

# Legal Prohibitions Relating to God, Self, and Society

There are a number of obligations and prohibitions that a Muslim should take heed of. Many such obligations are expressed in the form of rulings (*aḥkam*) that carry moral and legal weight in the Islamic conception of law (*fiqh*). While law is only one aspect of a broader Islamic conception of life, one should understand the law as boundaries defining the possibilities of action and a starting point for traversing a much larger path towards moral perfection – a path that includes ethics, theology, and practice.

Below are a selection of legal prohibitions that relate to a person's relationships with Allah ﷻ and others, in accordance with the rulings of Sayyid Ali al-Husayni al-Sistani. ((Sayyid Ali al-Husayni al-Sistani, *al-Masā'il al-Muntakhabah* (Beirut: Dār al-Mu'arrikh al-'Arabī, 2012), 10-4.)) Although this selection of rulings includes actions that are all equally forbidden, the tool and methods for avoiding and resolving them may widely differ. Seeking inspiration and assistance from various disciplines outside of law may be required.

One should not:

- Lose hope in the mercy of Allah and His salvation
- Feel a guarantee of safety from Allah's retribution for evil. Allah may seize an evildoer at anytime in a way they would never have imagined.
- "Revert to Ignorance" after migration. This is defined as moving or living in a place where one's religion becomes deficient. Therefore, it is not permissible to go somewhere that would result in a person's faith (*imān*) becoming weaker in terms of correct doctrine, performance of obligations, or avoidance of what is religiously prohibited.
- Assist or incline towards a tyrant (*zālim*) is forbidden, as is accepting an official position from him. The exception to this rule is when the action or role is (a) permissible in itself and (b) is performed in order to

counteract the tyrant for the sake of the best interests of the Muslims.

- Kill a Muslim or any innocent or protected soul. It is also not permitted to harm, hit, or do any harmful action against such a person. Related to this issue is the impermissibility of the killing of a fetus before the soul enters its body, even if it merely be a blood clot or embryo.
- Gossip (*ghībah*) about a believer. Gossip is to publicly mention a deficiency or shortcoming of a believer which is hidden from people while that believer is not present. Such “public mention” is gossip regardless of whether one does so intending to demean or not.
- Curse, damn, demean, humiliate, mock, and cause fear to a believer. Likewise, it is not permissible to spread his or her secrets, keep track of his or her mistakes and shortcomings, and to look down upon him or her. This is especially the case if he or she is poor or destitute.
- Slander a believer, which is defined as mentioning something in his or her absence which is *not* true. (The difference here, between “gossip” and “slander”, is that the former is a true statement whereas the latter is false.)
- Stir up calumny between believers, which results in dividing them.
- Forsake a Muslim for more than three days (forbidden as an obligatory precaution).
- Accuse a chaste man or woman of indecency, such as adultery (*zinā*), without a religiously mandated form of proof.
- Cheat a Muslim in commerce or anything similar, whether by hiding a fault or the undesirability of a product, or offering a desirable description of a product that does not accurately describe it, or showing a product that is actually not the same type as what is being sold. Generally speaking, any form of deception in commerce is forbidden.
- Use vulgar speech, defined as obscene words whose mention is considered shameful.
- Be treacherous and betray a Muslim or a non-Muslim.
- Express jealousy (*ḥasad*) in word or deed. As for jealousy in the heart that is not expressed in word or deed, such is not forbidden *per se*, although it is a reprehensible trait. There is no harm in envy (*ghibṭah*),

defined as wishing for something that someone else has been bestowed with, without wishing for it to be taken away or removed from that person.

- Have sexual activity outside of a valid marriage, including looking, touching, and listening with desire. Likewise, bringing two people together for illicit sexual relations is also forbidden. Furthermore, it is not permitted to see one's spouse commit adultery while being silent or not stopping it.
- Resemble the opposite gender (For men to resemble women or women to resemble men), according to obligatory precaution. Such resemblance is defined by a person taking on the form or dress of the opposite gender.
- Give an opinion without knowledge or legitimate evidence.
- Lie, even regarding something which does not harm another person. The worst types of lies are the giving of false testimony in legal cases and issuing a religious edict (fatwa) without a valid basis in that which Allah ﷻ has revealed.
- Break a promise, as per obligatory precaution. Also, making a promise which one does not intend to fulfill.
- Receive usury in transactions and lending. Consuming usury, carrying it, and gifting it are all forbidden. It is also not permitted to give compensation for a usurious transaction. Recording and testifying to such a transaction is also not permitted.
- Be arrogant (*kibr*) and conceited (*ikhtiyāl*). This is when a person presents himself, without merit, as better than or above others.
- Cut ties (*qaṭī'at al-raḥim*) with relatives. "Cutting ties" is defined as neglecting goodness to them in a situation where goodness would be expected.
- Be extravagant, which is spending in excess of what is proper, or wasteful, which is spending on that which is not proper.
- Pay less than what is due in a transaction, in terms of money, weight, measure, or the like, in such a way that what is rightfully due to another is not fulfilled.

- Spend the wealth of a Muslim (or one ruled as a Muslim, such as the minor child of Muslim parents) without their consent or willingness.
- Harm a Muslim (or one ruled as such) regarding his person, his wealth, or his reputation.
- Accept bribes for legal judgments, whether one gives or receives, even if for getting a ruling which is correct. As for bribes for seeking one's right from an oppressor, it is permissible, although forbidden for the oppressor to take it.
- Show off, either by being seen or heard, in matters of religious obedience and worship.
- Kill oneself or intend to bring about substantial harm to oneself. Also a believer should not debase himself or herself, for example, by wearing clothes which make him look disgraceful or heinous in the eyes of the public.

A believer should make preparations for the sake of obedience to Allah by following His commands and prohibitions, purifying and refining the soul from contemptible attributes and objectionable traits, and adorning the soul with the perfections of morality and praiseworthy traits. This is accomplished by following the Sacred Book and the Noble Practice of the Prophet ﷺ, such as remembering death, the transience of the life of this world, and the final outcome of the afterlife, such as Purgatory (*Barzakh*), Resurrection (*Nushūr*), the Gathering of all people on that Day (*Ḥashr*), the Accounting of all actions (*Ḥisāb*), and the Judgement from Allah ﷻ. Also, the remembrance of the descriptions and blessings of paradise, along with the terror of the Hellfire. Likewise, one would do well to remember the results of one's actions in this life and their final result in the Hereafter. This advice is what is meant by the religious instruction of having mindfulness of Allah, His obedience, and being wary of falling into sin.