

Speech Acts of Advising in Selected News Texts about Coronavirus

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Biodata:

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Abstract

After the invading of Coronavirus in 2019 in China, The world Health Organization has declared this virus as a pandemic. The virus outbreaks among countries terrifying manner which makes governments take some quick decisions to stop it. Government all over the world employes TV channels and media to deliver instructions and advices to their peoples. But, this time the advice and instructions are different in style and language, since there is a crisis which may destroy the whole country, as what has happened in Ital pandemicly. Therefore, the speech act of advising which is used under this circumstances is a bit different for imposing more emphasis to face that danger. Advising people needs to be more directive and imperative. This study hypothesizes that under serious crisis, speech act of advice tends to be more directive and imperative to make the language receiver takes the advice in his/her consideration. This study tries to answer the following question: Do strategies in performing speech act of advice under a common crisis differ between government and Tv Channels? The study analyses ten texts from two different news channels. The first five texts are taken from Kurdistan 24 Channel and the other five are taken from BBC NEWS Channel.

The study reaches to the findings that under serious crisis, there is no difference between western and esteran government in the strategies used to direct their people. In both channels, the speech act of advice tends to be direct and imperative more than other strategies to express it.

Keywords: advising strategy, coronavirus, news channels, speech acts.

1.The Concept of Speech Acts

An investigation of Speech Acts Theory (henceforth SAT) needs the two pioneers, Austin (1962) & Searle (1969). After the organizing of the main speech acts by Austin (1962), Searle (1969) clarifies Austin's arranging. Although, the characterization of Searle is, by all accounts, unique according to Austin's characterizations, yet Austin and Searle don't make major change in the arrangement or the hypothesis.

Speech act refers to the act that is performed by the speaker when articulating utterances. SAT is considered as "an approach in which the effect of an utterance is examined in relationship to the listener and speaker's behaviour". Moreover, it assists us in analyzing utterances based on their functions. Austin emphasizes that when people use language, they are engaging in some types of activity, he names them speech acts. Scholars generally distinguish between speaking and actions on the basis that speaking about something is not the same as doing it. Austin put this to the test by demonstrating that expressions may be seen as events related to certain activities. The following table summarizes Austin's models of speech acts, which he thinks this kind of list can be built upon (Griffiths, 2006).

Table (1) Austin's sample of speech acts

Speech Act Types	Examples
Statement	I have stayed there for six month
Order	Do your homework now
Question	What is your name?
Prohibition	No right turn
Greeting	Hi
Invitation	Would you like to come to my party
Felicitation	Happy birthday
Apology (Grudging)	I'm sorry

(Griffiths, 2006:148)

As a result, the substantive idea of SAT is to conduct acts (things) rather than only to describe, because depiction isn't the primary purpose of language.

Austin says that "to say something may be to do something, or in saying something we do something" (1962:91). He suggests that a speaker does three acts simultaneously while making an utterance, these acts are:

Locutionary Act (LA), Illocutionary Act (IA), and Perlocutionary Act (PA). These speech acts ought to be performed simultaneously. It is not the speaker's choice to perform one or two of them and leave the other; in this case the whole communication process will be prematurely ended.

The act that produces words and sounds with their referential intending is named Locutionary Act. Whereas, the act that does something through stating something, is named Illocutionary Act. The act that causes a specific effect on listeners/hearers and others, just like persuading, is named Perlocutionary Act (ibid). Searle (1969:23–4) adds a number of contributions to the theory of speech act in an effort to fill in some of the gaps left by Austin. He proposes felicity conditions which are principles for creating acts that are successfully and extensively used in communication. These principles, as cited by Searle (1969:23-4), are:

1- Propositional Content Conditions (henceforth PCC): conditions that are related to Propositional Act.

2-Preparatory Conditions (henceforth PC): conditions that are concerning the surrounding knowledge and circumstances concerning speakers and hearers which have to hold previously to the act performance.

3- Sincerity conditions (henceforth SC): conditions that are related to beliefs, intentions, and desires of speakers.

4- Essential conditions (henceforth EC): conditions that concern Illocutionary Act, that is, what the statement is considered to be.

1.1 Austin

According to Austin, speech acts theory can be classified into five categories, as quoted from (Austin,1962:150):

Verdictives: Acts that typified via a decision rendered by an umpire, a judge, or arbitrator. Such as: diagnose, grade, estimate, and acquit, etc.

Commissives: Acts that impose speakers in a future action. However, they consist of announcements and declarations of the intention, such as; bet, oppose, promise, and guarantee.

Exercitives: Acts that are exercising of influence, power, or right when making decisions supporting or opposed particular course of action, such us: appoint, authorize, grant, or advise.

Behabitives are acts that ought to perform with and social conduct and attitudes, such as: complaint, criticize, challenge, and apologize.

Expositives are acts that describe the use of words and how they fit into the current conversion. Such as: ask, affirm, and argue.

1.2 Searle

Searle classifies speech acts in to five main classes; each class forms a variety of additional subclasses of acts that could be differentiated via their felicity conditions. These classes, as quoted from Searle (1969:65) are:

1. Assertives, or representatives: are acts which own a truth-value that tell what the speaker thinks it is the case or isn't. By employing an assertive act, speakers fit their utterances to the world. Instances contains: asserting, concluding, and stating.

Expressives; are acts which state speakers' feeling. Speakers' statements of pain, joy, pleasure, sorrow and hatred reflect their psychological condition. He/she doesn't get the words or the world to match when they use an expressive. Instances are: thanking, criticizing, complaining, etc.

Declarations; or performatives as Austin names them: Acts that their production alters the world. To perform this act correctly, speakers have to have a unique institutional function in a particular setting.

Directives: Acts that are endeavours to make the hearer does something. They articulate the speaker's desires. Included in this class are commands, orders, suggestions, counsel, and others. These acts could be both negative and positive. By utilizing directive act, speakers try to make the world, by hearers, fit the words.

Commissives: are acts that bind or commit the speaker to a certain future action plan. They convey the speaker's goal. Such acts include those that involve threats, offers, refusals, and promises. Speakers tries to fit the words into the world when they use a commissive.

1.3 The Speech Act of Advice

Advice has been defined as "telling you what is best for you." By relying on the classification of speech acts of Searle, the speech act of advising is related to the directive speech acts. Speakers, in directive act, expect their advisee to do something. Advice is similar to requests in certain ways, but it is given with the intention of helping the one receiving it. Speech act of advice belongs to advisories group, that contain suggestions and recommendations as well, and it has been noticed that advice must indicate what is best for the hearer and serve the hearer's interests rather than the speaker. Speakers might wish that the hearers will take some action in the future (Searle,1969:7). According to Brown and Levinson, advising speech is "a potentially face-threatening act" since it puts recipients into the position which they must do something, therefore, it restricts recipients' freedom of action (1987:82). On

the other hand, Bouwmeester remarks that advising speech act puts speakers in the position of power and authority, as if they know what is best for the hearers. It has been proposed that giving advice makes the advisee has the need to consider the advice carefully (2010:56). Advising speech act is a complicated act "that should be performed with caution when the speaker is reasonably certain that the hearer is likely to do what is being advised, that all advice must be hedged and softened and never given explicitly to avoid offending the hearer, and that the speaker is presupposed to have the right or the authority to give advice" (Hinkel,1997:5). In the case of performing advising speech act, the giver of advice assumes that the advice is desired and that he is imparting knowledge that he possesses but the advisee does not (Searle,1969:67).

1.3.1. *Felicity Conditions*

A set of conditions of felicity are put by Searle (1969:67) for advising speech act:

- 1. Propositional content condition (PCC):** in this condition the adviser or the speaker look forward to a future action of the advisee or the hearer.
- 2. Preparatory condition (PC):** The adviser believes that the advised action will benefit the advisee. However, whether the advisee will stick to the advice or not is not clear to both the adviser and the advisee.
- 3. Sincerity condition (SC):** the adviser thinks that the advised action will be beneficial for the advisee.
- 4. Essential condition (EC):** the adviser wants the utterance to be counted as a piece of advice, that is in the advisee's best interest.

1.3.2. *Strategies for Expressing Advice*

There are three kinds of strategies can be used in order to refer to speech act of advice. These strategies are: direct, conventionally indirect and indirect strategies. Pragmatically speaking, direct advice is transparent expression which is divided into four realizations: imperatives such as "Stand up", negative imperatives "Do not use that pen", declarative sentences with should or ought to as in "They ought to study more for that exam", and declarative sentences with performative verbs as in "I advise you to study more." In this case, the verb *advise* and the noun *advice* as in "My advice to you is...." are utilized (Martinez-Flor,2003:144).

Indirect conventionalized strategy is the second kind contains three linguistic realizations: conditional as in "If I were you, I would study", probability "It might be better for you to study hard", and specific formulae (ibid). The

strength of the forms, which used to express advice, differentiates between direct and indirect advice. That is, forms as "you must", "you should", "you'd better" and imperatives could be classified as direct advice. Other forms such as "you can/could", "you might want to" and "it may/would be a good idea to" could be classified as indirect advice (Matsumura,2001:677). The last kind of advice, indirect nonconventionalized acts, contains those hints in which the speaker's intentions are made implicitly as in "You want to pass, don't you." (ibid.) Certain expressions have been presented to indicate advice. These expressions are: "You would better..... , Maybe you should.... , How about.....? If you ask me, I would....., I think you should....., My advice'd be....., If I were in your position, I'd.... , It might be a good idea to...." (Nakagawa & Nishimura,1998:48)

2. Data Analysis

2.1 Speech act of Advice in Kurdistan 24 Channel Pieces of news

Two pieces of news has been published in Kurdistan 24 Channel about the precautionary measure to limit Coronavirus outbreak that has been taken by the government. They are entitled "KRG imposes curfews, orders quarantine of those returning from abroad as infections continue" and "Kurdistan Region announces Ramadan schedule, 'tight restrictions' to reopen mosques".

Text1:

The ministry reiterated its call on citizens to stay in their homes. "Upon any suspicion, you are advised to call 122 [on your phone] and suspected cases must stay put until medical teams reach you," read an advisory message by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

(Kurdistan 24 Channel, Mar.15,2020)

In this piece of news, Iraqi ministry of health faces a message to Iraqi citizens and those who have just returned from abroad advises them to stay at home and do the checkup by calling for medical help. By advising them, the Iraqi health ministry hope that Iraqi citizens take their advice in to consideration and stay at home (PCC). Whether the Iraqi citizens will stick to these pieces of advice or not is not clear (PC). The Iraqi ministry of health believe that their advice will benefit Iraqi people (SC). The ministry wants their words to count as advice to Iraqi citizens. Three pieces of advice are mentioned in the above text. The direct strategy is employed through the use of imperative sentence "stay in their homes", performative " you are advised to call 122",

and declarative "suspected cases must stay put until medical teams reach you"

Text 2:

The ministry also called on anyone who has recently returned "illegally" to the Kurdistan Region from Iran "must immediately report to the medical teams" for appropriate health checkups.

(Kurdistan 24 Channel, Mar.15,2020)

The ministry of health continuous their call to people who have just returned from abroad to call the medical team and do the check-ups. By advising these people the ministry wish that these people do the medical test (PCC). It's not clear whether people will follow the ministry's advice (PC). The ministry believe that their advice will benefit people since committing into this piece of advice will save their lives (SC). The ministry intends their utterance to count as a piece of advice to people to do the check-ups. Otherwise, they will put themselves at risk of spreading Coronavirus. A direct strategy is utilized in the above analyzed text. Ministry's advice is issued via the utilization of declarative sentence "anyone... must immediately report to the medical teams".

Text 3

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – The prime minister of the Kurdistan Region sent out a message marking the advent of Ramadan while urging the public to avoid traditional family gatherings associated with the month-long religious observance amid a spike in new coronavirus cases.

(Kurdistan 24 Channel, Apr.11,2021)

In this piece of news, the prime minister advices Iraqi people to avoid typical family gatherings connected with Ramadan religious observance due to an increase in new coronavirus infections. By advising them, prime minister hopes that no traditional families' gatherings will held this year during Ramadan (PCC). Whether Iraqi people will follow the prime minister's advice or not is not obvious (PC). The Iraqi prime minister thinks that his advice will help Iraqi people because committing into this advice will decrease the rate of infections (SC). The prime minister wants Iraqi people to take his utterances as a piece of advice and obviate family gatherings. If not, they will face the risk of being inflected by the new virus. The strategy that is followed in the present text is a direct one. The prime minister's advice is issued by the utilization of imperative sentence "avoid traditional family gatherings".

Text No. 4

The "tight restrictions" that mosques and worshipers are required to follow include a limit that evening and Taraweeh prayers must last no more than a combined 35 minutes and that distributing food or beverages either inside and outside mosques has been prohibited.

(Kurdistan 24 Channel, Apr.11,2021)

This piece of news deals with the restrictions that are imposed as a conditions to reopen the mosques during the pandemic. The minister advices people here to avoid take much time in their prayers at mosques. Their prayers mustn't take time more than 35 minutes. By doing so, the minister hopes that Taraweeh prayers will take less than 35 minutes (PCC). It is uncertain if the Iraqi people would heed the minister's advice (PC). The minister believes that following his advice will benefit the people since doing so will reduce the rate of infections (SC). The minister wants people take his utterances as a piece of advice and lessen their prayers at mosques. If not, they will face the risk of being inflected by the new virus. The strategy that is followed in the present text is a direct one. The minister's advice is issued by the utilization of declarative sentence "Taraweeh prayers must last no more than a combined 35 minutes".

Text 5

Among additional new conditions for the reopenings are that worshipers must now perform ablution (washing before prayer) before leaving their homes and they must wear masks and avoid handshakes and other physical contact not only during public prayers, but also when traveling to and from mosques.

(Kurdistan 24 Channel, Apr.11,2021)

The restrictions that are imposed as a conditions to reopen the Iraqi mosques during Ramadan involve washing at home, avoid handshake and put masks. The minister advices people here to wash at home, wear their masks and avoid handshakes at mosques. By doing so, the minister hopes that worshipers will follow these instructions precisely (PCC). It is uncertain if the Iraqi people will follow the minister's advice (PC). The minister believes that following his advice will benefit the people since doing so will reduce the rate of infections (SC). The minister wants people take his utterances as a piece of advice and follow that instructions. If not, they will face the risk of being inflected by the new virus. The strategy that is followed in the present text is a direct one. The minister's advice is issued by the utilization of

declarative sentences: " worshipers must now perform ablution " " they must wear masks and avoid handshakes"

2.2 Advice in BBC NEWS Channel Pieces of news

The official site of BBC news Channel has published pieces of news urging people in UK to stay at home and not to break the curfew which has been imposed by the government in order to stop Coronavirus outbreak among them. They have been entitled "Coronavirus: How can I shop or get deliveries and takeaways safely?", and " Coronavirus: Stay at home over Easter to stop virus, public told"

Text 1:

Those were the words Boris Johnson used about the new approach to shopping as he outlined the government's curbs on daily life, to limit the spread of coronavirus. He said people should use food delivery services where you can. (BBC, Apr.9,2020)

In this text the editor mentions a quote taken from British prime minister Boris Johnson speech who is advising people to use food delivery services instead of break the curfew and go to market which probably puts them at risk of infecting coronavirus. By giving British people a piece of advice, prime minister Boris Johnson wishes that people will not go out to market and break curfew (PCC). Boris Johnson believes that it's not clear whether or not British people will take his piece of advice into their consideration (PC). Boris Johnson believes that his advice will benefit British people. Otherwise, if they go out for shopping, they will put themselves at risk of being infected by Coronavirus (SC). Boris Johnson wants his words to count as a piece of advice to British people to stay at their houses and use food delivery services and not to go out for shopping (EC). A direct strategy is employed here via the utilization of the linguistic structure "**people should**".

Text2:

Wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and water, or with alcohol-based hand sanitiser before and after shopping. (BBC,Mar.27,2020)

The editor of the article Victoria Gill has mentioned the best way to her readers for shopping and get necessary things safely and without being infected by Coronavirus. She advised them to wash their hands for 20 seconds with soap and water after touching things. By advising her readers, Victoria Gill wishes that her readers will do as she has advised them to do (PCC). Victoria Gill believes that it's not clear whether or her readers will

take her piece of advice into their consideration (PC). Victoria Gill thinks that her advice will benefit her readers. Otherwise, they will put themselves at risk of being infected by Coronavirus (SC). Victoria Gill wants her words to count as a piece of advice for her readers to wash their hands in order to keep Coronavirus away and stay in a good healthy condition (EC). The advising strategy that is utilized in this text is the direct strategy. Gills' pieces of advice are issued via the utilization of imperative sentence "**Wash hands**".

Text 3:

It might be better in the current circumstances to order hot, freshly cooked food, rather than cold or raw items. The Food Standards Agency does stress the risk from food is low and "there is no reason to avoid having ready-to-eat food delivered if it has been prepared and handled properly".

(BBC, Mar. 27, 2020)

In this text, the editor advice British people to order fresh hot food instead if cold and raw because the danger of being infected from food is low. The editor wishes that her readers/listeners to take her advice into consideration (PCC). Whether the readers/listeners will take the editor advice into the consideration or not, it's not clear to the editor (PC). The editor thinks that her advice will help readers/listeners by reducing the danger of being infected when they order food (SC). The editor wants her words to be interpreted as an advice that is best for readers/listeners (EC). The advising strategy that is utilized in this text is the Indirect conventionalized strategy. It is utilized via employing the probability structure "it might be better..."

Text 4

"People should follow the government's coronavirus rules and stay home over the Easter weekend, as warmer weather is forecast across parts of the UK." (BBC, Apr. 9, 2020)

In the present piece of News, the editor declares the importance of following the curfew, that is imposed by the government, during Easter weekend. Via advicig British people to stick to the curfew of government, the editor hopes that people in British will follow it (PPC). The editor believes that is not obvious if people will stick to her/his advice or not (PC). The editor thinks that this advice will benefit British people because breaking the curfew will dispose them to danger of being infected by the new virus (SC). The editor here wants these words to count as some advice to British people to stick to the government curfew (EC). The editor uses a direct strategy by

employing a declarative sentence "people should..." and imperative one "stay home..." in order to issue some advice

Text 5

"Prof Alison Sinclair, a virology expert from the University of Sussex, adds: "There should be no more risk from using online deliveries than using a friend or volunteer to collect groceries for you." Some experts also advise using plastic bags only once during this pandemic."

(BBC, Mar.27, 2020)

Another advice to British people from experts who advise them to use plastic bags only once to avoid the danger of the virus. By advising people, experts wish that British people will use plastic bags just once (PPC). It's not obvious if people will take this advice into their consideration or not (PC). Experts believe that this advice will benefit people, otherwise they may be infected (SC). Experts intend their utterances to be considered as some advice to British people to lessen the use of plastic bags (EC). The direct strategy, through the use of Performative "Some experts also advise using plastic bags....", is used to give advice.

3. Result and Discussion

In news, various linguistic structures are employed to express the speech act of advising. In the present study, particular linguistic structures are found in the selected data. Table (2) below shows those structures frequencies along with their using percentages. In addition, it compares their frequencies to show which linguistic structure is the dominate one. Subsequently, the analysis result will be discussed in order to detect the reason beyond the highly occurrence of particular structures and strategies of advising in news texts, and if there is difference between Iraqi items of news and British ones.

Table 2 The frequency of linguistic structures News

News	Imper.	Neg. imper.	Perfo.	Declar.	Pro b.	Cond .	Interro .
Iraqi	6	0	1	6	0	0	0
British	17	1	1	3	1	0	0
Percentage	46%	0%	7%	46%	0%	0%	0%
	73%	4%	4%	13%	4%	0%	0%

The result of the analysis displays that imperative structure is used more than other linguistic structure. It represents 46% of linguistic structures that are found in Iraqi pieces of news and 73% of linguistic structures that are

found in British pieces of news. Though, imperative sentences sound impolite and offensive, however, when a serious crisis happens, speech act of advice tends to be more directive and commanding. Therefore, in both Iraqi and British Tv Channels, imperative form is mostly employed. Also, because of the instructional nature of imperative sentences, Tv Channels advise citizens and directs them to the best ways to avoid this deadly virus.

The second dominate structure is declarative one, which is represented by the form: subj. + modal verb + v.+ com. It represents 46% of linguistic structures that are found in Iraqi items of news and 13% of linguistic structures that are found in British items of news. Though, the language of news tends to be more formal, in both selected texts the less formal structures are mostly used. Again, this is related to the urgent and exceptional circumstances that the countries pass through. Consequently, the language of news, which is surly directed by an official entity, tends to be more directive and causal to be closer to be comprehended serious by the citizens. Also, there is an obvious avoiding of formality since instructions and advice have no optional acceptance at the side of message receiver.

The negative imperative occurs one time only in British news but not in Iraqi, and it indirectly conveys a sense of prohibition, while Iraqi news decodes the sense of prohibition more explicitly as it can be noticed in the pieces of news in p. 16.

The following figure shows the rate of direct, indirect conventionalized, and indirect nonconventionalized strategies that are found in both Iraqi and British pieces of news.



4. Conclusion

After analyzing the data and as the table shows, it is found that there is no difference between the two channels in the strategies used to advise people in Iraq or England. The hypothesis of the study is verified since in whole data the direct strategy is used and the table shows that imperative structure is highly employed. The study concludes that;

1. There isn't noticeable differences between the language that are used in Iraqi and British news concerning the speech act of advising.
2. In British news, there is a kind of variety in the linguistic structures as opposed to Iraqi ones.
3. In news, directives acts is frequently used, especially the imperative one. This is related to the seriousness of the current situation, in which the intended message must be received directly.

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- <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-52225121>

Appendix

KRG imposes curfews, orders quarantine of those returning from abroad as infections continue

The Kurdistan Region's health ministry announced on Friday that nine out of 251 coronavirus tests conducted in the autonomous region came back positive, while the interior ministry announced a list of new measures aimed at curbing the further spread of the infection, including curfews and mandatory quarantines.

[_Kosar Nawzad](#) 2020/03/14 05:44



kurdistan Kurdistan KRG Coronavirus Iraq Erbil Sulaimani Baghdad Europe

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – The Kurdistan Region's health ministry announced on Friday that nine out of 251 coronavirus tests conducted in the autonomous region came back positive, while the interior ministry announced a list of new measures aimed at curbing the further spread of the infection, including curfews and mandatory quarantines.

The disease, officially known as COVID-19 and recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a global pandemic, has infected over 145,000 and killed nearly 5,500 worldwide since first appearing in China in late 2019. The new cases in the Kurdistan Region add to a total of 28 infections, one of which was fatal. The health ministry added that the latest cases included that of a 48-year-old man in Halabja who had recently returned from Iran and was under quarantine. The ministry reiterated its call on citizens to stay in their homes.

“Upon any suspicion, you are advised to call 122 [on your phone] and suspected cases must stay put until medical teams reach you,” read an [advisory message](#) by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

On the same day, the regional interior ministry announced, “The imposition of a total curfew inside the cities of Erbil and [Sulaimani] effective for 48-hours starting at 12:00 midnight on Friday until 12:00 midnight 15th of March 2020.”

The ministry later clarified that journalists are exempt from the curfew, “provided their press cards are shown.”

The ministry also called on anyone who has recently returned “illegally” to the Kurdistan Region from Iran “must immediately report to the medical teams” for appropriate health checkups. “Failing to do so will lead to

mandatory quarantine and prosecution under the law for the intentional spread of the virus and illegal border crossing.”

Iran has been the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak in the Middle East, with Tehran having reported 11,364 infections so far and 514 deaths recorded.

Iraq has recorded 102 cases with nine deaths across the country, including the Kurdistan Region.

The KRG interior ministry also stated that “Iraqi and foreign citizens that have traveled to the following countries in the past 30 days will undergo tests and quarantined for a duration determined by the Health Ministry.” The countries include most European Union nations, where the coronavirus outbreak is soaring with Italy being affected most critically. The Mediterranean country reported 250 deaths just on Friday, totaling 1,266, with 17,660 cases recorded.

As part of the measures it has taken, the Iraqi government issued a decree on Friday that banned movement between provinces and religious gatherings, a crisis cell set up in response to the outbreak announced in a statement. The body explained that traveling between provinces would be halted until March 25.

“The decisions also included [allowing] the reopening of restaurants to serve home delivery only and preventing all forms of gatherings, including wedding parties, mourning, and social events.”

Editing by John J. Catherine

Kurdistan Region announces Ramadan schedule, 'tight restrictions' to reopen mosques

Mustafa Shilani 2021/04/11 18:59



The inside of a mosque in the Kurdistan Region. (Photo: Kurdistan24)

Kurdistan Ramadan COVID-19 Religion Iraq Kurdistan Region

ERBIL (Kurdistan 24) – The Kurdistan Region's Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs announced Tuesday as the beginning of this year's Ramadan and that it had decided to reopen the doors of local mosques for the duration of the holy month of fasting, now closed as part of anti-coronavirus efforts. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has recently witnessed a significant escalation in infections of the highly-contagious disease.

The ministry explained in a statement that Monday would be recognized as is the final day of the month of Sha`ban, according to the Islamic calendar, and that Tuesday will mark the first day of the month of Ramadan.

Religious authorities in most Muslim-majority nations typically declare the exact schedule of the holy month, which can vary a day or so depending on visible stations of the moon, for all those within its borders. In Iraq, however, the faithful from different sects – or in this case, the Kurdistan Region – often end up beginning and ending their month of fasting on divergent dates.

The Ministry said it had decided to again allow the general public to gather in mosques throughout the region during Ramadan after a meeting held by the KRG's Supreme Committee to Combat Coronavirus, but with new rules.

The "tight restrictions" that mosques and worshipers are required to follow include a limit that evening and Taraweeh prayers must last no more than a combined 35 minutes and that distributing food or beverages either inside and outside mosques has been prohibited.

Among additional new conditions for the reopenings are that worshipers must now perform ablution (washing before prayer) before leaving their homes and they must wear masks and avoid handshakes and other physical contact not only during public prayers, but also when traveling to and from mosques. Women's halls inside mosques were also ordered to remain closed, while religious sermons will not be allowed following afternoon and evening Ramadan prayers Ramadan, as is customary.

Sermons during Friday prayers must not last more than half an hour.

The Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs threatened to temporarily close any mosque that does not adhere to its guidelines.

Editing by John J. Catherine.

BBC News:

Coronavirus: Stay at home over Easter to stop virus, public told

● Published 9 April 2020

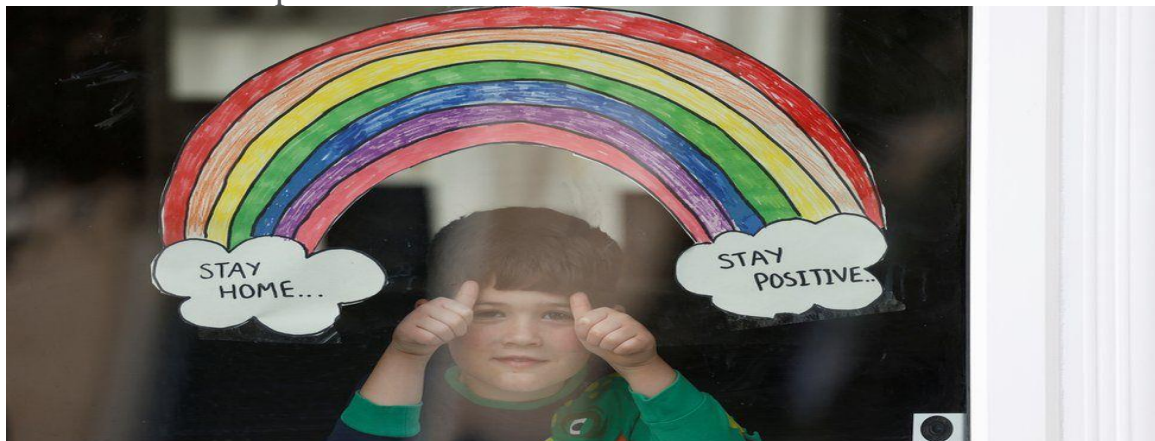


Image caption,

The government introduced its lockdown measures two-and-a-half weeks ago **People should follow the government's coronavirus rules and stay home over the Easter weekend**, as warmer weather is forecast across parts of the UK.

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said the UK was "just beginning to see this strategy starting to work" and people needed to "stick with it".

Temperatures are forecast to reach 25C (77F) in some parts of the country, according to the Met Office. Some police forces have warned of a crackdown on people flouting the rules. It comes as Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab - who is deputising for the prime minister **while he continues his treatment in intensive care** - chairs a virtual meeting of the emergency Cobra committee to discuss the lockdown measures. The rules, which were brought in on 23 March, are due to be officially reviewed next week. But in Wales, the rules have already been extended, while **Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said** it was "likely" the lockdown was "going to be in place for some weeks to come yet".

Downing Street said **Boris Johnson's condition "continues to improve"** as his treatment for the virus carries on in intensive care at St Thomas' Hospital in London. He was taken to hospital on Sunday evening after self-isolating with coronavirus symptoms and admitted to intensive care a day later. A total of 7,978 patients have died in hospital after testing positive for coronavirus as of 17:00 BST on Thursday, up by 881 on the previous day.

NHS England said 765 people with the virus had died, while in Scotland **another 81 people died**. Wales announced a further 41 deaths and four more people died with the virus in Northern Ireland. Of those who died in England, 43 had no known underlying health condition and were aged between 33 and 99 years old. Among those who have died in recent days is Edmond Adedeji, 62, a doctor at Great Western Hospital in Swindon.

Easter weekend warning

Speaking to BBC Breakfast, Mr Dowden appealed for people to stay at home over the Easter weekend. "This is not how I planned to spend my Easter weekend, I'm sure it's not how any of your viewers planned to spend their Easter weekend," he said. "We'll have to stay at home." He said it was unlikely that the restrictions would be lifted in any way next week "given they're just starting to have an effect". Nicola Sturgeon said she knew following the rules will "seem even harder over this Easter holiday weekend". "Please stay in touch with family, friends and loved ones in whatever alternative way best



Image caption,

Adverts across Thursday's newspapers urge the public to "stay home this bank holiday weekend"

Image caption,

Public benches are taped off in Brockwell Park in London

Since the measures were brought in on 23 March, people have been told they can only leave the house for four limited reasons: Shopping for basic necessities; one form of exercise a day; any medical need and travelling to work if you cannot work from home.

Police were given powers to enforce the restrictions and have been acting with discretion, with some people receiving fines.

● **What can the police fine you for doing?**

But the chief of Northamptonshire Police warned the "three-week grace period is over" and more people could face fines or a criminal record if they do not stick to those rules.

And the assistant chief constable of Devon and Cornwall Police said police officers will patrol roads, adding: "If we stop vehicles and they are travelling to a second home, we will ask them to return to their primary residence."

Downing Street said the police will have the "full support" of government in enforcing the lockdown, adding that individual forces will use their "discretion" as to how the measures are enforced.

Restrictions, the biggest curtailment of our liberty in our lifetimes, lockdown. Call it what you will - it's not going any time soon.

The Welsh government has already said so. So has the Scottish government.

And the Culture Secretary at Westminster, Oliver Dowden, has said the evidence points to it "staying in place". And Downing Street is at pains to emphasise the importance of social distancing, and not talk about anything else. There have been some private grumbles at Westminster that Cardiff and Edinburgh have been so explicit, so soon, given there are UK-wide discussions about this.

But that is to indulge in the minutiae when the big picture is what matters.

Should we be surprised the lockdown is going to carry on for some time? No.

Yes, the government promised to look at it three weeks in. That means next week.

But it was always going to take this long for even the beginnings of evidence that it might be working to start to appear. So across the Easter weekend, and beyond bluntly, we need to get used to this.

Ministers, including from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, are looking at evidence from scientists on the impact of the measures at the Cobra meeting.

Welsh health minister Vaughan Gething - who is also taking part in the Cobra meeting - **said there was "virtually zero prospect"** of government experts advising that it was safe to lift the lockdown.

He told BBC Breakfast it was important to be "straight with the public", saying that "if we don't provide a clear message" then people might be under the impression the lockdown measures might be lifted next week anyway and "start to act as if the last few days doesn't really matter".

A UK government source said "we were surprised that the Welsh government decided to jump the gun with their own plans" before the Cobra meeting.

The source said there was a "high-level joint call" between Welsh First Minister Mark Drakeford, Welsh Secretary Simon Hart and Cabinet Office minister Michael Gove "where it was agreed that a continued UK-wide approach was best for our response to fighting coronavirus".

According **to new coronavirus laws**, the health secretary must review the restrictions at least once every 21 days, with the first review due by 16 April.

Coronavirus: How safe are takeaways and supermarket deliveries?

- By Victoria Gill
- Science correspondent, BBC News

27 March 2020

Updated 8 January 2021



IMAGE SOURCE, GETTY IMAGES

With pubs, restaurants and cafes nearly all closed because of lockdowns across the UK, there's been a growth in takeaway and delivery of food and drink.

But what are the Covid-19 risks?

Can Covid be spread by food or its packaging?

Covid-19 is a respiratory illness - it's mainly spread by droplets of fluid that come out of an infected person's nose and mouth, which can then be breathed in by people nearby. This is thought to be the main way people catch the virus.

There is little direct evidence of people catching the virus from droplets that have ended up on objects (such as food or food packaging) - although it's difficult to gather this evidence so we can't rule it out as a route of transmission.

Reputable chains and good restaurant kitchens are most likely to be geared towards professional, hygienic food preparation, meaning there would be minimal risk from a freshly cooked takeaway meal.

Deliveroo and Just Eat have issued guidance on how their riders can stay safe and make food deliveries without touching restaurant packaging.

Any risk from touching infected objects or surfaces can be pretty much eliminated by washing your hands and not touching your face.



IMAGE SOURCE,GETTY IMAGES

Should I eat with my hands?

If you get a takeaway delivery, the risk of packaging contamination can be minimised.

"Empty the contents [into a clean dish], dispose of the packaging into a refuse bag and wash your hands thoroughly before you eat," advises Prof Sally Bloomfield, of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

"Take food out of a container with a spoon and eat it with a knife and fork - not your fingers."

It might be better in the current circumstances to order hot, freshly cooked food, rather than cold or raw items. The Food Standards Agency does stress the risk from food is low and "there is no reason to avoid having ready-to-eat food delivered if it has been prepared and handled properly".

For the most cautious and vulnerable though, careful preparation and cooking may be reassuring.

"With a pizza for example, if you wanted to be really safe, you could even pop it into the microwave for a couple of minutes," Prof Bloomfield adds.

TY IMAGES

How safe are supermarket deliveries?

Delivery slots permitting, a home food drop is less risky than a trip to a supermarket as you will avoid other shoppers. Any risk would be the possible contamination of food or packaging - handled by other people - or from the delivery driver.

You could leave a note on your door asking drivers to ring the bell and step back, but Prof Bloomfield says there's no such thing as "zero risk".

"For contained or packaged goods, either store them for 72 hours before using them - or spray and wipe plastic or glass containers with bleach [carefully diluted as directed on the bottle].

"For unwrapped fresh goods, which could have been handled by anyone - wash thoroughly under running water and leave to dry," she adds.

Prof Alison Sinclair, a virology expert from the University of Sussex, adds: "There should be no more risk from using online deliveries than using a friend or volunteer to collect groceries for you." Some experts also advise using plastic bags only once during this pandemic.

But if I do go to the supermarket?

Coronavirus spreads when an infected person coughs small droplets - packed with the virus - into the air. These can cause an infection if they are breathed in, or potentially if you touch a surface they have landed on. So going shopping and mixing with other people does carry a risk. Wearing a face covering and social distancing - keeping at least 2m (about 6ft) from others - are both important ways to reduce that risk.

Supermarkets can provide an "ideal setting" for virus transfer, says Prof Bloomfield. "Many people are touching and replacing items, checkout belts, cash cards, car park ticket machine buttons, ATM payment buttons, paper receipts etc... Not to mention being in the proximity of several other people."

There are ways to offset these risks:

- Wear a mask if you can
- Wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and water, or with alcohol-based hand sanitiser before and after shopping
- Treat surfaces as if they may be contaminated, meaning you avoid touching your face after handling shopping trolleys, baskets, packages and produce
- Use contactless payment methods