256475 - Can a Doctor Interrupt Prayer to Attend to An Emergency?

the question

Sometimes only one doctor is on call, and he goes to offer his prayer, and whilst he is praying he is notified of an emergency case. Should he interrupt his prayer so that the patient will not be harmed because of his delay or what should he do?

Summary of answer

If the doctor has started to pray, then he is told of an emergency case and there is no one available to take care of it except him, then he must interrupt his prayer and treat the patient.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

If the doctor has started to pray, then he is told of an emergency case and there is no one available to take care of it except him, then must interrupt his prayer and treat the patient . This is because the prayer may be repeated later, or even made up after its time has ended, whereas if the life of the patient is lost because of the doctor's delay, he cannot be brought back.

The same applies if the patient suffers physical harm because of such a delay.

One of the well-established principles according to the scholars is: "that which could be lost is to be given precedence over that which cannot be lost".

It says in *Kashshaf Al-Qina'* (1/380):

"We should protect a disbeliever whose life is to be protected because he is living under Muslim rule, or there is a truce or treaty with his people, from falling into a well and the like, such as a snake that is heading towards him, just as we should protect a Muslim from that, because both

lives are to be protected according to Islamic teachings.

And we should save a drowning person and the like, such as one who is caught in a fire, so prayer should be interrupted for that purpose , whether the prayer is obligatory or supererogatory.

What appears to be the case is that this applies even if there is not much time left for the prayer, because the individual can make up the prayer after the time for it has ended, unlike saving the one who is drowning and the like."

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

"Interrupting the prayer for an important reason , or to ward off danger, such as saving one who is caught in a fire or is drowning, or warding off a human or animal who wants to kill him, and the like – there is nothing wrong with any of that." (*Fatawa Nur 'Ala Ad-Darb* by Ibn Baz, 9/303)

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

"He may interrupt his prayer to save one whose life is to be protected [according to Islamic teachings], because saving one whose life is to be protected is obligatory, and doing that will be missed if he continues praying. As for prayer, continuing it is obligatory, but he can make it up after saving that person whose life is to be protected." (*Fatawa Nur 'Ala Ad-Darb* by Ibn `Uthaymin).

And Allah knows best.