
In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Who needs to pay?

Compiled by: Iqbal Lambat

Sheikh Ahmad Ash-Sharabasi, professor of Islamic Creed and Philosophy at Al-Azhar University, is of the opinion, supported by the majority of Islamic scholars, that Zakat-ul-Fitr is payable by all Muslims.

“This zakah is incumbent on every Muslim who possesses more food than that which is not needed as a basic food for himself or his family for the duration of one day and night.

“Fasting is not a condition in zakat al-fitr being obligatory on Muslims. An ill or old person or a traveling one who may not observe fasting is still required to pay it. Besides, it is also obligatory on Muslims who are not legally responsible for fasting.

“Muslim men are required to pay this zakah for themselves and dependents such as their wives and children. As for one’s adult sons who are financially independent, one is not required to pay for them. But if they do not work or are still students, one is then required to pay for them. As for one’s parents, one is also not required to pay this zakah for them, for one is not responsible for providing for them [unless of course they cannot provide for themselves].

“Ibn `Umar said, “The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) enjoined that zakat al-fitr be paid for the young and adult as well as the free and slave persons whom one is responsible for providing for.”

Under Hanafi law, Zakat-ul-Fitr is only payable by a person who has the equivalent of nisaab (the qualifying limit to pay zakat), after deducting all debts. You are required to have the equivalent of nisaab only for the day of Eid (or if you pay before that the day you choose to pay) to qualify to pay Zakat-ul-Fitr.

Calculation of nisaab:

The nisaab identified by the Prophet (PBUH) for assets (other than livestock and crops) is detailed below:

NISSAB		Grams	Tolas	Grains	Troy Oz.	A\$/ Troy Oz.	Australian Dollar Equivalent
Gold	20 Mithqaals	87.48	7.5	1350	2.8125	1140	\$3,206
Silver	200 Dirhams	612.36	52.5	9450	19.6857	17.17	\$338

(Commodity prices as at 27 August 2009).

A number of scholars are of the opinion that the lower value should be used that is, \$338.

Preferred view:

The majority of scholars are of the opinion that zakat-ul-fitr is obligatory for all Muslims, not only those who possess the nisab. Renowned Islamic scholar Al-Khattabi explains why: “In essence, the rationale behind it zakat-ul-fitr was stated to be the purification of one who fasts from any indecent act or speech. And since every Muslim needs this, it is therefore obligatory upon every fasting Muslim, whether rich or poor, who possesses one Saa` in excess of his main staple food for the duration of one day and night. This is because so long as the essential rationale is shared by all Muslims, then they also share the same obligation¹.”

Al-Qaradawi also asserts the majority view when he said, “It is a virtuous wisdom of Islam that it makes this Zakah obligatory not only on the rich, but also upon nearly every Muslim, for you can hardly find a person who does not possess one Saa` of food above his main staple food for the duration of one day and night. The wisdom behind this obligation, therefore, is to prepare the poor to practice benevolence and feel the dignity and honour of giving in charity. Allah described the believers with these words, “Those who spend (freely), whether in prosperity, or in adversity...” (3:134). Thus if we contemplate on this wisdom, we will not find it strange that the needy pay this Zakah, because it does not cause them to suffer any loss. He will pay only his Zakah and then receive the Zakah of various people².”

A number of scholars are of the opinion that if the nisaab calculation holds then it is probable that minors will not qualify to pay zakat-ul-fitr. In their opinion that is not the intent of zakat-ul-fitr.

¹ Dahmân, Muhammad Ahmad, Kitâb al-Siyâm, 1st ed., Matba'at al-Taraqqî, Damascus, 1341/1923, p. 19-20.

² Qaradâwî, Yûsuf, Al-'Ibâdah fî al-slâm, 5th ed., Maktabat Wahbah, Cairo, 1985,p. 282.