

Recipients of Zakaat

Now that we understand zakah, and its various conditions and calculation, we must now learn who it is payable to. Those who are entitled to receive zakah are grouped into eight categories, as determined by the Qur'an and Sunnah. Allah says, "Sadaqat are only for the poor who do not beg and the poor who beg and those employed to collect them, and for attracting the hearts (of those who have been inclined towards Islam), and to free the captives and for those in debt and for Allah's Cause, and for the wayfarer a due imposed by Allah. And Allah is All-Knower, All-Wise." [9:60]

The Fuqaraa (the poor who do not beg)

These may have money, but it is not sufficient for their basic needs. Others have stated that these people have nothing. Allah says, 'If they are Fuqaraa (poor), Allah will enrich them out of His Bounty.' (24:32)

The Masaakeen (the poor who beg)

These people do not have anything, so they are in need of asking others for food and clothing. Such have the rights to ask and receive Zakaat. Others hold that these are those who may have some of their basic needs. Allah says, 'But he has made no effort to pass on the path that is steep. And what will make you know the path that is steep? (It is) freeing a neck (slave). Or giving food in a day of hunger to an orphan near of kin. Or to a miskeen afflicted with misery.' (90:11-16)

Attracting Hearts

Zakaat is also to be paid to attract the hearts of those who have been inclined towards Islam or to prevent the harm of non-Muslims residing within the Muslim state. Scholars have agreed that this type of Zakaat should be considered whenever there is a need for it. We often see people who embrace Islam become detached from their families and are sometimes deprived of a source of income. These people have the right to receive Zakaat to protect themselves from harm and to make their faith firm.

Freeing Captives

This shows that Zakaat can be paid in order to buy a slave and then free him or her. These slaves become free, capable of worshipping Allah, and then become useful members within the community.

Wayfarer

The wayfarer is the traveler stranded in a foreign land and is in need of money to achieve his objective or to return to his own country. This person can receive Zakaat, if the purpose for traveling is lawful. If the purpose were unlawful, then he should not receive any moneys from Zakaat because it would help him in his sins. Allah Ta'ala warns us, 'Help one another in righteousness and piety, but do not help one another in sin and transgression.' (5:2)

The Debtors

Debtors are those people burdened by debts because of personal needs or social necessity, such as the person who borrows to spend on himself and his family. This person is given

Zakaat if he doesn't have enough money beyond his basic needs to repay his debt. However, for the one who borrows money for a social necessity, such as spending on an orphan, reconciling between Muslims, or renovating a Masjid or school, then he may be given Zakaat to repay his debt. This holds true even if he is wealthy according to the sound opinion of the jurists.

Allah's Cause

Jurists have differed in the meaning of this outlet for Zakaat. Some have limited it to the fighters in the path of Allah, even if they were wealthy, if they do not receive wages from the Islamic treasury. Others say that this also includes all acts that make one closer to Allah. Therefore, anyone that strives in the obedience of Allah and performs good deserves Zakaat. The opinion that 'Allah's Cause' is limited to voluntary mujahids that do not receive wages from the Islamic treasury, seems most correct. If the meaning were inclusive of all good deeds, the prophet would have explained that. The Khulafaa al-Raashidoon (rightly guided Caliphs) collected tremendous amounts of Zakaat, but nothing has been transmitted about spending the Zakaat on other paths of good. Moreover, Allah Ta'ala has specified the eight recipients of Zakaat and none of them include other than what is stated. Any outlet other than these should receive support from the Islamic treasury, but not from Zakaat.

Zakaat Collectors

These are persons that the authority employs to collect the Zakaat. The authority gives them a fee for their work, which includes, collecting, recording, guarding, dividing and distributing the Zakaat.

ZAKAAT IS NOT DUE TO:

THE WEALTHY

Jurists have agreed that no wealthy person should be given from the share of the fuqaraa and the masakeen. They held that giving to the rich from their share meant depriving them from the zakah that they rightly deserve, and that defeats the purpose of its obligation which is to satisfy the needs of the poor. Other outlets of zakah may be given to the wealthy and this includes those employed to collect the zakah, attracting their hearts towards Islam, fighters in the path of Allah, and the wayfarers.

THE STRONG & HEALTHY

Jurists have agreed that zakah is forbidden to anyone capable of working and earning a living unless he cannot find a job or he finds a job but the money received is insufficient for him and his family. Then he can be assisted from zakah with the amount for his needs, or that enables him to work. The reason behind this prohibition is that these people are commanded by the Shar'iah to work and support themselves. They are not to lie back and depend on others.

THE DISBELIEVER

Jurists agree that it is forbidden to spend zakah on the unbelievers for this will constitute supporting them and their disbelief. The obligation of spending the zakah is on poor and needy Muslims. This means that it should not be spent on the disbelieving poor and needy.

Furthermore, the apparent wisdom in zakah is to satisfy the needs of poor Muslims and establish bridges of love and brotherhood among the members of the Muslim community.

FATHERS, SONS & WIVES

Jurists agree that it is not permissible to give zakah to one's wife, father, grandfather, mother, grandmother, son, grandson, and the daughter or her children. This is because if one pays zakah to them then he has not fulfilled his financial obligations towards them. This is equated to giving the zakah to himself. However, giving zakah to other relatives is permissible (brothers, sisters and others) when there is no obligation to take care of them. This is even better because one receives the rewards of sadaqah and of keeping good relations with relatives.

THE FAMILY OF THE PROPHET sallallaahu alayhi wasallam

The family of the Prophet did not receive zakah because they took their share from the booty gained from war. However, if they did not receive a share from the booty, can they be given zakah? Some jurists state that it is permissible whereas others say that it is not permissible. The family or descendants of the Prophet, sallallaahu alayhi wasallam, are the Banu Hashim and Banu Abdul-Muttalib, while others feel that they are only the Banu Hashim.