75644 - What is the ruling on professional pursuit of football (soccer)?

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Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The word ihtiraaf (professional pursuit) is defined in al-Mawsoo'ah al-Fiqhiyyah (2/69) as follows:

Ihtiraaf in Arabic means seeking to earn a living, or seeking a profession in order to earn money. A profession is anything in which a person works and becomes known for. So they say "the profession of So and so is such and such," meaning his habit and practice, which is synonymous to the words craft and work.

The fuqaha' of sharee'ah are in agreement with the linguists on this issue, and the word ihtiraaf (professional pursuit) is used to refer to work and to earning a living.

Al-Mawsoo'ah al-Fiqhiyyah (2/69).

It is not permissible for anyone to issue a ruling on playing football – let alone taking it as a profession – without knowing the nature of this game at this time and the atmosphere that surrounds it. In this game 'awrahs are uncovered, prayers are missed, fitnah and desires are provoked, and there is the possibility of harm and injury, as well as the negligence of acts of worship that is involved.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Ibraaheem (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

Playing football nowadays is accompanied by reprehensible things which mean that playing it should be disallowed. These things may be summed up as follows:

1 – It is proven to us that play continues during the times of prayer, which results in the players and spectators missing prayers or prayers in congregation, or they delay performing prayers until the time for them is over. Undoubtedly any action that interferes with performance of prayers on time or leads to missing prayers in congregation with no valid shar'i excuse is haraam.

2 – The nature of this game leads to factionalism, stirring up fitnah and hatred. These results are the opposite of what Islam promotes of tolerance, friendship and brotherhood, and cleaning hearts and souls of hatred, resentment and grudges.

3 – The game involves physical danger for the players as a result of collisions and injuries. Usually the players do not end the game without some of them falling on the pitch unconscious or with broken arms or legs. Nothing is more indicative of that than the fact that there must always be an ambulance present throughout the game.

4 – The purpose behind allowing sports is to make people become physically active and to train them for fighting and to ward off chronic disease. But playing football nowadays has no such aim. As well as the things mentioned above, it is now also taking people's money for false purposes, let alone the danger of physical injury and the generation of hatred in the hearts of players and spectators, and the stirring up of fitnah. It has even gone so far that some spectators attack some players, which could go as far as murder, as happened in a match a few months ago. This alone is sufficient reason to disallow it. And Allaah is the source of strength. End quote.

Fataawa Ibn Ibraaheem (8/116, 117).

As for playing football just to strengthen the body and give it energy, or to treat some diseases without falling into any of these haraam things, this is something permissible.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Ibraaheem (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

The basic principle concerning such games and sports is that they are permissible if they serve an innocent purpose, as was referred to by Ibn al-Qayyim in his book al-Faroosiyyah and as was mentioned by Shaykh Taqiy al-Deen Ibn Taymiyah and others. If that is done as training for jihad

and attack and retreat, or for physical fitness, or to ward off chronic diseases and strengthen the spirit, then it comes under the heading of permissible things, if the one who does it has a sound intention. In all cases it is essential that there be no harm caused to bodies or minds, and that it does not lead to the grudges and hatred that usually occur between players, and that it does not distract them from things that are more important, and that it does not prevent them from remembrance of Allaah (dhikr) or prayer. End quote.

Fataawa Ibn Ibraaheem (8/118)

He also said:

Playing football in this organized manner, making the players into two factions, whether they are paid or not, should not be done, because it involves preventing remembrance of Allaah (dhikr) and prayer. It may also involve consuming wealth unlawfully and may be accompanied by gambling; it is akin to playing chess in some ways.

But if one or two people play with a ball and play football in an unorganized fashion, there is nothing wrong with that because it does not involve anything haraam. And Allaah knows best. End quote.

Fataawa Ibn Ibraaheem (8/119)

In the answer to question no. 22305 we have explained the conditions for it to be permissible to play football. Among the things we said there was the following:

The third condition: that it should not take up too much of the player's time, let alone take up all his time or mean that he becomes known among people for that, or it becomes his job, because then there is the fear that the words of Allaah may be true in his case: "Who took their religion as an amusement and play, and the life of the world deceived them. So this Day We shall forget them" [al-A'raaf 7:51]. End quote.

Thus it is clear that taking football as a profession as it exists nowadays is haraam, because it includes things that are forbidden in Islam, even if playing football is basically permissible.

This applies especially if we realize what is involved in taking football as a profession, such as travelling to kaafir countries to play against international teams. It is obvious to everyone what kind of kufr, evil and sin is present in those countries, and it is also well known that the players are exposed to the temptations of women and desires because of their fame, stardom and wealth.

It should also be noted that settling in kaafir countries is haraam, and it is not permissible except in cases of need, subject to certain conditions which have been explained in question no. 27211 .

And Allaah knows best.