



Onitsha Traditional Council

P.O.Box 1, Ime -Obi, Onitsha

Monday, 04 May, 2020.

Proclamation On The Burial Of Our Departed Loved Ones In Onitsha Ado N'Idu During The Period Of The Covid-19 Hygiene And Safety Protocols in Anambra State.

In his address to Ndi Anambra on Friday, 01 May 2020, His Excellency, Governor Willie Obiano, stated that mortuary facilities in Anambra State have come under pressure since the cessation of normal funerals resulting from the lockdown of the State in the battle against the Corona Virus (Covid-19) which is ravaging the world. Consequently, he urged Ndi Anambra to take immediate steps to bury their loved ones who are in the mortuaries in the State, but with strict compliance to the Covid-19 hygiene and safety protocols. He added that there should be no fanfare, and attendance should not be more than 30 family members. He also stated that corpses brought into Anambra State must be buried on the same day of arrival in the State.

Following due consideration of the Governor's address, and the guidelines from the World Health Organization (WHO), Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), and the State and Federal Governments, the Obi-in-Council has decided that it is imperative that Ndi Onicha should comply with the Governor's statements above. They also decided that, in so doing, our departed loved ones should be buried with restrained dignity and solemnity in line with our customs and traditions whilst complying strictly to the Covid-19 protocols. Consequently, I, by the authority vested in me as the monarch of Onicha Ado N'Idu, after due consultations, hereby make the following proclamation with regard to the burial of the dead in our domain during the period that the hygiene and safety protocols of the Covid-19 remain in effect.

1. All our departed loved ones currently in mortuaries in Anambra State should be buried as soon as possible in line with the Governor's statement. The newly dead should similarly be buried as soon as possible.

2. All intended burials must be approved by the respective Diokpa and Ndichie Ogbe and registered at Ime Obi as is the procedure in normal times. By endorsing the application for burial, the Diokpa and Ndichie Ogbe assume the responsibility of ensuring strict compliance to the Covid-19 hygiene and safety protocols. Compliance will be monitored by Ogbo So Achi Ani assisted by the Vigilante Service.

3. The entire burial, from departing the mortuary till the final interment, must not exceed two hours. Thus, the application to Ime Obi for burial must also stipulate the preferred two-hour period for the burial.

4. The Catholic and Anglican denominations in Onitsha have agreed that a short funeral service lasting not more than 45 minutes may be conducted in the church for the departed, but in strict conformity with the Covid-19 protocols. This would include having not more than 30 persons in the church (including officiating persons), wearing of face masks, hand washing before entering the church, physical distancing, no hand shaking, etc. The deceased must be taken directly from the mortuary to the church, thence directly to the final burial place. The entire sequence must not exceed two hours as stated in No.3 above. In this circumstance, a complete funeral will be deemed to have been performed and only a memorial service may be held for the deceased when normalcy returns.

5. Whether traditional or Christian burial, there should be no formal invitation to, or presence of, Umuada, Ikwu N'Ibe, or other constituent groups, associations or clubs that the deceased belonged to. Rather, these groups will be formally invited, and receive their normal entitlements, at a subsequent time when the full traditional obsequies or Christian memorial service can take place. This is in line with our ancient customs and traditions which were significantly put to practice during and immediately after the Nigerian civil war.

6. There must be no entertainment of any type, that is, no food, drinks, snacks or any form of refreshments whatsoever anywhere in connection with the burial. Similarly, there shall be no performance by music, dance or masquerade groups, and no shooting of cannon or gun shots.

7. For emphasis, it is repeated that the maximum number of persons attending a burial during the period of the Covid-19 protocols must not exceed 30 and should be restricted to close family members.

8. In line with the Governor's statement, corpses brought home from outside Anambra State must be buried immediately on arrival without any observances whatsoever, traditional or Christian. To facilitate immediate burial, the grave must be ready before the arrival of the corpse.

9. For the avoidance of any doubt, this proclamation is necessarily long and very explicit. It is a consequence of the dire situation that our community, as others in the country, now faces, which must be accorded all seriousness. Therefore, defaulting on any or all of the above directives will attract a minimum fine of Five Hundred Thousand Naira (N500,000) payable by the concerned family. In addition, the family will be brought to the attention of the State Government and law enforcement agencies for further appropriate sanctions.

10. This proclamation is a re-affirmation of the public announcement stating the conditions for burying our deceased under the Covid-19 protocols issued on 25 March, 2020 by the Chief of Staff to Ime Obi.

Whilst the above provisions may appear burdensome, they have been made with every sense of responsibility, and are a short-term sacrifice we must make in order to achieve longer-term good health, safety and wellbeing for our entire domain. The pandemic has created a war situation with an unseen but very deadly enemy for almost the entire world. Onitsha, Anambra State and Nigeria are not exempt. We must therefore make similar necessary adjustments for survival in this 21st century warfare as we had to do during the Nigerian civil war.

I count on the understanding and cooperation of the entire community for the smooth handling of this sensitive emotional matter over the period it will last. This proclamation takes immediate effect and binds all Onitsha indigenes.

Please keep safe and observe all legitimate guidelines. #Nduka.



His Majesty,
Nnaemeka A. Achebe, CFR, mni,
Obi of Onitsha.