49028 - He is asking about ihraam for children

the question

If I enter ihraam with my young son, then we find it too difficult with the crowding and other things that happen at Hajj nowadays, can we annul his ihraam after dressing him in those clothes? What do we have to do if we annul it?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

We have already stated that Hajj of children is acceptable according to sharee'ah, but that a child's Hajj does not count as the "Hajj of Islam" (i.e., the Hajj that is required once in a lifetime. We have already explained what the guardian must do with his child. See questions no. 13636; 36862, 14621.

In addition to that, the guardian must pay attention to the time when he wants the child to enter ihraam. If it is a time when it is not so difficult for the child to enter ihraam, because there is less crowding and so on, then he may enter ihraam; if it is too difficult for the child to enter ihraam because there is too much crowding during Hajj, or during 'umrah in Ramadaan, or because his guardian is unable, and so on, then in this case it is better for the child not to enter ihraam, because that may distract him (the adult) from performing properly the rituals that he is required to perform.

See al-Sharh al-Mumti', 7/24.

But many guardians underestimate these difficulties or think that they will be able to put up with them, then they find that the situation is not as they had thought it would be. The child himself may not be able to remain in ihraam, and it may be difficult for the guardian to make him stay in ihraam. What is the ruling in this case?

The well-known view in our madhhab (Hanbali) is that he has to complete it, because Hajj and ‘Umrah must be completed once started. The other view, which is the madhhab of Abu Haneefah (may Allaah have mercy on him) is that he does not have to complete it, because he is not accountable and is not obliged to do the obligatory duties of Islam.

This view is more likely to be correct, and it seems to be the view of the author of al-Furoo’ (i.e., Ibn Muflih, the student of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah).

Based on this, the child may exit ihraam, and he does not have to do anything (i.e., offer any ransom). This is actually kinder to people, because a guardian may think that ihraam is easy for a child, then it turns out to be otherwise, so he is faced with a dilemma. This happens a lot with people nowadays, so if we adopt this opinion, which is more likely to be correct because of the correct reason given for it, this will resolve the dilemma.

Al-Sharh al-Mumti’, 7/25; see also al-Fataawa, 22/148.