

## **Clarifying the confusion and doubts regarding Zakat Al-Fitr**

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Every year after fasting the noble month of Ramadaan, Muslims are obligated to spend a special type of charity called Zakat al Fitr/Sadaqatul Fitr with some special condition. This charity should be given at the end of Ramadaan (as much as possible), in the form of food (four handfuls of appropriate food of the land) to the miskeen, before the local Eid Prayer.

This is a small effort to clarify some of the confusion and doubts regarding this practice.

### **Why do we have to distribute zakat al fitr in the form of food only?**

Charity, prayer etc. are instructions from Allaah. Allah instructed the Prophet (Sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) to pray, and give charity in a certain way. We are supposed to follow these instructions and not contradict the way of our Prophet (Sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam).

When we look at zakat al fitr, we look into the practice of the Prophet (Sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) and his companions and we learn that they gave out zakat al fitr in the form of food. So, we keep the practice as they showed us. This is called “Listening and obeying.” This should be the way of all the believers.

### **Some scholars of the past allowed the zakat al fitr to be distributed in the form of food? Can't we use these fatwa to change the practice of the Prophet (sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam)?**

Our scholars are human and their fatwa is their opinions based upon their understanding of the Quran and Sunnah. So, as their true followers, we are supposed to understand and follow their fatwa based on the proof. Our noble scholars taught us that if we see their opinion contradicts the sunnah, we are supposed to reject their opinion and follow the sunnah. We must not forget this general and important principle while learning from our scholars. Otherwise, we will fall into great danger of neglecting the sunnah and giving preference to opinions.

In the case of Zakat al Fitr, the sunnah and the way of sahabah clearly indicates us to give this zakat in the form of food. Hence, in this case, it is not allowed for a believer to contradict the sunnah and to give preference to the opinions of scholars who are human and are prone to errors.

**The poor might need other things than food during the end of Ramadaan, so in that case, why can't we give the zakat al fitr in the form of money so that will fulfil their need.**

This is very true that poor Muslims need other things during the end of Ramadaan, but remember, this was also the case in the time of the Prophet (Sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam). But the Prophet and his companions still gave out this charity in the form of food. So, why should we change?

In addition, our religion has other types of charities: Zakat al maal and general charity. So, let's say a poor family does not need food, they have enough food, they need to buy clothes, or pay their bills. In this case, this family doesn't deserve zakat al fitr but their other need can be taken care of by giving them cash from general sadaqah or from zakat al maal (if they qualify). So, this excuse that poor people need other things and using their excuse as a reason to change the established practice of zakat al fitr in the form of food is invalid and prohibited.

Many organizations who use this excuse themselves can easily use other forms of charity to fulfil the needs of the poor people without changing the sunnah! May Allaah cure their heart and protect us from falling into this fitnah of changing the sunnah.

**Some organizations take money for zakat al fitr and then they distribute it in the form of food. Is it ok for me to give them my zakat al fitr in the form of money?**

Yes, of course, this is ok as long as the organization is committed to distributing zakat al fitr in the form of food. We as individuals must do our homework of choosing the right organization that will take this amaanah/trust and distribute in the form of food only.

**Some organizations take the zakat al fitr in the form of money and distribute the food after the Eid prayer? Is this allowed?**

As for each individual, we must give the zakat al fitr in the form of food or in the form of money to a trustworthy organization before the local Eid prayer. However, the organization that collects the money or food, it is not a must that they have to deliver the food before Eid. It can be done after the Eid too depending on the need of the Muslims. This zakat acts as a food bank for the Muslims.

**Conclusion:**

The majority of scholars obligate the Zakat al Fitr to be given in the form of food except for the Hanafiyyah. What is correct is what the majority of scholars view as this view is based upon clear evidence from the authentic narrations in Bukhari, Muslim and others.

The Hanafis argue that poor people have other needs and the purpose of zakat is to enrich them. However, the scholars refute them with several points:

- First of all, changing the form of zakat al fitr is going against the guidance of the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) and the sahabah
- If poor people have other needs, they can be given the zakat al fitr as food and can be given extra money from general sadaqah or zakat al maal. In addition, this excuse was present in the time of the Prophet (Sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) too. But that didn't persuade them to do what some people want to do in our time!
- Zakat al-Maal is the fund that Allaah (ta'alaah) instituted to be distributed in the form of wealth.
- As for Zakat-al-Fitr, it is instituted to be distributed in food and works as a food bank.

So, the correct position is that Zakat Al-Fitr should be distributed in the form of food and changing this is an innovation and against the sunnah of the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam).