

Iranians licking religious shrines in defiance of coronavirus spread

By [Yaron Steinbuch](#)

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This is no way to lick the coronavirus.

Shocking footage has emerged of Iranians tempting fate by licking the doors and a burial mound at the Fatima Masumeh Shrine in Qom, the epicenter of the [Islamic Republic's COVID-19 outbreak](#).

Journalist Masih Alinejad shared video of the disturbing practice, noting that officials have refused to shut down the religious shrines — while the death toll in the country stands at 66, with more than 1,500 infected.

“These pro-regime people are licking the shrines & encouraging people to visit them,” [he said in a tweet](#). “Iran’s authorities are endangering lives of Iranians & the world.”

Pilgrims routinely kiss and lick religious shrines, including in Qom, which is considered a “place for healing,” [according to the UK's Daily Star](#).

Those who were photographed licking the doors said they “don’t care what happens,” the news outlet reported.

Despite restrictions on who is allowed in and out of Qom, the seventh-largest city in Iran, it has not been locked down during the medical crisis.

“The smell of disinfectants has become my nightmare. The city smells like a cemetery, a morgue,” said retired teacher Ziba Rezaie, according to the Star.

Meanwhile, [it was reported Monday](#) that a close adviser to Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei died of the illness.

Two key officials also have been confirmed to be infected, including Masoumeh Ebtekar, a vice president better known as “Sister Mary,” who served as spokeswoman for the students who seized the US Embassy in Tehran in 1979.