

# THE RULING ON STANDING FOR THE ANTHEM

During the past week (this refers to a week sometime ago), a number of postings have appeared from both individuals and organizations, expressing their opinions about Mahmoud Abdul Rauf's decision to not stand for the singing of the national anthem. Some have even claimed that standing for the anthem "does not violate Islam."

Irrespective of the differing views, few of them have succeeded in clarifying

(a) whether this act, i.e., standing for the anthem, is an act which is permissible in Islam, and

(b) what are the Shariah proofs to determine the act's permissibility or impermissibility. Thus to clarify and settle this issue, let us review this matter based on Allah's book, and the sunnah of His Messenger (sallallahu alaihi wa salam).

We can deduce the Islamic ruling by first understanding the meaning of the word "worship." Worship or "ibadah" could be reduced to the secular understanding of the word, but 'ibadah means, according to the shariah, "all that Allah is pleased with from actions of the heart, tongue and limbs." (al-Ubudiyah). Therefore, the matter of standing for the anthem can be shown to be impermissible based on four counts.

1. The Shariah has prohibited specific body movements, as a sign of respect, let alone worship, to other than Allah. This can be seen clearly from four incidents in the Prophet's sunnah.

## I. Standing out of respect:

(a) Anas said, that no one was dearer to (the companions) than Allah's messenger (sallallahu alaihi wa salam), but when they saw him they did not stand up because they knew his dislike of that. (At-Tirmidhi]

(b) Muawiyah reported that Allah's Messenger (sallallahu alahi wa salam) said, "Let he who likes people to stand up before him, let him receive his place in Hell." [Abu Dawud & At-Tirmidhi]

## II. Bowing out of respect:

It is narrated in at-Tirmidhi that the Prophet (sallallahu alahi wa salam) forbade bowing to anyone out of respect.

## III. Prostrating out of respect:

Abu Hurayrah reports that when Muadh ibn Jabal returned from Sham, he came to the Prophet (sallallahu alahi wa salam) and prostrated before him, saying that he had seen the people of Sham prostrating in respect to their monks, and that the Messenger (sallallahu alahi wa salam) deserved greater respect than than what Muadh had seen the people of Sham give to their monks. The Prophet (sallallahu alahi wa salam) replied, "Were I to have commanded anyone

to prostrate to anyone, I would have commanded the wife to prostrate to her husband. [At-Tirmidhi]

Even though no worship was intended in each case, whether standing, bowing or prostrating, the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wa salam) forbade the action. Thus it is understood from the Shariah, that the act of standing in respect is, at the very best, makroo' (disliked) and at worst, haram (absolutely forbidden).

2. Among the greatest principles of Islam is that a person must not show wala' to the unbelievers and their objects of worship. Wala' is rooted in the heart and manifested by the tongue and limbs. When one stands in allegiance or wala' to the flag of a nation, he is expressing his wala' to all of what that system represents. None can argue that the American flag symbolizes Islam, on the contrary, it symbolizes disbelief in Allah and His Prophet, irrespective if we consider the flag a Christian or a secular symbol.

Moreover, the issue of coercion cannot be raised, as one is allowed to dissimulate his faith only when under the threat of death. As occurred during the time when the Quraish tortured Ammar ibn Yassir and his family for becoming Muslims. Yassir died because of his torture, Sumayah, Ammar's mother was killed by Abu Jahl himself, while Ammar, under torture, verbally recanted his faith. He afterwards came weeping, to the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wa salam), telling him what had occurred. The Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wa salam), asked Ammar, 'how was your heart at that moment?' Ammar replied, 'tranquil with Iman.' The Messenger (sallallahu alaihi wa salam), consoled him and confirmed Ammar's faith. Afterwards Allah revealed the verse, "Whoever disbelieved in Allah after his belief, except him who is forced thereto and whose heart is at rest with Faith..." [An-Nahl, 106]

Indeed, Ibn Abbas and others have further qualified that dissimulation is by the tongue alone and not by the limbs. Consider the hadeeth reported in the book "az-Zuhd" by Imam Ahmad where the Prophet (sallallahu alahi wa salam) related to his companions that because of a fly, one man went to Paradise and another man went to Hell:

"Two men came upon a people who had an idol to which the people ordered everyone passing through their land, to offer a sacrifice. When they ordered the first of the two men to sacrifice something, he replied that he had nothing to offer. They told him, 'sacrifice anything, even if it is a fly.' He did so and they gave him passage. He later died and went to Hell. They then ordered the second man to offer a sacrifice and he replied, 'I will never sacrifice anything except to Allah, azz wa jall.' The people then decapitated him and the man went to Paradise."

3. Allegiance/wala. Now some might argue, "I don't believe in standing, I'm only deceiving them by doing it." Even though it has been shown that this is impermissible, a Muslim's character is not one of deception, but of forthrightness. Ibn Taymiyah in his essay on the hadeeth of "ghurbah," mentions that those Muslims who living under the unbelievers, but were at the same time strict in observing their own religion, were unharmed, as they endeared the respect of the unbelievers; he also observes that Muslims who lived underneath the unbelievers, yet were afraid to express their faith, were often enslaved. This carries many lessons especially for Muslims living in the West today.

4. Hypocrisy. While CAIR's declaration did not express this, ISNA's seemed to hinge on the issue of 'constitutional rights.' This in fact, is a tacit recognition of the law of taghut to which we are ordered to disbelieve.

Indeed, our call to Islam, entails the command that people worship Allah alone and submit to Allah's shariah alone. "Whoever disbelieves in Taghut and believes in Allah, has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that will never break..." [Al-Baqarah, 256]

This is Islam, the religion that Allah has chosen for us, blessed us with, and the only acceptable religion with Him. While the SAS does not deny the good work that both CAIR and ISNA may have done in the past, the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wa salam) has taught us that this religion is one of naseehah. And it is out of naseehah to Allah, His Book, His Prophet, the leaders of the Muslims and their common folk that we have written this short clarification. And Allah knows best. We ask Allah to bless us all and guide us to that which He loves and is pleased with.

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