152261 - Is Fishing Prohibited in Islam?

the question

Is it permissible to go fishing as a sport, knowing that we will not waste or mess about with the fish; rather we will eat it?

Summary of answer

1- The basic ruling with regard to hunting is that it is permissible except for one who is in a state of Ihram. Fishing and the pursuit of other aquatic creatures is not prohibited for the one who is in Ihram.
2- If the hunter or fisherman does not have any particular need for what he catches, and he is only doing it as a sport (i.e., as a leisure activity or for fun), then hunting or fishing in this case is disliked.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Is fishing prohibited?

The basic ruling with regard to hunting [translator's note: in Arabic the same word is used to refer to hunting or fishing] is that it is permissible, except for one who is in a state of Ihram (for Hajj or `Umrah) or one who is in the Haram zone (the boundaries of the Makkan Sanctuary). This applies to hunting on land; with regard to fishing and the pursuit of other aquatic creatures, it is not prohibited for the one who is in Ihram. Allah, may He be Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Lawful to you is what you catch from the sea and its use for food - for the benefit of yourselves and those who travel, but forbidden is what you catch on land as long as you are in a state of

Ihram (for Hajj or Umrah). And fear Allah to Whom you shall be gathered back." [Al-Ma'idah 5:96]

If a person hunts permissible animals with a permissible intention, such as earning a living by selling them or eating them, there is nothing wrong with hunting or catching them, according to scholarly consensus.

Similarly, if a person's main aim, when catching fish, is permissible in principle, such as leisure and the like, but he will make use of what he catches, such as selling it or eating it, and so on, then there is nothing wrong with him doing such things.

Is fishing prohibited as a sport?

If the hunter or fisherman does not have any particular need for what he catches, and he is only doing it for sport (as a leisure activity or for fun), then the ruling on hunting or fishing in this case changes from permissible to disliked.

It says in Al-Mawsu`ah Al-Fiqhiyyah (28/115):

"If it is known that the basic principle with regard to hunting (or fishing) is that it is permissible, it cannot be deemed to be otherwise, or to be deemed disliked, prohibited or recommended or obligatory except in specific cases for which there is specific evidence, as follows:

… Hunting or fishing is disliked if the purpose behind it is to have fun or do it as a leisure activity, because the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Do not take any living being as a target." (Narrated by Muslim, 1957)."

More than one of the scholars have stated that hunting and fishing in this case is disliked.

Al-Nafrawi Al-Maliki (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

"Hunting for fun is disliked." (Al-Fawakih Ad-Dawani, 1/390)

Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“Hunting to meet a need is permissible; as for hunting for no purpose other than leisure or sport, it is disliked, and if it involves wronging people by transgressing upon their crops or property, then it is prohibited.”(Al-Fatawa Al-Kubra, 5/550)

Shaykh Mansur Al-Buhuti (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“It is disliked to hunt for sport, because that is an idle pursuit. If the hunting involves wronging people by transgressing upon their crops or property, then it is prohibited, because the means take the same ruling as the ends.” (Kashshaf Al-Qina`, 6/213)

Ibn `Abidin (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“In Majma‘ Al-Fatawa it says: (Hunting) is disliked if it is for leisure.” (Radd Al-Muhtar, 5/297)

Is it permissible to fish as a sport if one will benefit from it?

If the purpose of the hunting or fishing is leisure and sport, but the person will benefit from it, by either eating, selling or giving away his catch as a gift and the like, then it no longer comes under the ruling of being disliked, as mentioned here, and the hunting or fishing reverts to the original ruling of permissibility, because in this case it is not purely for the purpose of sport and it does not involve damage to property or tormenting the animals caught.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Ibrahim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“It is not prescribed to cause death to a living being for sport, such as hunters shooting from moving vehicles, when the intention is not to eat it or feed it to others. In the Hadith it says: “Whoever kills a sparrow unlawfully will be questioned about it.” (Fatawa wa Rasa’il Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Aal Ash-Shaykh, 12/231)

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

“If it is for an Islamically-acceptable purpose, such as eating or selling it, as in the case of those who catch bustards, lizards and rabbits, and other permissible animals, to eat them or sell them,

then there is nothing wrong with it. However, if a person is hunting or fishing in order to kill the animal and leave it there, this is not right. The least that can be said about it is that it is very disliked. No one should hunt an animal that can be eaten unless it is for a purpose, either to eat it or feed it to the poor or give it as a gift or sell it. As for hunting it for sport, that is not permissible; it is a kind of leisure or "fun" that is not appropriate on the part of the believer. It was narrated that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) forbade hunting, except for food or to make use of (the animal caught)." (From the website of Shaykh Ibn Baz)

To sum up, hunting or fishing, as mentioned in the question, is permissible and there is nothing wrong with it, so long as it is possible to make use of what is caught, by eating it, selling it and so on.

For more details, please see this category: Rulings on sport, leisure and entertainment

And Allah knows best.