220741 - Ruling on making friends with non-Muslims and helping them when they need help

the question

I live in a non-Muslim country where there has been unprecedented violence against Muslims recently. I have a close friend who is not Muslim (he is Buddhist). He has asked me to lend him some money to pay his tuition fees. I have helped him a great deal, and in return he has helped me on many occasions. I do not know what his real stance is regarding what is happening to Muslims these days, because we have not spoken about this topic at all.

I have begun to wonder whether I must maintain good relationships with my non-Muslim friends and help them when needed, or not. Should I stay friends with someone whose people are hostile towards Islam and are persecuting Muslims?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

It is not permissible for a Muslim man or woman to take a non-Muslim as a close friend or ally, because Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you - then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people} [Al-Ma’idah 5:51]

{O you who believe, do not take as your close friends those outside your ranks; they will spare no effort to cause you mischief; they wish to see you in distress. Hatred has already appeared from their mouths, and what their hearts conceal is far worse. We have made clear to you the signs [of

their ill will], if you understand} [Al `Imran 3:118].

What is meant by the word bitanah [translated here as close friends] is a person's inner circle or closest friends.

Imam al-Qurtubi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: In this verse Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted, forbade the believers to take a close friend from among the disbelievers, Jews and those who follow their whims and desires, in the sense of consulting them, discussing issues with them and trusting them with some of their affairs.

End quote from *Al-Jami` li Ahkam al-Qur'an*, 4/178.

Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted, says:

{You will not find a people who believe in Allah and the Last Day having affection for those who oppose Allah and His Messenger, even if they were their fathers or their sons or their brothers or their kindred} [Al-Mujadilah 58:22].

Here Allah, may He be Exalted, forbade the Muslims from having affection for the disbelievers and taking them as allies and close friends, and He stated that this is not one of the characteristics of those who believe in Allah and the Last Day.

It is proven in the hadith that the Messenger of Allah (Blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Do not keep company with anyone but a believer and do not let anyone eat your food but one who is pious." Narrated by Abu Dawud, 4832; at-Tirmidhi, 2395. Al-Albani classed it as sound (hasan) in *Sahih al-Jami`*, 7341.

It says in *Dalil al-Falihin li Turuq Riyadh as-Salihin*: This indicates that it is prohibited to take the disbelievers as close friends, have affection for them and be close to them. End quote, 3/229.

The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) forbade making friends with the disbelievers and hypocrites, because keeping company with them is detrimental to one's religious commitment.

End quote from *Mirqat al-Mafatih*, 8/3141.

It is well known that friendship and companionship lead to affection and love, and that may result in the heart becoming inclined towards the friend and approving of his religion. This in turn may lead to disbelief – Allah forbid. As a result of the impact of friendship, a person will be influenced by the character and behaviour of his friend, as it says in the hadith: “A man will follow the way of his close friend, so let one of you look at who he takes as a close friend.” Narrated by Abu Dawud, 4833; at-Tirmidhi, 2378. Also narrated in *as-Silsilah as-Sahihah* by al-Albani, 927.

Disallowing friendship with non-Muslims does not mean cutting off ties completely – if he is not involved in persecuting Muslims or known to be hostile towards them – especially if he is a neighbour or work colleague. Disallowing friendship does not mean that you cannot show kindness or be generous towards him, accept his gifts, visit him when he is sick and do business with him. Rather all of that is permissible if there is no fear of falling into what is prohibited – without feeling affection for the disbelievers and participating or cooperating in anything that is prohibited – especially if it is done with the intention of calling him to Islam and showing him the beauty of the faith.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{Allah does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with those who do not fight you because of your religion or drive you out of your homes, for verily Allah loves those who are just } [Al-Mumtahanah 60:8].

Shaykh as-Sa`di (may Allah have mercy on him) said: That is, Allah does not forbid you to show kindness, uphold ties, and to be fair and just towards the polytheists among your relatives and others, if they are not involved in waging war against you or driving you out of your homes. So there is no blame on you if you uphold ties with them, because there are no reservations about upholding ties with them in this case, and doing so will not lead to bad consequences. This is similar to what Allah (st) says about polytheist parents, if their child is Muslim: {But if they endeavour to make you ascribe partners to Me of which you have no knowledge, then do not obey

them. But keep company with them in this world kindly} [Luqman 31:15].

End quote from *Tafsir as-Sa`di*, p. 856.

The scholars of the Permanent Committee for Ifta' were asked: Is it permissible for a Muslim to make friends with a Christian, travelling with him, visiting him and studying with him, and so on?

They replied: It is permissible for a Muslim to interact with a disbeliever who is not hostile towards Muslims or involved in persecuting them, by treating him kindly, returning his favours, and exchanging gifts with him, but not taking him as a close friend to the point that he loves him.

End quote from *Fatawa al-Lajnah ad-Da'imah*, 26/89.

For more information, please see the answers to questions no. 23325 and 129664.

Secondly:

The basic principle with regard to financial transactions and business between Muslims and non-Muslims is that they are permissible – so long as the transaction itself is permissible and within the guidelines of Islamic teachings, and there is no differentiation between one who is hostile towards the Muslims and one who is not when it comes to buying, selling, lending, borrowing, renting, hiring and so on. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to do business with the polytheists and the Jews, buying and selling.

It is soundly narrated from `A'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) that she said: When the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) died, his shield was held in pledge with a Jew for thirty sa`s of barley. Narrated by al-Bukhari, 2916.

Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said: It is permissible to do business with the disbelievers so long as the item being traded is not prohibited.

End quote from *Fat-h al-Bari*, 5/141.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked about doing business

with the Tatars: Is it permissible for the one with whom they do business? He replied: As for doing business with the Tatars, it is permissible in everything that is permissible with people like them, and it is prohibited in everything that is prohibited with people like them. So it is permissible for a man to buy their livestock, horses and the like, just as it is permissible to buy livestock and horses from the Turkmens, Bedouin and Kurds. And it is permissible to sell to them such food, clothing and the like that is permissible to sell to others like them. As for selling to them and others that which helps them to do prohibited things, such as selling horses and weapons to those who use them to fight for prohibited causes, this is not permissible…

End quote from *Majmu` al-Fatawa*, 29/275.

Thirdly:

Based on the above, there is nothing wrong with a Muslim lending money to a non-Muslim – meaning a goodly loan [in which no interest is charged] – so that he can pay his tuition fees, especially if that is in return for his favours and help to you in the past.

But strive to make friends with pious believers who will remind you of Allah if you forget Him, and will help you to obey Allah, may He be Exalted. And do not refrain from showing kindness to non-Muslims who are not hostile towards the Muslims and do not harm them and persecute them.

And Allah knows best.