

## **Challenges for the CEC churches in the time of COVID-19 in Freedom of Religion or Belief and other fundamental rights – case studies**

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### **STATISTICS OF COVID-19 IN ARMENIA**

As of July 07, 2020, Armenia has 29,285 confirmed cases of Covid-19 within its borders with 16,907 confirmed recoveries and 503 confirmed deaths.

The Government of Armenia declared a State of Emergency March 16, 2020 in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. On June 12, 2020, this State of Emergency was extended for an additional 30 days, through July 13, 2020. Actions include closure of schools and universities, prohibition of events with more than five persons in attendance, screening and quarantine measures, and restriction of entry into Armenia.

As of May 4, 2020, the Government of Armenia lifted many of the restrictions on businesses and movement introduced on March 24. While schools and universities remain closed, most restrictions on businesses and the movement of individuals, including the requirement to carry a passport and government form, have been lifted.

As of May 18, the ban on public transportation is lifted; pre-schools are open; shopping malls and gyms are open; and restaurants and cafes can seat customers in regular seating areas. Starting May 18, all passengers using public transportation are required to wear a mask and gloves.

The Government of Armenia requires that all individuals wear face masks in public spaces or face potential fines of 10,000 dram. Children under the age of six, as well as individuals exercising or riding a bike, are exempted from this requirement. Face masks are also required in vehicles containing more than one passenger, regardless of whether the passengers are all family members.

### **COVID-19 Travel restrictions**

#### **Local Resources:**

Gov of Armenia: <https://www.gov.am/en/>

Ministry of Health of Armenia: [www.moh.am](http://www.moh.am)

Armenian National Center for Disease Control: [www.ncdc.am](http://www.ncdc.am)

Minister of Health Facebook page: [Facebook.com/ATorosyanOfficial](https://www.facebook.com/ATorosyanOfficial)

### **EMERGENCY (LOCKDOWN) AND OFFICIAL SITUATION**

The Church – 11 dioceses in Armenia with schools, social centres.

**From the beginning of Pandemic, the Church stayed pro-active and alert.**

### **1. STATEMENT OF COLLEGE OF BISHOPS MARCH 13<sup>TH</sup>**

“Our Church has always implemented its soul-salvation service and, today also, it will continue its God-trusted mission through serving spiritual care to its faithful people, encouraging them to stay strong in their faith and face the difficulties and hardships via the faith and prayer towards God.”

### **2. EXHORTATION OF THE CATHOLICOS OF ALL ARMENIANS TO THE NATION, MARCH 16<sup>TH</sup>**

A. To schedule church service hours each day from 9:00 am to 7:00 pm for individual visits and private prayers for believers, as well as for Holy Communion and other urgent spiritual needs, for the period until Holy Thursday.

B. Conduct the celebrations of the Divine Liturgy behind closed doors, without the participation of faithful people, if possible, by streaming the celebrations online.

C. To cancel the order of Blessing of children on the feast of Palm Sunday, to perform the Andastan (Blessing of the Four Corners of the World) ceremony and blessing of tree branches without the presence of believers.

D. To cancel the Service of Blessing of women awaiting the joy of motherhood on April 7, the Feast of the Annunciation of Blessed Virgin Mary,

E. Not to conduct ceremonies of Matrimony,

F. Offer the Sacrament of Baptism only in case of urgency (in case if the person to be baptized is ill),

G. In the case of funerals, only offer the Graveyard ceremony, urging the mourners to refrain from organizing crowded funerals and memorial gatherings for meal.

### **ACTIVITIES DURING THE LOCKDOWN/emergency**

#### **PRAYER SERVICES FOR HEALING**

*March 18th Nationwide Prayer Day*  
*Prayer services – Keghart (Holy Lance),*  
*Relics of St. Gregory the Illuminator,*  
*Relics of St. Gregory of Narek*  
*Relics of the Holy Cross,*

#### **Online Services**

#### **SOCIAL PROJECTS**

Church started to provide support to vulnerable individuals and groups in Armenia during the COVID-19

Cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin- during the COVID -19  
Armenian Church History

**Challenges:**

Sacraments  
Holy Communion  
Funerals

**Conclusions**