), "Shrouding the deceased is a unanimously agreed upon issue. This is to protect the deceased from being exposed and also to cover their deteriorating body. Shrouding the deceased should be done after removing their clothing in order to delay deterioration of the corpse." Therefore, it is clear that

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leaving the face of the dead person uncovered for a day or more as mentioned in the question to be displayed contradicts the Sunnah and the Muslim consensus. There is no harm if the bereaved family wants to uncover the face to see the deceased without delaying its preparation and burial. It was reported [\( that Jabir ibn `Abdullah \(may Allah be pleased with them\) said, "When my father was martyred, I lifted the sheet from his face and wept. The Prophet \(peace be upon him\) did not forbid me to do so. \)](#) [\( `Aishah \(may Allah be pleased with her\) said that she saw the Messenger of Allah kissing `Uthman ibn Mazh`un when the latter died, and tears were flowing \(from his eyes\). \)](#) She also said, [\( Abu Bakr went directly to the Prophet \(peace be upon him\) who was covered with a marked blanket. Abu Bakr uncovered his face. He knelt down and kissed him and then started weeping and said, "My father and my mother be sacrificed for you, O Allah's Prophet! Allah will not combine two deaths on you. You have died the death which was predestined for you." \)](#)

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**Secondly,** hastening to prepare the dead after confirming their death is an act of Sunnah as this protects their bodies from decaying, and people being repulsed by them. It is recorded by [Abu Dawud](#) that the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated, [\( I see that Talhah ibn Al-Bara' has died; so tell me \(about his death\), and make haste, for it is not advisable that the corpse of a Muslim should remain withheld among his family. \)](#) Related by [Al-Tabarany](#) with good chain of transmission on the authority of [Ibn `Umar](#) (may Allah be pleased with them) that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him)

said,﴿ When one of you dies, do not withhold his corpse. Rather, make haste to bury him in his grave. ﴾It has been authentically reported on the authority of [Abu Hurayrah](#) (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated,﴿ Make haste with the funeral for if the person was righteous, you are rushing it to goodness; and if it was not, then you are putting down an evil thing from your shoulders. ﴾Related by Ahmad, [Al-Bukhari](#), [Muslim](#), and [Ashab-ul-Sunan](#) (authors of Hadith compilations classified by jurisprudential themes).This Hadith indicates that it is preferable to hasten to prepare the deceased for goodness or to be relieved of them. It is permissible to wait until people gather to offer Funeral Prayer, follow the funeral procession, and invoke Allah's forgiveness and mercy for the dead. However, this should not take a long time. It is clear that keeping the deceased for one or more days without necessity contradicts the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and therefore, those who delay the preparation and the burial of the deceased to show the face of the deceased should be advised

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and guided to the way of the Prophet (peace be upon him) on how to deal with the deceased Muslim. May Allah guide them to what is right.

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