

6977 - Giving zakaat to a primary school which is in need of funds

the question

A school for imparting primary education to children is in need of funds. Can Zakat be given to the school?

Detailed answer

The correct view is that it is not permissible to give zakaat to this school. Allaah has explained how the zakaat funds are to be spent, in the aayah (interpretation of the meaning):

“As-Sadaqaat (here it means Zakaat) are only for the Fuqaraa’ (poor), and Al-Masaakeen (the poor) and those employed to collect (the funds); and to attract the hearts of those who have been inclined (towards Islam); and to free the captives; and for those in debt; and for Allaah’s Cause (i.e. for Mujaahidoon those fighting in a holy battle), and for the wayfarer (a traveller who is cut off from everything)...” [al-Tawbah 9:60]

1. The poor (faqeer) means the person who does not have anything.
2. The poor (miskeen) means a person who has something, but it is not enough.
3. Those employed to collect the funds means those who are appointed by the imaam (leader) to collect the zakaat. They are to be given an amount commensurate with their efforts, even if they are rich.
4. Attracting the hearts of those who have been inclined (towards Islam). This refers to those whose hearts the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) wanted to soften so that they would become Muslim, or so that he could ward off their evil, or those whose resolve he wanted to strengthen and help them to be steadfast in Islam. These are the three types of those whose hearts were to be softened.

5. The captives refers to slaves who had drawn up a written contract with their masters to purchase their freedom, or the amount needed to purchase their freedom without a prior contract.
6. Those in debt refers to debtors who are unable to pay off their loans.
7. For Allaah's Cause refers to the soldiers who are devoted to waging jihaad for the sake of Allaah and making the word of Islam prevail.
8. The wayfarer means a travelling stranger who is cut off from his wealth; he may be given whatever he needs even if he is rich in his own land.

The person who is paying zakaah may give his zakaat to all of the kinds of people mentioned above, or to some or one of these kinds, whichever it may be.

Some people give a broader meaning to the phrase "for Allaah's Cause", but the most correct view is that it refers to Jihaad, but it may also include Hajj.

Ibn Katheer said:

"The phrase 'for Allaah's Cause' includes the fighters who have no right to a regular income from the state. According to Imaam Ahmad, al-Hasan and Ishaq, the Cause of Allaah also includes Hajj, because of the hadeeth."

(Tafseer Ibn Katheer, 2/367).

The hadeeth referred to was narrated by Imaam Ahmad; it states that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Hajj and 'Umrah are included in the Cause of Allaah."

In conclusion:

It is not permissible to use zakaat for this school, unless its students are poor or come under any of the eight categories referred to above. But in Islam the doors are open for people to help this school in other ways, by giving charity (sadaqah), donations and setting up awqaaf (endowments).

And Allaah knows best.