119955 - Ruling on one who says that the poverty of Muslims is because they have too many children

the question

What is the Islamic ruling, in your view, on one who says that the poverty of Muslims and their weakness and backwardness in the current age is the result of the population explosion and having many children, that outpaces economic progress? What is your advice to someone who believes that?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

We think that this opinion is wrong, because it is Allah, may He be exalted, who grants abundant provision to whomever He wills or grants it in scant measure. The reason is not the large size of the population, because there is no creature on earth but its provision is granted by Allah, but Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, gives and withholds on the basis of wisdom.

Our advice to the one who holds such views is that he should fear Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, and give up this false belief. He should understand that no matter how much the population of the world increases, if Allah so willed, He could grant them all abundant provision, but Allah says in His Book (interpretation of the meaning):

“And if Allah were to enlarge the provision for His slaves, they would surely rebel in the earth, but He sends down by measure as He wills. Verily! He is in respect of His slaves, the Well-Aware, the All-Seer (of things that benefit them)”

[ash-Shoora 42:27].

Shaykh Muhammad ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him)

Fataawa ‘Ulama’ al-Balad al-Haraam (p. 1084)

Undoubtedly calling for restrictions or reductions on the numbers of children one has is contrary to the command of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) who said: “Marry women who are loving and fertile, for I shall be proud of your large numbers before other nations.” Narrated by Abu Dawood (2050); classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Irwa’ al-Ghaleel (1784)

Allah, may He be exalted, has guaranteed provision for all creatures, as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And no (moving) living creature is there on earth but its provision is due from Allah”

[Hood 11:6].

Opposing population increase, whether by imposing means of contraception or abortion or otherwise, based on the belief that resources are not sufficient for an increased population, or that the interests of humanity dictate reduction in population growth, this is explicitly denying the Lordship of Allah and His care for His creation, and the abundance of His provision. It is akin to the beliefs of the polytheists, who used to kill their children for fear of poverty. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“kill not your children because of poverty - We provide sustenance for you and for them”

[al-An‘aam 6:151]

“And kill not your children for fear of poverty. We provide for them and for you. Surely, the killing of them is a great sin”

[al-Isra’ 17:31].

The large size of the ummah is one of the blessings of Allah, may He be exalted, for which He deserves to be thanked and He alone deserves to be worshipped. Hence Allah, may He be exalted, tells us that His Prophet Shu‘ayb (peace be upon him) reminded his people of some of the blessings that Allah had bestowed upon them, as he said (interpretation of the meaning):

“And remember when you were but few, and He multiplied you”

[al-A‘raaf 7:86].

The large size of the ummah is one of the means of its strength and victory over its enemies. Hence Allah, may He be exalted, says concerning the Children of Israel (interpretation of the meaning):

“Then We gave you once again, a return of victory over them. And We helped you with wealth and children and made you more numerous in man power”

[al-Isra’ 17:7].

According to a future study about Egypt, Dr Muhammad Sayyid Ghallaab said:

Population increase has never been a burden, and it is not right to regard it as such in the coming century, for it is what allowed Egypt to achieve progress in all eras.

According to another study, Dr Mustafa al-Fiqqi indicates that one of the most important factors that allowed Egypt to play an influential role in the Arab world is that it is regarded as the storehouse of human resources.

Prof Khurshid Ahmad, the expert economist, says:

In the future, prevalence and power can only be on the side of countries that enjoy an increase in population and at the same time are advanced in various scientific fields. There is nothing that could enable the Western nations to maintain their international dominance and leadership apart from trying to support the movement that promotes population control and contraception in Asia and Africa. For that reason, the Western countries today are striving their utmost to increase their own populations, but at the same time they are resorting to the best media and propaganda methods that they have in order to support the population control movement in Asian and African countries.

He also said:

How true are the words of Organski [an American thinker] who said: In the future, power will only

be on the side of the camp that has the greater number of people.

He also said:

It is obvious to the student of history that population size is of fundamental political significance. Therefore every civilisation or superpower has focused its efforts on increasing its population during the stages of its rise and development. Hence the well-known historian Prof. Will Durant regards having a large population is one of the most important means of civil progress. Prof Arnold Toynbee also regards increasing the population size as one of the most important challenges to be met in order for any human civilization to exist and progress.

In order to avoid any misinterpretation of what is stated above, we should note that population increase on its own is not sufficient to achieve progress, establish a civilisation and prevail over the enemy. Rather it is an essential means of achieving that, but it is not the only means, because it should be accompanied by a strong education system, sound upbringing of the new generation, the establishment of justice and security in society, and fighting corruption, and – over and above all of that – faith and piety. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And if the people of the towns had believed and had the Taqwa (piety), certainly, We should have opened for them blessings from the heaven and the earth, but they belied (the Messengers). So We took them (with punishment) for what they used to earn (polytheism and crimes, etc.)”

[al-A‘raaf 7:96].

The voices of the enemies of Islam have begun to cry out, warning against the large numbers of Muslims, and saying that this is one of the main dangers that threaten them.

In a book entitled Changes in the Geography of the Middle East by Prof. Arnon Soffer (1984 CE) – which is a textbook in the Jewish state that is regarded as a reference work for specialists there – the writer states that the high population increase in Egypt is of concern to Israel, because of the possibility of establishing a strong army.

On 19/1/1988 the Daily Telegraph newspaper published an article entitled “The Population Time-

Bomb in the Mediterranean Basin", in which the author discusses this issue that gives the West sleepless nights, namely the great population increase in the countries to the south-east of the Mediterranean, and the population decline of the countries to its north. The article quotes a report of the United Nations Environment Program which states that two-thirds of the inhabitants of the Mediterranean in the nineteen-fifties were European, in countries extending from the Straits of Gibraltar to the Bosporus, but this picture will be reversed by 2025, when the Mediterranean will become an Islamic – if not Arab – sea.

This article indicates, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that the one who propagates the issues of population control and restricting population increase among the Muslims, and supports all activities that are striving to achieve that under many slogans, such as family planning, social planning and so on… We say that the one who supports that is only serving the enemies of Islam and the Muslims and is working in their interests, whether they are aware of that or not.

Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

As for the view that supports population control, this is undoubtedly one of the plots of the enemies of the Muslims, who want the Muslims not to increase in number, because the very idea scares them, for the Muslims will become self-sufficient and will not need anyone else; thus the Muslims will be able to produce their own food and establish their own businesses, and that will lead to improvement in the economy and serve other interests and aims. But if the Muslims remain few, they will become humiliated and will need others in everything. End quote.

Tafseer Soorat al-Baqarah (2/88)

Finally, we need to increase the population, along with Islamization of development plans, Islamization of regulations, and Islamization of laws, in addition to benefitting from modern sciences.

For more information, please see the book Harakat Tahdeed an-Nasl (Birth Control Movement) by Abu'l-A'la al-Mawdoodi (Maududi) (p. 178-186); Majallat al-Bayaan (issue no, 11/107, 191)

And Allah knows best.