267554 - Ruling on giving zakah to charitable organisations that help displaced people and migrants

the question

Is it permissible to give zakah to humanitarian organisations that help displaced people and migrants who have fled hotspots, especially in light of current circumstances in some regions, when thousands of displaced families are living in camps?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

It is not permissible to give obligatory zakah to any except the eight categories specified by Allah, may He be exalted, in His Book (interpretation of the meaning):

“Zakah expenditures are only for the poor and for the needy and for those employed to collect [zakah] and for bringing hearts together [for Islam] and for freeing captives [or slaves] and for those in debt and for the cause of Allah and for the [stranded] traveler - an obligation [imposed] by Allah . And Allah is Knowing and Wise”

[at-Tawbah 9:60].

For detailed information on these categories, please see the answer to question no. 46209.

Giving zakah to organisations that help the needy is in effect delegating these organisations to deliver zakah to those who are entitled to it. That is permissible on condition that those in charge of the organisation are trustworthy and will deliver the zakah to the categories prescribed in Islamic teaching.

But if they will give the money to both rich and poor, Muslim and non-Muslim, then zakah should not be given to them.

It is better for the individual to distribute his zakah himself, so that he can be certain that it has reached one who is entitled to it.

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked:

In our region there is a branch of a charitable organisation. Is it permissible to give some of the zakah of my wealth to them?

He replied: If those who are in charge of this branch of the charitable organisation are people who are trustworthy in terms of their religious commitment and knowledge, then there is nothing wrong with giving them some of your zakah , and telling them that it is zakah , lest they distribute it in the manner of regular charity.

But if you do not know how they are, then it is better for you to give it yourself. In fact the best is to give the zakah yourself in all cases, because a person’s giving his zakah directly himself, being certain that it has reached those who are entitled to it, and being rewarded for making the effort to make sure that it reaches those who are entitled to it, is better than his giving it to someone else to distribute it on his behalf.

End quote from Fataawa Noor ‘ala ad-Darb (7/408).

Secondly:

If the organisation will take the money and use it to buy things to be given to those who are entitled to zakah , such as food, medicine, and clothing, then this is a matter concerning which there is a difference of opinion among the fuqaha’. The majority are of the view that it is not valid, but some of the fuqaha’ are of the view that it is valid; this is the view of the Hanafis, and was the view favoured by Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah, if that serves the interests of the poor.

In fatwa no. 79337, we stated that Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azeez ibn Baaz (may Allah have mercy on him)

allowed the giving of zakah in the form of goods, such as medicine and food, instead of giving it in the form of cash, if that serves an interest. But if it is to be used to buy things that those who are entitled to it will not take possession of themselves, such as ambulances or equipment to treat the sick, then it is not permissible to buy such things from zakah funds.

See the answer to question no. 212183.

And Allah knows best.