

OSB

Information sheet: Funeral in the Muslim burial ground of the town of Osnabrück,

June 5, 2020

Funeral in the Muslim burial ground of the town of Osnabrück, cemetery Friedhof Nahne

Information as to the use of the coffin and to funeral without a coffin

The funeral law prescribes that funerals must always be carried out in a coffin. Nevertheless, the lower public health authority can allow for exceptions in the event of important personal reasons for the deceased person(s) and where there are no objections to public interest. These reasons include in particular affiliation to a specific religious community.

The procedure described herein of funerals without a coffin on the Muslim burial ground in the cemetery Friedhof Nahne has been agreed with the lower public health authority. That means, the families can now choose whether they want a funeral to take place with or without a coffin. The undertaker shall notify the desired type of funeral to the general cemetery management. No costs for a coffin shall be charged in the event of a funeral without a coffin. But there will be additional costs with the undertaker for the transport coffin required by law and with the cemetery management for supplementary work to ensure safety. Therefore, any potential financial advantages due to waiver of a coffin will be irrelevant.

Funeral with a coffin

Where the funeral is carried out with a coffin, the undertaker shall transport the coffin in the coroner car to the cemetery. The washing room of the cemetery shall be available for the purpose of ritual washing of the deceased person. Such coffin shall be lifted from the car by the family or taken out of the washing room and brought to the gravesite.

The open grave shall be prepared such that the coffin can be placed on two square timbers above the grave. Then, the family members shall lift the coffin by means of ropes, shall remove the square timbers and the coffin shall be lowered into the grave. The family members can fill the grave with earth, using shovels provided to this end. A so-called support box is provided inside the grave which must have a minimum depth of 1.70m. This structure prevents earth from slipping into the grave while persons are standing on its rim above and who might otherwise fall into the grave, too. Nevertheless, such support box must be removed prior to filling the grave with earth.

The cemetery management employees shall be given a sign by the undertaker when the grave shall be filled with earth such that the coffin is no longer be visible. Thereupon, a small power shovel shall approach the grave. While the family members shall keep a safety distance, the power shovel shall tear the support box out of the grave. Afterwards, the family member can

continue to close the grave.

Funeral with a coffin in the burial ground for children of up to six years

For safety reasons, support material was integrated for digging purposes in the burial ground for children of up to six year, where the condition of the soil so requires. This is necessary in any case starting from a depth of the grave of 100cm and a size of the grave of 100cm. From this size of grave as a minimum and in case of unstable soil even for smaller sizes, running boards are also positioned in the longitudinal direction on both sides. This protective measure is necessary in order to prevent any collapse due to any approach by the family members. When the child is buried in the grave, filling of such grave can be carried out by the family members without interruption.

Funeral without a coffin

In case of funeral without a coffin, the undertaker shall bring the body wrapped in ritual shrouds to the cemetery in a transport coffin. Alternatively, the body shall ritually be wrapped in shrouds following washing in the washing room in the cemetery and be placed into a transport coffin. Subsequently, the latter shall be carried by the family members in order to be as close as possible to the gravesite.

At this point of time, the gravesite has been prepared by the cemetery management to enable a coffin-free funeral: A metal plate containing structure covers the open grave. This allows for placement of the body above the open grave and ensuring the family members' safety. The metal plates are covered by a white linen sheet used to lower the body. The transport coffin is placed onto a device made available by the municipality. The family members shall take the body out of this coffin and place it onto the sheets of the cover. Four to six family members shall surround the body (laterally as well as at the head and the feet) and grasp the respective ends of the linen sheet.

When the body is lifted and the family members are safely standing on the foot grids outside the metal plates, a member of the cemetery management shall open the grave cover. Then, the body shall be lowered into the grave. A ladder shall be available enabling one family member to descend into the grave and to orientate the body in the direction towards Mecca. Subsequently, the body shall be covered with wooden plates provided above such that no earth shall fall onto the body when filling the grave. Thereupon, the family member shall leave the grave, the ladder shall be removed and the grave can be filled. Here, too, the support box must be removed after some time, prior to the grave being filled entirely.

Funeral without a coffin in the burial ground for children of up to six years

In case of funeral of a child without a coffin, the undertaker shall bring the body wrapped in ritual shrouds to the Muslim burial ground of the cemetery in a small transport container. In the case of very young children without any obligation of funeral, the family members can even bring the

child to the cemetery by themselves. Such transport container shall be approached as much as possible to the gravesite.

At this point of time, the gravesite has been prepared by the cemetery management to enable a coffin-free funeral: The open grave is covered by a board covered by a white linen sheet. The family members shall take the body out of the transport container and place it onto the sheets of the cover. Two family members shall stand at the head and the feet of the body and grasp the linen sheet at its ends. After lifting the body, the board shall be torn away by a member of the municipality. Then, the body shall be lowered into the grave and can be orientated towards Mecca. Subsequently, the body shall be covered with a wooden cover in order to prevent any undesirable contact with the earth. Afterwards, the family member can fill the grave.