

## **Muslim Political Participation - Views of the Scholars**

### **Taha Jabir al-Alwani, Fiqh Council of North America:**

...it is incumbent upon Muslims to actively participate for the following reasons: 1) In order to protect our rights as American citizens, we must be involved in politics. 2) Our involvement can facilitate our support of our fellow Muslims around the world. 3) Our interaction with non-Muslims and our involvement will help to spread Islam's message. 4) It helps to convey the universality of Islam... Our participation is an obligation in Islam, and not merely "a right" that we can choose to forfeit at will. It affords us the opportunity to protect our human rights, guarantee the fulfillment of our needs, and work for the improvement of living conditions for Muslims and non-Muslims in America and abroad... Whatever helps us to achieve these noble goals becomes Islamically obligatory. This includes: ... Supporting (both politically and financially) those non-Muslim candidates whose beliefs and values are most compatible with ours as Muslims, and who most address and support our issues and causes... Registering to vote and then voting. Although separate acts, they are both an essential part of the electoral process. Our participation in that process is mandatory.

### **Muhammad ibn Adam, Dar al-Iftaa, United Kingdom:**

...In a situation where there is no worthy candidate (as in non-Muslim countries, where at least the ideologies and beliefs of the relevant parties are contrary to the teachings of Shariah), then the vote should be given to the one who is the better and more trust worthy than the other candidates... Vote should be given to the candidate that one believes will give people their rights, prevent oppression, and so on... If it is thought that a particular candidate or party will be of benefit to the general public in their day to day affairs, then the vote should be given to him. And by voting a particular party, it will not be considered that one agrees with all their ideologies and beliefs... At times, voting becomes necessary. Sayyiduna Abu Bakr (rAa) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (sAas) said: "If people see an oppressor and don't prevent him, then it is very likely that Allah will include all of them in the punishment" (Sunan Tirmizi & Sunan Abu Dawud). Therefore, if you see open oppression and transgression, and despite having the capability of preventing this oppression by giving your vote, you don't do so, then in the light of this Hadith you will be sinful...

### **Dr. Jamal Badawi, Islamic Society of North America:**

I'll just give you one specific example. Suppose you have two candidates for president, for example. Both of them might be not even sympathetic to just Muslim causes, suppose. In most cases that is actually the situation... However, in terms of relative harm and benefit which is a rule of Shariah it may be the collective wisdom, for example, of Muslim voters that one of them would do even greater harm to Muslim causes than the other... Well in that case, obviously, the lesser of the two harms, i.e. electing or voting for someone who will do less harm to Muslims obviously would be much better than sitting on the sidelines and just criticizing both and doing nothing about it... Voting for them and supporting them in elections is not necessarily an agreement with everything that the law, by way of laws and regulations. But at least it would be for that particular, limited purpose.

### **Shaykh Muhammad al-Munajjid, Saudi scholar:**

This is a matter concerning which rulings may differ according to different circumstances in different times and places. There is no absolute ruling that covers all situations, both real and hypothetical... It may be the case that the interests of Islam require Muslims to vote so as to ward off the greater evil and to reduce harmful effects, such as where two candidates may be non-Muslims but one of them is less hostile towards Muslims than the other, and Muslims' votes will have an impact on the outcome of the election. In such cases there is nothing wrong with Muslims casting their votes in favour of the less evil candidate. In any case, this is the matter of ijtihaad based on the principle of weighing up the pros and cons, what is in the interests of Islam and what is detrimental... No one should imagine that anyone who says that it is OK to vote is thereby expressing approval or support for kufr. It is done in the interests of the Muslims, not out of love for kufr and its people...

### **Imam Mohammad Joban, Islamic Center of Olympia:**

The voting problem in non-Muslim countries, or voting for non-Muslim to run for offices in non-Muslim countries is an ijthadiyah problem. This means Islamic scholars have different opinions in the above problem, and the judgments/hukm are different from one place to another and from one time to another time... However, when it is of Islamic interest for the Muslims to vote, that if we don't vote then Islam will be threatened, then it is better to vote. And as according to usul fiqh method, whenever we are confronted with two evils, we must choose the lesser evil. For instance, when we have two non-Muslim candidates, but one of them is less hostile towards Muslims than the other, then it may be wise to choose the less hostile one... But we must remember that when we see a Muslim taking part in voting we must be careful not to accuse him as kafir/infidel or [of] supporting the kufr. The reason being is that he may be doing it for the interest of Islam and/or Muslims where he is living...