

21757 - Muslim attitudes towards violence and how to react to kaafir aggression against the Muslim community

the question

In view of the critical situation which we Muslims are now facing in America, with aggression – which may reach the point of killing – shots being fired at mosques, women with hijab being harassed in the streets, assaults against Muslim students in schools and universities, persecution of some Muslim employees in their workplaces, all because of the recent events in which some Muslim persons are being accused of causing explosions in the capital and elsewhere, we want to ask whether it is permissible for us to forego praying in jamaa'ah or praying Jumu'ah in the mosque? And what about our women's hijab? And what is the ruling on us foregoing Islamic dress?

Detailed answer

and blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of Allaah.

What we have heard about what our Muslim brothers are going through in kaafir countries in the north and the south, where they are being harassed and persecuted for something in which they did not take part and in which they played no role, is not strange, given the wrongdoing and hatred of the kuffaar, even though they claim to be the people of justice, fairness and freedom. What is the crime of a Muslim woman who walks down the street in her hijab? What is the crime of a Muslim who leaves his home to go and pray, not to spread mischief in the land? What is the crime of a Muslim employee who goes to his company or a student who goes to his university or a schoolgirl who is walking to her school, not going out to bomb and destroy? If the western man in the street was fair-minded – at least with himself – he would go and take revenge on the people who plotted and took part in harming him. But one who does not fear God could do anything, and the very least that the Muslims will be faced with is curses and insults. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“and you shall certainly hear much that will grieve you from those who received the Scripture before you (Jews and Christians) and from those who ascribe partners to Allaah; but if you persevere patiently, and become Al-Muttaqoon (the pious) then verily, that will be a determining factor in all affairs”[Aal ‘Imraan 3:186]

Our attitude must be clear; we must explain to the kuffaar the ruling of Islamic sharee’ah concerning harming and killing others. We should tell them that Islam forbids harming innocent people in any way, whether that involves harming their bodies, their wealth or their honour. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “There should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm.” It is not permissible to kill a kaafir who is not hostile or who has a legitimate peace treaty with the Muslims; rather treating a non-hostile kaafir with kindness is part of the Islamic religion, especially if that is done to call him to Islam and soften his heart (towards Islam). Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Allaah does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who fought not against you on account of religion nor drove you out of your homes. Verily, Allaah loves those who deal with equity”[al-Mumtahinah 60:8]

At times of war against the kuffaar, it is not permissible for a Muslim to deliberately kill a kaafir child or woman who is not bearing arms against the Muslims or helping in the fight. It was narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said to the Muslim army: “Go out in the name of Allaah and by the help of Allaah, following the way of the Messenger of Allaah. Do not kill any old man, infant, child or woman... spread goodness and do good, for Allaah loves those who do good.” (Narrated by Abu Dawood, 2614; its isnaad includes Khaalid ibn al-Faraz, of whom Ibn Hajar said in al-Taqreeb, he is maqbool (acceptable) i.e., if there are corroborating reports)

This is supported by the advice which Abu Bakr al-Siddeeq (may Allaah be pleased with him) gave to the commander of his army: “I advise you of ten things: do not kill a woman, or a child, or any old person, or cut down any fruit trees...” (al-Muwatta’, 982, Kitaab al-Jihaad).

The kaafirs whom the Muslims fight and inflict harm and loss upon are the kaafirs who fight the Muslims and drive them out of their homes, or help to drive them out of their homes and punish and mistreat them, and who stand in the way of calling people to Islam and prevent people from following the path of Allaah, and prevent the spread of Islam. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“It is only as regards those who fought against you on account of religion, and have driven you out of your homes, and helped to drive you out, that Allaah forbids you to befriend them. And whosoever will befriend them, then such are the Zaalimoon (wrongdoers those who disobey Allaah).”[al-Mumtahinah 60:9]

Such people are to be fought against when [the Muslims] have the power to do so, and when fighting them and declaring jihad against them is more likely to serve a purpose. But when you can achieve your purpose with gentleness and kindness, it is not right to resort to violence and force. Muslims should only use force when they are compelled to, and as a last resort. They should not initiate fighting, unless there is some cause on the part of the kaafirs, such as their fighting the Muslims, or helping other enemies of the Muslims, or preventing them from following the path of Allaah and establishing the law of Allaah in the land.

We should also remind these kaafirs of the massacres which have been carried out and are still being carried out against Muslims in all parts of the world, in Bosnia, Kosova, Chechnya, Palestine and Kashmir, which are being supported by Jews, Christians and others. Is the blood of the Muslims cheaper than the blood of others? Should there be mourners for non-Muslims who are killed and not for Muslims who are killed?

Moreover, when the Orthodox Christians carried out massacres in Bosnia and Kosova, in which the numbers of those killed exceeded 200,000, apart from those who were wounded or raped, and the economic losses that resulted, did the Muslims in the Arab and Islamic countries launch attacks against the Orthodox Christians who live in their countries, or kill any of them, or open fire against their churches and subject them to terror?! What does this tell you?

It is very important for Muslims to explain these things to non-Muslims, in order to establish proof against the kuffaar. This is something that Allaah wants. Secondly, among the kuffaar there are intelligent and fair-minded people, and people who are receptive to the guidance of Islam; perhaps they will be affected by a clear explanation. Thirdly, no Muslim should permit himself to be accused without explaining his innocence. The distorted image of Muslims is one of the things that is keeping the kaafirs away from the truth and being affected by the Muslims; indeed it may make them treat the Muslims like outcasts, resulting in additional wrongdoing towards the Muslims.

With regard to the question, it is permissible for a Muslim at times of tribulation, when they cannot walk safely through the streets or reach the mosque safe and sound, to pray at home and not attend prayers in jamaa'ah. But we must examine the situation more carefully before deciding not to attend Jumu'ah prayer because of its extreme importance. So we should not stop praying in jamaa'ah or stop attending Jumu'ah prayers on the grounds of mere speculation or an unlikely possibility of aggression. Rather if a person is certain or believes it to be most likely that he will be attacked if he goes to the mosque, then it is permissible for him not to go.

Among the opinions of the scholars concerning the permissibility of refraining from going to Jumu'ah prayers or prayers in jamaa'ah because of fear is the comment of Ibn Qudaamah (may Allaah have mercy on him) who said: "The one who is sick and the one who is afraid is excused from attending them - i.e., Jumu'ah and prayers in jamaa'ah - according to the view of most of the scholars. Ibn 'Abbaas narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: 'Whoever hears the call to prayer and is not prevented from responding by an excuse -' They said, 'What is the excuse, O Messenger of Allaah?' He said, 'Fear or sickness, (otherwise) the prayer that he offers will not be accepted.'"

(narrated by Abu Dawood, 1/130. Shaykh al-Albaani classed this version of the hadeeth as da'eef (weak), but he classed as saheeh (sound) the version narrated by Ibn Maajah, 793, which says: "Whoever hears the call and does not come, his prayer is not valid, except for one who has an excuse." Al-Irwaa' 2/337). And Bilaal used to give the call to prayer; one

day the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) came when he was sick, and said, 'Tell Abu Bakr to lead the people in prayer.'" (al-Bukhaari, 633; Muslim, 418)

Fear is of three kinds: fear for oneself, fear for one's wealth, and fear for one's family. The first kind means fearing capture by an oppressive ruler, or an enemy, or a thief, or attack by wild animals, or a flood, etc., which may cause harm to oneself.

The second kind means fear for one's wealth if one leaves home, as we have mentioned, such as oppressive rulers, thieves and the like, or fear that one's house may be broken into or burned down or something like that; in such cases one is excused from attending Jumu'ah and prayers in jamaa'ah.

The third kind means fear for one's child and family. In all such cases one is excused from attending Jumu'ah and prayers in jamaa'ah. This was the view of 'Ataa', al-Hasan, al-Oozaa'i and al-Shaafa'i, and we know of no difference of opinion concerning this matter."

(summarized from al-Mughni, 2/376).

In Fataawa al-Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azeez ibn Baaz, when a man asked him about refraining from attending prayers in jamaa'ah because he was afraid for his wife, he said, "If there is some danger to your wife (at home) and she is not safe, and she is surrounded by things which give rise to fear, then he is excused for praying at home because of his fear for his wife..." Then he said: "But if your wife is not safe and the place is not safe, and danger is present, then it is o.k. for you to pray at home; this is a legitimate excuse..."

Majmoo' Fataawa Samaahat al-Shaykh Ibn Baaz (may Allaah have mercy on him), 12/42

With regard to Muslim women, they should stay in their homes and not go out – as much as they can – lest they be exposed to harm. Their relatives and neighbours should help them to meet their needs so that they will not be forced to go out. This is a means of earning great reward by helping those who are in desperate need.

With regard to Muslim men giving up distinctive Islamic dress and wearing the clothes commonly found in the kaafir society in which he lives, that is o.k., especially at times of

persecution and harassment. Imaam Ibn Taymiyah said:

“The Muslim in a kaafir country that is at war with the Muslims or otherwise is not commanded to differ from them in outward appearance, because of the harm that may result from that. Rather it is recommended or obligatory for men to resemble them sometimes in his outward appearance, if that serves a religious purpose such as calling them to Islam, or finding out about their true state of affairs in order to inform the Muslims of that, or warding off their harm from the Muslims, and other righteous goals.” (Iqtidaa’ al-Siraat al-Mustaqeem, p. 176).

The words of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah must be understood correctly. He is speaking of special circumstances or cases of necessity; he does not mean at all that Muslims should become assimilated with the kaafirs and do evil things or drink alcohol with them or that Muslim children should go to churches and lose their Islamic identity. Rather what is meant is that it is permissible to forego distinctive Islamic dress – for example – and wear clothing of the type prevalent in the kaafir country, and to speak the language of the kaafirs, etc., in order to ward off the harm of the kaafirs, especially in an atmosphere that is charged with hostility, such as that mentioned in the question.

Perhaps these events will give the Muslims who are living in kaafir lands unnecessarily and for no shar’i purpose the opportunity to review their situation and consider going back to the Muslim world and making hijrah from the land of the kaafirs.

We ask Allaah to protect us and all our Muslim brothers from harm, wrongdoing and evil, and guide us to the right path. May Allaah bless our Prophet Muhammad and grant him peace.