126602 - Hanging up flags and symbols of non-Muslim countries

the question

Among some young people it is common to hang up flags and symbols of some non-Muslim countries, and we see them buying and keeping these things, printing them on shirts, pants, belts, glasses, hats, shoes, rulers, pens, rings and watches, and putting them on car seat covers and window decals. Some of them buy the complete flag and put it on the hood or trunk of the car. What is the ruling on buying and selling, keeping and hanging up these flags?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

One of the aims of Islamic sharia is that the Muslim should be distinct from all disbelievers and evildoers in terms of beliefs, attitudes, behaviour and thinking, and even in outward appearance and language too, and that he should cut off all ties of love, loyalty and support for anyone who disbelieves in Allah and His Messenger. There is a great deal of shar'i evidence, both in the form of clear texts (of Qur'an and Sunnah) in the form of rulings derived from those texts, to support this basic Islamic principle, that warns lest one go against it or take it lightly by way of aping and imitating those who do not believe in Allah or the Last Day, and do not regard as prohibited that which Allah and His Messenger prohibited. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Then We have put you (O Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)) on a plain way of (Our) commandment (like the one which We commanded Our Messengers before you (i.e. legal ways and laws of the Islamic Monotheism)). So follow you that (Islamic Monotheism and its laws), and follow not the desires of those who know not"

[al-Jaathiyah 45:18]

"Never will the Jews nor the Christians be pleased with you (O Muhammad (blessings and peace of

Allah be upon him)) till you follow their religion. Say: "Verily, the Guidance of Allah (i.e. Islamic Monotheism) that is the (only) Guidance. And if you (O Muhammad Peace be upon him) were to follow their (Jews and Christians) desires after what you have received of Knowledge (i.e. the Quran), then you would have against Allah neither any Walee (protector or guardian) nor any helper”

[al-Baqarah 2:120]

“and follow not their vain desires, but beware of them lest they turn you (O Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)) far away from some of that which Allah has sent down to you”

[al-Maa’idah 5:49]

“Has not the time come for the hearts of those who believe (in the Oneness of Allah - Islamic Monotheism) to be affected by Allah’s Reminder (this Qur’an), and that which has been revealed of the truth, lest they become as those who received the Scripture (the Taurat (Torah) and the Injeel (Gospel)) before (i.e. Jews and Christians), and the term was prolonged for them and so their hearts were hardened? And many of them were Fasiqoon (rebellious, disobedient to Allah)”

[al-Hadeed 57:16].

The verses that speak of this matter are many and well-known. And the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said, when he saw ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Aas wearing two garments dyed with safflower: “This is the clothing of the disbelievers, so do not wear it.” Narrated by Muslim in his Saheeh. It is proven in as-Saheehayn that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) went against the way of the People of the Book with regard to leaving the hair loose, and he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Be different from the mushrikeen: let your beards grow and trim your moustaches.” Narrated in as-Saheehayn.

The hadiths and reports from the righteous early generation concerning this matter are many and well-known.

From the above it is known that a person cannot be following true Islamic teaching until his

outward actions and inward beliefs are in accordance with the command of Allah and His Messenger. So his loyalty should be to Allah, His Messenger and his brothers in faith, as Allah, may He be glorified, says (interpretation of the meaning): “Verily, your Walee (Protector or Helper) is Allah, His Messenger, and the believers, - those who perform As-Salat (Iqamat-as-Salat), and give Zakat, and they bow down (submit themselves with obedience to Allah in prayer)” [al-Maa’idah 5:55]. The believers are obliged to disavow disbelief and its people, whether they are Christians, Jews, Magians, atheists or followers of any other path or religion that is contrary to Islam.

In order to protect the basic principle mentioned above and to protect the Muslim and his Islam from deviation, the Islamic texts prohibit imitation of the disbelievers in matters that are unique to them, be that words, actions, clothes or general appearance, because that poses a danger to the belief of the Muslim, and lest it lead to him thinking well of the disbelief and misguidance that they follow. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “I have been sent ahead of the Hour with the sword, until Allah alone is worshipped with no partner or associate; my provision has been placed beneath the shade of my spear, and humiliation and ignominy have been ordained for those who go against my commands; whoever imitates a people is one of them.” Narrated by Imam Ahmad and others with a jayyid isnaad. And he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “He is not one of us who imitates others; do not imitate the Jews or the Christians.” A hasan hadith; narrated by at-Tirmidhi and others.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said, explaining the Islamic wisdom behind the prohibition on imitating the disbelievers and the obligation to differ from them in outward matters such as dress and the like:

Allah sent Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) with wisdom, namely his Sunnah which is the way and path that He prescribed for him. Part of this wisdom is that He prescribed for him words and deeds that made his way distinct from the way of those who earn His anger and those who go astray, and He enjoined him to differ from them in outward appearance and practices – even if many people cannot see anything wrong with that – for several reasons, including the following:

·Dressing and acting like them will generate feelings of commonality between those who resemble one another, which may lead to some degree of similarity in attitude and deeds. This is something obvious, because the one who wears the garments of fighting soldiers, for example, will find himself starting to behave like them to some extent, and his attitude will be influenced by that, unless something prevents it.

·Being different in dress and behaviour will lead to differences and disconnection, which will result in refraining from that which incurs divine wrath and leads to misguidance, and will lead to joining those who are guided and with whom Allah is pleased. Thus the decree of Allah will be fulfilled, that His friends, who are the successful ones, will be allies of one another and His enemies, who are the losers, will likewise be allies of one another.

The more a person's heart is filled with living faith and knowledge of true Islam – I do not mean outward pretence or believing in general terms – the more he will feel distant, both outwardly and inwardly, from the Jews and Christians, and the further he will feel from their behaviour and attitudes that even some Muslims may have adopted.

·Dressing and behaving like them outwardly leads to mixing with them, to the extent that the distinction is no longer there between those who are guided and with whom Allah is pleased, and those with whom Allah is angry and who have gone astray, and other reasons why we should be different.

This has to do with behaving and dressing like them in ways that would otherwise be permissible, were it not for resembling them. But if it is the matter of behaving like them with regard to that which is part of their disbelief, then it is a branch of disbelief, and going along with them in that implies agreeing with one type of their sins. So this is something that one must be careful about. [End quote]

Based on the above, there is no doubt that one aspect of being allied with the disbelievers is imitating them and wearing clothes that bear their symbols, such as the cross and the like, being concerned with their pictures, supporting their sports teams, putting their flags on cars, houses

and stores, using their names, calling people to love them and befriend them, being proud of belonging to them and to their prominent figures and leaders, and being impressed by their whims and desires that are contrary to Islam. (The Muslims who do that) do not realise that by doing this, they are demolishing one of the basic principles of Islam in their hearts and in the hearts of the Muslims, and they are exacerbating the weakness of the ummah. Verily to Allah we belong and to Him is our return.

What all Muslims must do is adhere to the teachings of Islam and the straight path, and beware of deviating from that to the path of those with whom Allah is angry and those who are astray, namely the Jews, Christians and all other polytheists. The Muslims should encourage one another to be righteous and fear Allah, and to do everything that will bring goodness and glory to Islam and the Muslims; they should refrain from everything that may harm the Muslims or help their enemies against them, and they should refrain from propagating and spreading such things.

And Allah is the source of strength; may Allah send blessings and peace upon our Prophet Muhammad and his family and companions. End quote.

Standing Committee for Academic Research and Issuing Fatwas

Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azeez ibn ‘Abdullah ibn Baaz, Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azeez Aal ash-Shaykh, Shaykh ‘Abdullah ibn Ghadyaan, Shaykh Saalih al-Fawzaan, Shaykh Bakr Abu Zayd.