

1. CAN Zakat *al-Fitr* BE GIVEN TO NON-MUSLIM

Zakat al-Fitr is given to the poor and needy at the end of the annual Ramadan fast. Some Muslims are of the opinion that it is not acceptable to give *zakat al-fitr* to people of other faiths. As a result, they refrain from giving *zakat al-fitr* to people of other faiths, even if they are in need.

Is it permissible to give *zakat al-fitr* to non-Muslims?

Sayyid Sabiq, in his *Fiqh-us-Sunnah*, describes *Zakat al-Fitr* in the following words:

“*Zakat al-Fitr* was made obligatory in the month of Sha‘bān in the second year of the *Hijra*. Its purpose is to purify one who fasts from any indecent act or speech and to help the poor and needy. This view is based upon the hadith reported by Abu Dawood, Ibn Majah, and al-Daraqutni from Ibn Abbas. The Messenger of Allah, upon whom be peace, enjoined *Zakat al-Fitr* on the one who fasts, to shield one’s self from any indecent act or speech and for the purpose of providing food for the needy. It is accepted as *Zakah* for the person who pays it before the ‘*Eid Salah*, and it is *sadaqa* for the one who pays it after the *Salah*.”¹

Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi explains:

“*Zakat al-Fitr*, expiation (*kaffara*) and vows are like voluntary charity as far as giving to (non-Muslim) People of the Pledge is concerned. Abu Hanifa,

¹ Sayyid Sabiq, *Fiqh al-Sunnah*, vol.3, no.87a, under the title “The Purpose of *Zakat al-Fitr*”, in Alim 6.0

Muhammad, and some other jurists permit paying these charities to People of the Pledge on the grounds that texts about these charities are general, such as the *āyāt* [verses], “*If you make your sadaqa public, that is good for you. But if you conceal it and give it to the poor, that is better for you, and We will erase some of your bad actions from you*” (2:271), and “*The expiation in that case is to feed ten poor people with the average amount you feed your family*” (5:92), and “*And anyone who is unable to do that must feed sixty poor people*” (58:4).

“These *āyāt* make no distinction between poor believers and unbelievers, which is an expression of the generally required good treatment of the People of the Pledge. Obviously, these scholars believe it is undoubtedly better to give to the Muslim poor since it helps a person who obeys Allah. Abu Hanifa established the condition that an unbeliever must not be fighting against Muslims in order to be given *Zakat al-Fitr*.² Lastly, Abu Ubayd and Ibn Abi Shayba report that some followers [of the Companions of the Prophet] gave monks *Zakat al-Fitr*.”³

Some scholars, therefore, are of the opinion that it is not prohibited to give *zakat al-fitr* to people of other faiths who are deserving.

² *Al-Bada'i*, vol.2, p.49, Cited in Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Zakat*. Trans. from Arabic by Dr Monzer Kahf, Dar al-Taqwa, London, 1999, p.449

³ *Al-Amwal*, pp.613-614 and Ibn Abi Shayba, *Musannaf*, vol.4, p. 39, Cited in Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Zakat*. Trans. from Arabic by Dr Monzer Kahf, Dar al-Taqwa, London, 1999, p.449