

82784 - Should he work for a company that sells original-brand inks and others that are counterfeit?

the question

I started to work as an inventory clerk for an ink-supply company. This company deals with printer inks, some of which are original brands and others are counterfeit. The company mostly sells non-original ink, but when selling it they tell the purchaser that there are original-brand inks and counterfeit inks which they call "second grade." The customer is aware that there are original and counterfeit products. Please note that the companies that manufacture original-brand inks are opposed to counterfeit inks. What is the Islamic ruling concerning that? Is it permissible for me to work in this company or not?

Detailed answer

There is nothing wrong with companies and factories selling goods which are second- or third-grade. In almost everything that is manufactured and produced nowadays there are different grades and different qualities of manufactured goods, depending on the materials of which they are made, and people vary in what they can afford to buy. Naturally not all goods that are sold are original brands, because prices are high and many are not able to afford to buy them.

The scholars are unanimously agreed that the basic principle with regard to transactions is that they are permissible. What is meant by the principle is the general guideline which is applicable at all times and in all situations. The evidence for this principle includes the following:

1.. The verse (interpretation of the meaning):

{It is He who created for you all of that which is on the earth} [al-Baqarah 2:29].

2.. The verse (interpretation of the meaning):

{Do you not see that Allah has made subject to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth and amply bestowed upon you His favors, [both] apparent and unapparent?} [Luqman 31:20].

3.. It was narrated that Abu'd-Darda' (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Whatever Allah has permitted in His Book is permissible and whatever He has prohibited is prohibited, and whatever He has said nothing about is a concession, so accept from Allah His concession, for Allah does not forget." Then he recited this verse (interpretation of the meaning): {And never is your Lord forgetful} [Maryam 19:64].

Narrated by al-Hakim (2/375); classed as hasan by al-Albani in *Ghayat al-Maram* (p. 14).

But you should differentiate between goods that are second- or third-grade and goods that are counterfeit, which carry the name of the original brand but are of lower quality than it, because this is cheating the purchasers, and doing that involves deceiving and lying, which the Muslim should be far above doing.

Based on that, if these inks are second-grade, then it is permissible to sell them on condition that the true quality be explained to the purchaser, and on condition that they do not bear the name or trademark of another ink. But if those inks are counterfeit inks which resemble the original-brand ink in appearance, packaging and name, then this is cheating and deceiving, and it is not permissible for you to buy them or sell them to the people, because the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever deceives us is not one of us." Narrated by Muslim (101).

And Allah knows best.