52886 - Is it permissible for him to trim his beard so that he will not be exposed to harm?

the question

My friend is going to get married in an Islamic country. Alhamdillah he is a practicing Muslim (May Allah taala guide us all) and observes the sunnah of "leaving the beard". In this country where he is going, those with long beards are detained (especially those of Pakistani origin) at the airport and the secret police often follow them. He does not want to cause hardship to his wife's family, who are likely to be followed and harassed by the government. Therefore, he wishes to trim his beard slightly just for this occasion and grow it back. If not for the possibility of bringing hardship to his in-laws he would not want to trim. Please advise .

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Letting the beard grow is obligatory according to sharee’ah, and shaving it is haraam. In the answer to question no. 1189 we have stated the ruling on shaving the beard, and that shaving it is a haraam action.

Ibn Hazm (may Allaah have mercy on him) narrated that the scholars are unanimously agreed that it is not permissible to shave the beard.

Al-Muhalla, 2/189

With regard to shaving it for fear of persecution or exposure to harm, this fear is not all of one level. In some cases it may be what is likely to happen, and in other cases it may be imaginary, and in yet others it may be six of one and half a dozen of the other.

It is not permissible for him to shave his beard or trim it except in cases where harm is likely to result, and it is not permissible in any other situation.

This comes under the heading of cases of necessity. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“But if one is forced by necessity without willful disobedience nor transgressing due limits, then there is no sin on him. Truly, Allaah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful”

[al-Baqarah 2:173]

Or in cases of compulsion. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Whoever disbelieved in Allaah after his belief, except him who is forced thereto and whose heart is at rest with Faith; but such as open their breasts to disbelief, on them is wrath from Allaah, and theirs will be a great torment”

[al-Nahl 16:106]

Force or compulsion means that he will be harmed if he does not shave it. As for simply experiencing some annoyance or questions or investigation, these are things from which those who do shave their beards are not necessarily safe, so that does not mean that a person is permitted to fall into sin.

In cases of compulsion, there are conditions which must be met in order for it to be permissible for a Muslim to be granted the concession of doing or saying something that is haraam. Understanding what these conditions are is very important, because many people are claiming that they are forced to do things when that is not the case.

Ibn Qudaamah said:

The conditions of compulsion include three things:

1 – That the one who is trying to force you has power to cause harm

2 – That he thinks it most likely that the threat will be carried out if he does not do what is being demanded of him

3 – That the harm be severe, such as being killed, beaten severely, tied up or imprisoned for a lengthy period. As for being insulted or cursed, this is not compulsion, and neither is taking a small amount of wealth.

If the person is of low status, a little harm may not be compulsion in his case, unlike those of high position for whom a little harm may be a humiliation and it is like a severe beating for someone else who is of lower status.

If there is a threat of torturing his child, this is not compulsion, because the harm is being directed at someone else. But it is more likely that this is compulsion, because that is worse for him than taking his wealth; that threat (to take his wealth) is compulsion, so the same applies here.

Al-Mughni, 7/292

If the harm can be warded off by trimming the beard, then he should not shave it off, rather it is sufficient to trim it, because shaving is worse than trimming. It should be noted that a person should have the need to undertake this journey to that country. But if there is no need for that then it is not permissible to shave his beard for the sake of travelling, because he is not being forced to do that.

And Allaah knows best.