

346333 - What is the ruling if members of the congregation form a row between the pillars, when they are spaced out because of the Covid pandemic?

the question

If a worshipper enters the mosque during the prayer, and he finds that the worshippers have formed a row between the pillars of the mosque, when there is no need for that because the mosque is not crowded, should he complete the row with them, or start a new row on his own, away from the pillars? Currently, because of Covid and the requirement for worshippers to be spaced out, does the same ruling apply which does not allow praying between the pillars, or is it permissible, because the rows themselves are not connected?

Summary of answer

If the worshippers are spaced out in the row because of precautionary measures required due to the pandemic, then there is no longer any reason to prevent praying between the pillars, and it is not disliked (makruh) to stand in a row between them in this case.

Detailed answer

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Firstly:

Ruling on praying between the pillars of the mosque

It was narrated that it is not allowed for the worshippers to pray between the pillars, unless there is a need for that, such as if the worshipper enters the mosque and cannot find any place

in the congregation except in a row that is between the pillars, as has been explained previously in the answer to the question no. [135898](#).

Secondly:

The reason for the prohibition on praying between the pillars

The reason for the prohibition on praying between the pillars is that the basic principle regarding the rows in prayer is that they should be uninterrupted, and that the row of worshippers should be compact.

It was narrated from Anas ibn Malik, that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Make your rows straight for I can see you behind my back.” So one of us would make his shoulder touch his neighbour’s shoulder, and make his foot touch his foot. Narrated by al-Bukhari, 725.

Ibn al-Qattan al-Fasi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It was narrated that Anas said: One of us would make his shoulder touch his neighbour’s shoulder, and make his foot touch his foot, and this is a matter of consensus.

End quote from *al-Iqna`*, 1/150.

The presence of the pillar in the middle of the row interrupts this connectedness.

It says in *al-Furu`*, 3/59, by Ibn Muflih (may Allah have mercy on him):

It is disliked for one who is praying behind an imam to stand between the pillars. Ahmad said: That is because it interrupts the row. End quote.

This reason is not applicable when praying in congregation with spaces between the worshippers due to the pandemic, because there are gaps between the people whatever the case, whether there is a pillar there or not.

In this case, the pillar is not the reason for the interruption in the row. The ruling is connected to the reason, so if the reason is not there, the ruling ceases to apply.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

If the Lawgiver connected the ruling to a reason, that ruling ceases to apply when that reason is no longer there... Islamic rulings are based on this principle.

End quote from *I'lam al-Muwaqqi'in*, 5/528-529.

Conclusion:

If the worshippers are spaced out in the row because of precautionary measures required due to the pandemic, then there is no longer any reason to prevent praying between the pillars, and it is not disliked (makruh) to stand in a row between them in this case.

And Allah knows best.