95029 - Ruling on setting up a website for posting audio and video files

the question

I want to set up a website for posting pictures and files on the internet. This is a simple explanation of what the website will do: a centre for pictures and files that will let you upload pictures and files from your computer to the internet, and make links to it so that you can take part in discussion boards or send them easily to whomever you want and without having to register (free service). The problem is that some users may upload pictures or files that contain things that go against Islamic sharee'ah such as pictures of women, indecent pictures or movies, songs and music, movie clips, stories of scandal and other kinds of pictures and movies that go against Islamic sharee'ah, because the site will not be continuously monitored. My question is: What is the ruling on this site? Will there be any sin on us for every unislamic file that is uploaded via our site? Is this work of ours regarded as spreading immorality or cooperating in sin and transgression? What is the ruling if the site is for uploading pictures only?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

It is not permissible for you to set up this website, because it will be a cause of spreading sin to other sites and those who want to spread songs or haraam clips or pictures will be able to do so easily through this site. It makes no difference whether it is for pictures only or for pictures and audio and video clips. By means of this site you will be helping those who want to spread haraam things, and this is the kind of cooperation that is forbidden in the Book of Allah. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"do not help one another in sin and transgression. And fear Allah. Verily, Allah is Severe in punishment" [Al-Maa'idah 5:2]

For every evil and sin that is spread via your website, you will have a share in it, and its spread will never end even if you shut down your site, because it will be transmitted and spread via other sites. This means that the sin will continue every time someone looks at or listen to that which was uploaded via your site. Even after you die the sin will come to you in your grave!

It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever calls others to guidance will have a reward like that of those who follow it, without that detracting from their reward in the slightest. And whoever calls others to misguidance will have a burden of sin like that of those who follow it, without it detracting from their burden in the slightest.”

Narrated by Muslim (2674)

It was narrated that Jareer ibn ‘Abd-Allah said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever sets a good precedent in Islam will have the reward for that and the reward of those who do it after him, without that detracting from their reward in the slightest. And whoever sets a bad precedent in Islam will bear the burden of sin for that, and the burden of those who do it after him, without that detracting from their burden in the slightest.”

Narrated by Muslim (1017)

Al-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: These two ahaadeeth clearly encourage us to set good precedents and forbid setting bad precedents. The one who sets a good precedent will have a reward like that of everyone who follows it until the Day of Resurrection, and the one who sets a bad precedent will have a burden of sin like that of everyone who follows it until the Day of Resurrection. The one who calls others to right guidance will have a reward like that of those who follow it, and the one who calls others to misguidance will have a burden of sin like that of those who follow it, whether this guidance or misguidance is something that he initiated or it was started before him, and whether that is by teaching knowledge, acts of worship, etiquette or anything else.

The words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) “those who do it after him”

mean: if he sets the precedent, whether they do it during his lifetime or after his death."(Sharh Muslim 16/226, 227)

It was narrated that Abu Mas'ood al-Ansaari said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "The one who tells another about something good is like the one who does it." Narrated by Muslim (1893)

It was narrated that Anas ibn Maalik said: The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "The one who tells others about something good is like the one who does it."

Narrated by al-Tirmidhi (2670); classed as saheeh by al-Albani in Saheeh al-Tirmidhi.

Similarly it is said that the one who tells others about something bad will have a burden of sin like the one who does it.

Al-Manaawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The one who ponders this meaning and is blessed with guidance will be motivated to learn and will be encouraged to spread knowledge so that his reward may be multiplied during his life and after his death in perpetuity, and he will refrain from introducing innovations and evils, for they will multiply his bad deeds in the manner mentioned, so long as anyone acts upon it. So let the Muslim ponder this meaning, the blessings of the one who tells others about good things and the doom of the one who tells others about bad things."(Fayd al-Qadeer 6/127).

What some owners of such websites do, obliging those who post material on them to promise that the material will not contain anything harmful to others or sinful, is not enough to discharge their duty, because many of those who surf the net are non-Muslims or evildoers who do not adhere to such promises.

We can tell you of something that will benefit your worldly interests – if you want – and your interests in the Hereafter, which is devoting the site that you are asking about for uploading beneficial Islamic material. This will require you to monitor the site constantly and to check the material before it is posted for others to look at. If you think that it is in accordance with Islam and

guides others to do good and warns against evil, then you can let it be posted. We do not think that this will be difficult from a technical point of view, but it will need you to check on what should be published, as well as seeking help from seekers of knowledge for rulings on material when you are not sure of the ruling on it. You can imagine how very beneficial this will be for the Muslims and how great your reward will be. This will be a kind of sadaqah jaariyah (ongoing charity) and knowledge from which others will benefit after you die.

There is no reason why the site should not include audio and video files and books. But you should avoid uploading nasheeds that are accompanied by instruments such as the daff etc, and avoid publishing pictures of women, and avoid publishing books that contain bid’ah (innovation) and misguidance.

And Allah knows best.