

TOOLKIT: National Day of Mourning and Lament

As we mark the death of 100,000 people in the U.S. from COVID-19, millions of people of faith across the country are calling for a **National Day of Mourning and Lament**. Together, they look to federal, state, and local elected officials to observe Monday, June 1, as a National Day of Mourning and Lament—a day marked by moments of silence, lowering of flags, interfaith vigils, ringing of bells, and civic memorials.

Together, interfaith leaders and mayors across the nation will call us to mourn, lament, and honor the dead, acknowledge the unequal nature of our suffering, pray together for the healing of the nation, and recommit to the difficult work ahead.

The National Day of Mourning and Lament will follow a weekend of services from Muslim, Jewish, and Christian houses of worship—including Protestant, Catholic, Evangelical, African American, Hispanic, Asian American, and Native American—all united in times of lament and mourning for the dead. Remembering will unite across lines of religion and traditions and transcend our politics.

This toolkit will help to coordinate our message and efforts across the country, to amplify our impact and reach.

This call is being supported by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, which represents over 1,400 mayors across the country. Mayors lead on the front line of the COVID-19 response effort and continue to model critical, local guidance amid this difficult time.

If you are involved in a National Day of Mourning and Lament event on Monday, June 1, [let us know here](#). We will help to convey your plans to the press.

For questions, please contact: jsimpson@sojo.net

How to get involved:

1. Ask your clergy and congregations to join in this weekend's unprecedented show of unity, as mosques, synagogues, and churches acknowledge this grim milestone with a time for lament and mourning—in whatever ways are best and most appropriate in your tradition.
2. Contact your elected officials—mayors, governors, and members of Congress—to acknowledge Monday, June 1, as a National Day of Mourning and Lament.
3. Organize a virtual event, service, press conference, moment of remembrance, etc. with your mayor or other elected officials.
4. Reach out to any members of the press you are in relationship with to make them aware of the weekend of services and the National Day of Mourning and Lament.
5. Share about your event on social media, with the press, and [with us!](#)

Framework:

This is the guiding framework of this call that can be used and adapted to help shape your message and efforts to lead your services over the weekend as well as interfaith events with elected officials in your community on Monday, June 1.

A National Day of Mourning and Lament

A call to grieve and honor those who have died from COVID-19 and join together in a National Day of Mourning and Lament for the healing of our nation

Our nation has passed a grievous point in history: 100,000 Americans have died from COVID-19. As people of faith, we cannot allow this grim number to go unnoticed. Always and everywhere, it is the duty of religious communities to remember the dead and mourn their passing. From generation to generation, we have been given this task: to speak their names and honor their lives. The deaths of 100,000 Americans shall not pass by unmarked and unlamented.

It is hard to comprehend this magnitude of deaths in so short a time. The past three months have been some of the deadliest in U.S. history. Americans have endured more death than in many of our wars, as we just memorialized last weekend. At 100,000 deaths, COVID-19 becomes the fifth most deadly event in U.S. history. The number of deceased is equivalent to whole towns and cities. The pandemic now ranks among those moments in the life of our nation marked by national remembrances, somber memorials, and moving tributes. As people of faith,

we cannot let this moment pass unnoticed. The nation must be given the chance to mourn, lament, and remember the dead.

The rapid spread of the disease, the scope of its impact, and the mitigation through “social distancing” has prevented the time and space for us to grieve. It has been impossible to bury our dead as people have for thousands of years—communally and intimately with friends, family, and neighbors. As religious leaders, we are deeply connected with our nation’s pain. Both as individuals and collectively as a nation, we need time to stop, reflect, pray, mourn, and honor the dead.

To meet this need, religious communities across faiths will act with unprecedented unity, gathering together safely to mourn, memorialize, and remember their lives both in our diverse faith traditions and in our public squares. Together, we will pray for the healing of our nation.

On May 29, 30, and 31—Friday, Saturday, and Sunday—America’s religious communities will gather for the first time following this grim 100,000 marker—many of us still virtually. Keeping with their own traditions and practices, each will mourn our American dead and pray for the healing of our nation.

On Friday, with Ramadan finished, Muslims will remember the revelation of the Quran. On Friday and Saturday, Jews will remember God’s covenant as they celebrate Shavuot and read their *yizkor* (remembrance) prayers. On Sunday, Christians will celebrate Pentecost Sunday, when the first Christians were given courage through the reception of the Holy Spirit. We will name, honor, lament, and offer our tributes to the lives and families of those who have died. The Christian prayers of mourning for the 100,000 dead will be offered across our Protestant, Catholic, Evangelical, Pentecostal, African American, Hispanic, Asian American, and Native American traditions and communities.

But religious communities do not act alone. We call too on political leaders—the president, senators and members of Congress, governors, and mayors—to lead a National Day of Mourning and Lament on Monday, June 1—at noon, local time—to pause to remember those who have died. It will be appropriate for flags to be lowered and to observe moments of silence, mourning, memorial, prayer, reflection, and bell ringing. We will stop. We will remember. We will mourn and honor our dead. We will pray for the healing of the nation.

In the days prior to our national weekend of remembrance, we invite Americans to use social media and other communication platforms to post prayers and laments, names, photos, and tributes to those who have died of the coronavirus in the United States, using the hashtags #Lament100k and #DayofMourning. In many civic spaces, outside places of worship and our homes, groups or individuals may place empty chairs with the names, dates, and photos as a tribute to and in remembrance of those who are no longer with us.

We will ask God to help heal our land in a moment of mourning as we honor those who have died, often without their loved ones around them. We come together both to weep and to rejoice for those lives that have been lost. We shall mourn the loss of so many Americans, many known only to families and friends, coworkers and neighbors. We will mourn family members and friends whom we loved; worked and worshiped with; ate, played, and prayed with; important members of our communities, some who were on the front lines of caring for and serving others; and those we passed on the street with a smile and nod. By God's grace, we will mourn with families who have not been able to memorialize, mourn, or properly bury their dead.

Our lament will also honor hard truths we have learned during this pandemic: Our suffering has been unequal, elders have been vulnerable and alone, black and brown neighbors have borne disproportionately the brunt of sickness and death and the front lines labor of the fight against this disease. Native communities, our land's original caretakers, have been particularly hard hit—as they have been so many times in the past. Asian Americans have been targeted by hateful words and actions. Our prayers for the healing of the nation must acknowledge the brokenness of our democracy and rededicate ourselves to repair the injustices this pandemic has revealed, even as work for the healing of those who are afflicted with the virus.

This vocation of the faith community to stop, name, feel, remember, memorialize, and pray for the dead, their families and their friends unites all our traditions and transcends our politics.

This momentous and tragic 100,000 marker will not be an empty data point on death's grim graph. We will remember those whom we loved and pray for both healing and hope—for our nation and the world. As a people, we have borne this pandemic's cost in the lives of our loved ones. As a nation, we shall honor and mourn them together.

As faith leaders, we must help to lead our congregations, communities, and country in this time of grief and lament in a way that will lead us forward more united as a country to address the very real challenges we face ahead. And that we must do together.

SOCIAL MEDIA:

HASHTAGS:

#DayofMourning

#Lament100k



Sample Press Release:

RELEASE: After 100,000 COVID-19 Deaths in U.S., Interfaith Leaders, Mayors Call for Day of Mourning and Lament

WASHINGTON, DC—As we mark the death of 100,000 people in the U.S. from COVID-19, an unprecedented group of **100+ national faith leaders**—from Christian, Jewish and Muslim traditions representing major denominations, national faith-based organizations, local congregations, and millions of people of faith across the country—call for a National Day of Mourning and Lament. Together, they look to federal, state, and local elected officials to observe Monday, June 1 as National Day of Mourning and Lament, a day marked by moments of silence, lowering of flags, interfaith vigils, ringing of bells, and civic memorials.

This call is being supported by the **United States Conference of Mayors** who represent over 1,400 mayors across the country. Mayors lead on the frontline of the COVID-19 response effort and continue to model critical local leadership amid this difficult time.

Together, interfaith leaders and mayors across the nation will call us to mourn, lament, and honor the dead, acknowledge the unequal nature of our suffering, pray together for the healing of the nation, and recommit to the difficult work ahead.

QUOTES FROM ORGANIZATION OR PRINCIPAL

The National Day of Mourning and Lament will follow a weekend of services from Muslim, Jewish and Christian houses of worship—including Protestant, Catholic, Evangelical, African American, Hispanic, Asian American, and Native American—all united in times of lament and mourning for the dead. Remembering will unite across lines of religion and traditions and transcend our politics.

For interview requests, contact **INSERT CONTACT INFORMATION.**

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Sample Mayoral Proclamation:

MAYORAL PROCLAMATION DECLARING JUNE 1, 2020 A DAY OF MOURNING AND LAMENT FOR ALL THOSE OUR CITY AND OUR NATION HAVE LOST TO COVID-19

Whereas, our nation has passed a grim point in our history: 100,000 Americans have died from COVID-19; and

Whereas, with the rapid spread of the virus, the scope of its impact, and its mitigation through “social distancing,” we have not been given the time or space to mourn, lament, and remember those whose lives have been taken by the virus; and

Whereas, it has been impossible to bury our dead as people have for thousands of years—communally and intimately with friends, family, and neighbors; and

Whereas, as individuals, residents of our city, and collectively as a nation, we need time to stop, reflect, pray, mourn, and honor the dead; and

Whereas, to meet this need, religious communities across faiths are acting in unity, gathering together safely to mourn, memorialize, and remember the lives of those we have lost, both in our diverse faith traditions and in our public squares, and to pray for the healing of our nation; and

Whereas, mayors are joining with faith leaders in their cities and across the nation through the United States Conference of Mayors to declare June 1, 2020 a National Day of Mourning and Lament and, at 12:00 noon local time on that day, to pause, reflect, pray, mourn and honor all those we have lost and, looking forward, to focus on repairing the injustices the pandemic has so painfully revealed,

Now, therefore,

I, _____, Mayor of the City of _____, declare June 1, 2020, a National Day of Mourning and Lament in our City and urge faith and community leaders and all of our residents to join us on that day and, to the extent possible, at 12:00 Noon, to pause, reflect, pray, mourn and honor all those we have lost and to comfort all those they have left behind.

Date _____

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Mayor of _____