

# ADVICE REGARDING OBEYING RULERS AND RESPECTING SCHOLARS DURING THE COVID-19 RESPONSE

Shawwāl 1441 / June 2020<sup>1</sup>

Bismillāh wal-Ḥamdulillāh.

As we have repeatedly stated, it is obligatory for Muslims to obey the rulers in the guidelines, regulations and restrictions they have placed based upon their ijtihād in the matter, for they have not done this except due to desiring good for their populations. The scholars have enjoined such obedience **because it is a foundation of the Sunnah** and not because the “science” claimed by any particular individual or institution requires us to do so.

Whoever claimed that the rulers are obeyed because “lockdown”, “social distancing” and “contact tracing” of **perfectly healthy and disease free people** are valid in medicine, public health and/or are specifically legislated in religion, then he is setting up the rulers and the scholars for attack and revilement at some point in the future.

But whoever said that the rulers are obeyed because **the Sunnah has ordered with obedience to them in whatever is not unlawful, even if it involves hardship and difficulty**, then this stance can never ever be attacked, and the scholars can only be praised for advising with the Sunnah. The claims of science can always be attacked, undermined, shown to be false and even fraudulent, years or decades later, if not weeks or months afterwards. This can lead to anger, resentment, distrust and the likes among people which can lead to undesirable behaviours and outcomes.

For this reason, when it is said that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: *“Upon a Muslim man is to hear and obey in both what he likes and dislikes, unless he is commanded with disobedience [to Allāh]. Then, there is no hearing and obeying.”*<sup>2</sup> And that therefore, it is a foundation in our religion that we hear and obey the rulers in whatever is not unlawful, then no one can ever attack this position or find fault with it.

There is nothing but goodness in the implementation of this foundation of the Sunnah. The rulers are rewarded for their ijtihād, and the scholars are always praised for calling to adherence to the Sunnah.

Further, there is a great difference between the non-Muslim rulers and nations—they run upon social democracy which as a system, is a stepping stone for communism—and they have many secular ideologies and philosophies upon which they desire to manage or control their societies. Thus, they often have ulterior motives, and in many cases, they are

beholden to private and corporate interests and hence do not really work for the interests of their subjects.

In contrast, the Muslim rulers—may Allāh protect them and grant them success—they are free of these ideologies and goals. They are simply acting for the genuine protection and benefit of their societies on the basis of what they believe to be credible science and appropriate regulations and measures.

As such, all of this, **upon the principle of the Sunnah**, requires compliance and obedience.

As for the aspect of hardship, difficulty, loss of employment, lack of provision and the likes, then each person should realise that all of this is a tribulation from Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ), and Allāh (عَزَّوَجَلَّ) brings trials to His servants through a variety of means—such means that they cannot escape from, because they are all-encompassing. **Such is the reach of Allāh.** None of His servants can escape His reach. And hence, these trials can only be repelled with repentance, seeking forgiveness and making amends. In his commentary on the verse about the appearance of mischief upon land and sea, “...because of what the hands of men have earned so that He may make them taste a part of what they have done” (30:41), Ibn Kathīr (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) cites from Abū al-‘Āliyah (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ), the statement: “Whoever disobeyed Allāh has caused corruption upon the earth, because the rectification of the earth and the rectification of the heaven is through obedience.”

By keeping this in mind, the wider realities that relate to al-Qaḍā wal-Qadar, Allāh’s wisdom in His actions and His justice, the role of sins and disobedience in restriction of livelihood and removal of safety and so on are incorporated and not ignored. Thus, one moves away from being resentful and angry about the difficulties and hardships and avoids projecting that anger outwards in ways that are detrimental and can oppose the Sunnah, and instead turns back to his heart and soul and to rectification of his self, whilst relying upon Allāh and invoking him for relief, without at the same time neglecting the pursuit of his beneficial interests in the world and trying to minimise the tribulation, as this is part and parcel of placing reliance upon Allāh for relief.

Abu ‘Iyaad

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<sup>1</sup> In an article discussing the science of lockdowns.

<sup>2</sup> Related by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.