## 60008 - Types of death announcements and the rulings thereon

**the question**

What are the kinds of death announcement that are permissible and forbidden? Is announcing the death of a person in the mosque haraam?.

**Detailed answer**

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly: definition of death announcement (al-na'i)

The word na'i refers to informing people of the death of a person and broadcasting that news. It also refers to matters that may accompany that such as listing the virtues of the deceased.

Al-Tirmidhi said in al-Jaami' (p. 239): al-na'i among them means that it is proclaimed among the people that So and so has died, so that they will attend his funeral.

Ibn al-Atheer said in al-Nihaayah (5/85): al-na'i means broadcasting news of the death of a person, and announcing it, and therefore lamenting him.

Al-Qalyoobi said in his Haashiyah (1/345): It is the call announcing the death of a person, mentioning his good deeds and good qualities.

Secondly: Types of death announcement

A death announcement may be a simple announcement, or it may be done by calling out and raising the voice, mentioning the good deeds of the deceased and so on. There is a ruling on both types.

As for simply announcing the death, the majority of Hanafi, Maaliki, Shaafa'i and Hanbali scholars and others are of the view that it is permissible to announce a death without calling out, so that the funeral prayer may be offered over the deceased.

See: Fath al-Qadeer, 2/127; Haashiyat al-Dasooqi, 1/24; Nihaayat al-Muhtaaj, 3/20; al-Iqnaa', 1/331; Tuhfat al-Ahwadhi, 4/61; al-Sayl al-Jaraar, 1/339

Indeed, the majority of scholars are of the view that that is mustahabb.

See al-Binaayah Sharh al-Hidaayah, 3/267; al-Khurashi 'ala Mukhtasar Khaleel, 2/139; al-Adhkaar by al-Nawawi, p. 226.

They quoted as evidence the report narrated by al-Bukhaari (1333) and Muslim from Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him), that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) announced the death of al-Najaashi (the Negus, the ruler of Abyssinia) on the day on which he died. He took them out to the prayer place, arranged them in rows and said four takbeers (i.e., offered the funeral prayer for him). According to a report narrated by al-Bukhaari, 1328: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) announced to us the death of the Negus, the ruler of Abyssinia, on the day on which he died, and said, "Pray for forgiveness for your brother."

Al-Nawawi said in Sharh Muslim:

This shows that it is mustahabb to announce the death of a person, but not in the manner in which deaths were announced in the Jaahiliyyah; rather it should be done simply for the purpose of notifying people so that they can come to the prayer, and to encourage people to attend his funeral and to fulfil their duty towards him in that regard. The prohibition on death announcements does not apply to this, rather it applies to the jaahili forms of death announcements which includes mention of the good qualities of the deceased and so on. End quote.

They also quoted as evidence the hadeeth narrated by al-Bukhaari (458) and Muslim (956) from Abu Hurayrah, that a black man or a black woman who used to take care of the mosque died. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) asked about him, and they said, "He has died." He said, "Why did you not tell me? Show me where his grave (or her grave) is." He went to the grave and offered the funeral prayer there.

These two hadeeths clearly show that it is permissible to announce a death so that people may attend the funeral prayer and make du'aa' for the deceased. Indeed, they indicate that it is mustahabb, and that it is a means of fulfilling the person's right to have the funeral prayer offered for him and to attend his funeral.

Evidence that it is permissible to announce a death for reasons other than the funeral prayer is the report narrated in Saheeh al-Bukhaari (4262) from Anas (may Allaah be pleased with him), that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) announced the deaths of Zayd, Ja'far and Ibn Rawaahah before news of that reached the people. He said: "Zayd took the flag and was killed, then Ja'far took it and was killed, then Ibn Rawaahah took it and was killed," and his eyes flowed with tears, "until one of the swords of Allaah took the flag until Allaah granted them victory."

In this hadeeth, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) announced the deaths of these three men (may Allaah be pleased with them). That announcement was not made so that the funeral prayer might be offered for them; rather it was in order to tell the Muslims news of their brothers, and what had happened to them in that battle.

Based on this, it is permissible to announce a death for any valid purpose, such as making du'aa' for the deceased, forgiving him and so on. See Nihaayat al-Muhtaaj, 3/20.

Ibn 'Abd al-Barr said in al-Istidhkaar (3/26): Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) would pass by gatherings and say, "Your brother has died, attend his funeral."

It says in Fataawa al-Lajnah al-Daa'imah, 8/402:

It is permissible to call the relatives, friends and neighbours of the deceased so that they may offer the funeral prayer for him, make du'aa' for him, attend his funeral and help to bury him, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) told his companions when the Negus (may Allaah have mercy on him) died, so that they could offer the funeral prayer for him. End quote.

As for announcing deaths with loud cries and raised voices, mentioning the good qualities of the

deceased, this kind of death announcement was forbidden by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).

Al-Tirmidhi (986) narrated that Hudhayfah ibn al-Yamaan said: When I die, do not announce it, for I fear that that will be a death announcement, and I heard the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) forbidding death announcements. Classed as hasan by al-Haafiz ibn Hajar; classed as hasan by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Tirmidhi.

Al-Sindi said in Haashiyat Ibn Maajah:

The people of the Jaahiliyyah used to announce deaths in a reprehensible manner, and the prohibition applies to that type of announcement. But Hudhayfah was afraid that what was meant was a general prohibition so he did not want it. This was a kind of precaution. Otherwise, announcing a death, especially if it is done for a purpose such as increasing the size of the congregation (for offering the funeral prayer) is permissible. End quote.

Al-Haafiz said in al-Fath:

Not all kinds of death announcements are forbidden, rather what is forbidden is what the people of the Jaahiliyyah used to do; they used to send out people to announce the death of a person at the doors of houses and in the markets.

Sa'eed ibn Mansoor said: Ibn 'Ulayyah told us that Ibn 'Awn said: I said to Ibraaheem, Did they regard death announcements as makrooh? He said, Yes. Ibn 'Awn said, If a man died, a man would ride his mount and cry out among the people, "I am announcing the death of So and so." Ibn Sireen said: I do not see anything wrong with the death of a man being announced to his friends and loved ones.

The point is that simply informing people of a death is not makrooh, but if it is more than that then it is not allowed. End quote.

In Tuhfat al-Ahwadhi it says:

The apparent meaning is that what Hudhayfah (may Allaah be pleased with him) meant in this hadeeth was death announcements (al-na'i) in the linguistic sense, and he understood the prohibition as applying to all kinds of na'i. Other scholars said that what is meant by na'i in this hadeeth is the kind of death announcement that was known during the Jaahiliyyah. Al-Asma'i said: If someone of status died among the Arabs, a rider would mount his horse and go among the people saying, "I announce the death of So and so," telling the news of his death. They said that because [?] it is proven that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) announced the death of the Negus, and that he (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) announced the deaths of Zayd ibn Haarithah, Ja'far ibn Abi Taalib and 'Abd-Allaah ibn Rawaahah when they were killed at Mu'tah. It is also proven that he (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, when he was told of the death of the black woman or youth who used to take care of the mosque, "Why didn't you tell me?" All of this indicates that simply informing others of a death is not the kind of death announcement that is forbidden, and that in the linguistic sense it may correctly be called na'i (death announcement). Hence the scholars said that what is meant by na'i in the phrase, "he forbade al-na'i" is the kind of death announcement that was known during the Jaahiliyyah. In this way the ahaadeeth may be reconciled.

Ibn al-'Arabi said: From the ahaadeeth it may be understood that there are three types of death announcements. The first is informing the family, friends and righteous people; this is Sunnah. The second is calling people to attend a gathering to show how important the deceased was; this is makrooh. The third is announcing it in some other manner, such as wailing and the like; this is haraam. End quote from Tuhfat al-Ahwadhi.

Al-Nawawi said in al-Majmoo' (5/174):

The correct view, as indicated by the ahaadeeth which we have quoted and others, is that announcing the death to one who did not know of it is not makrooh, rather if the intention is to inform people so that more will come to offer the funeral prayer, then this is mustahabb. What is makrooh is to mention the good qualities of the deceased and to go around among the people mentioning these things. This is the death announcement of the Jaahiliyyah which is forbidden.

There are saheeh ahaadeeth which speak of informing people of a death, and it is not permissible to ignore them. This is the answer given by some of the imams of fiqh and hadeeth. End quote.

As for giving death announcements by raising the voice but without mentioning the good qualities of the deceased, some Hanafi, Maaliki, Shaafa'i and Hanbali scholars are of the view that it is makrooh to cry out the news of a death, because of the hadeeth of Hudhayfah quoted above.

That is also because calling out and raising the voice is similar to the kind of death announcements given during the Jaahiliyyah, which is forbidden. They used to send out people to announce the news of the death at the doors of houses and in markets.

See al-'Inaayah Sharh al-Hidaayah, 3/267; al-Khurashi 'ala Mukhtasar Khaleel, 2/139; al-Muhadhdhab, 1/132; al-Sharh al-Kabeer, 6/287

Ibn Qudaamah said in al-Mughni:

Death announcements are makrooh, i.e., sending out a caller to announce to the people that So and so had died, so that they will attend his funeral… Many of the scholars said that there is nothing wrong with a man telling his brothers, acquaintances and good people, without crying out. Ibraaheem al-Nakha'i said: If a man dies, there is nothing wrong with telling his friends and companions. Rather they regarded it as makrooh to go around to gatherings announcing the death of So and so, as was done during the Jaahiliyyah. End quote.

Some of the Hanafis were of the view that it is not makrooh to call out the news of a death in streets and markets if that it simply calling out the news, without mentioning his good qualities.

They said: Because that will increase the number of people who offer the funeral prayer for the deceased and pray for forgiveness for him; that is not like the death announcements of the Jaahiliyyah, when they used to send word to the tribes and announce deaths with screaming, weeping, wailing, eulogizing, etc. See Fath al-Qadeer, 1/128.

The majority responded to this by noting that the purpose of increasing the number of people who offer the funeral prayer for the deceased and pray for forgiveness for him may be achieved

without calling out and raising the voice.

See Fath al-Baari, 3/117

As for announcing deaths from the minarets of mosques, we have answered this in question no. [41959].