

# ATTITUDE OF ISLAMIC SHARIA TOWARDS MEDICAL VACCINATION AMID GLOBAL PANDEMICS: COVID 19 AN EXAMPLE

Reema Al Qaruty, Al Falah University  
Lamya Raslan, Al Falah University

## ABSTRACT

*The current study focuses on an essential issue, which has emerged as a result of the pandemic, known as COVID 19, that has attacked the whole world since the beginning of 2020, and still having deep effect on people's lives up to nowadays. It is the issue of taking the medical vaccine from an Islamic perspective to restrict and reduce the pandemic's spread.*

*The study concludes that the ruling of medication in Islam is binding for all, especially if the spreading disease threatens the life of all humanity. Every ruler has the right to impose on his people to take the available vaccinations as a means highly required for protecting the whole society from this deadly epidemic.*

*Accordingly, taking the medical vaccination is not a matter of choice, but rather an obligation being inspired by the words of God Almighty, "Whoever saves a life, as if he has saved the lives of all people" (Surat Al-Ma'idah 32).*

**Keywords:** Pandemic, Vaccine, Medication, Legal Rules

## Research Plan

The research has been classified into two main parts and as follows:  
Clarification of the Terms' Meanings

- Pandemic, Vaccine & Medication
- Ruling of Medication and its importance in Islamic Sharia

Medical Vaccinations and their role in medicating and protecting people amid pandemics

- Medical Vaccinations and their Importance in Protecting Human Lives
- The Legal Rules that Govern Taking Medical Vaccine in Islamic Sharia

## Clarification of the Terms' Meanings

As stated above, this part includes two sub-sections. We shall investigate them in sequence.

### Pandemic, Vaccine & Medication

We are required to identify the three terms given above, i.e. pandemic, vaccine and medication, and as follows:

#### Pandemic

The term "pandemic" has been defined as

- a. "Anything that cannot be avoided, such as cold, wind and weeds"(Abul-Hassan, 1992)

- b. “Unavoidable damage to an amount of fruit or plant after it has been sold”,(Adawi, 1992) and it has been defined by Khalil as “anything that cannot be avoided”(Thnayyan, 1992)

It can be noted that these definitions consider a pandemic as anything that cannot be avoided because it is an action not committed by humans. Some may object to this, claiming that Virus Corona known as COVID 19 is man-made and therefore it is not a pandemic. In reply to this claim, we refer to what the World Health Organization has declared confirming that COVID 19 is a pandemic of the first degree, and the whole world shall cooperate to mitigate its effects.(<https://www.who.int/ar/>)

Pandemics, however, can be classified into two types: pandemics caused by Nature and pandemics caused by Man.

### **Pandemics Caused by Nature**

These pandemics are caused by Nature may negatively affect people’s lives. They include heat, wind, locusts, fire, mold, ice, birds, worms, toxins, snow, drought, and dried-up springs.(Hattab, 1992)

### **Pandemics Caused by Man**

The Malikis have come up with different ideas about an action committed by humans, whether it is considered a pandemic or not (Jezzi, 1999 AD). Those who believe it is not a pandemic, support their claim by a saying to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), , in which he says, “if God is not the producer, then what an excuse a person may use to take his brother’s money”.(Hajaj, 1954) Others however believe that man’s actions could be treated as pandemics as they do not differ from those caused by Nature.

In general, we may say that a pandemic is anything that cannot be forbidden or avoided, and it has negative effects on all the world no matter whether it is caused by humans or it is a decree that God Almighty has destined for all mankind.

As for the subject of this study, the World Health Organization, and as everybody knows, has already classified COVID19 as a global pandemic, which almost attacked the whole world causing deep negative effects on all aspects of life, economic, social, political, educational and others (<https://www.who.int/ar/>).

However, pandemics are not confined to what has been mentioned in the books of jurists, but they could extend to anything unavoidable, and that man has nothing to do with them.

### **Vaccine**

A vaccine is defined as “a biological substance designed to protect humans from infections caused by bacteria and viruses. Vaccines are also called immunizations because they take advantage of our natural immune system’s ability to prevent infectious illness” (<https://www.winchesterhospital.org/health-library/article?id=222982>).

### **Medication**

Medication can be defined as “any chemical substance intended for use in the medical diagnosis, cure, treatment or prevention of disease (<https://www.definitions.net/definition/medication>). Medication nowadays have taken different types and forms, including drugs, surgical treatment, psychotherapy, physiotherapy, and other methods such as vaccinations, which are taken to prevent or reduce the spread of epidemics. COVID 19 Pandemic is an example, which has negatively affected the whole world because it has been so easily dispersing and transferring among people. Statistics released by the World

Health Organization show a great increase in infections reaching more than a third of world's population (<https://www.who.int/ar/>).

### **Ruling of Medication and its Importance in Islamic Sharia**

Health is considered as one of the greatest blessings of God Almighty upon people and preserving it is one of the five fundamentals that Islam has emphasized, and to safeguard it, we shall do anything so as to protect it from any perdition. We are required therefore to come up with a ruling related to medicating a person when exposed to a disease, and when exploring the books of jurists we found out that they have different views about this issue. It is argued whether the patient who abandons his medication is a sinner, and he shall be punished by God Almighty, or it is recommended and there is a reward for accepting treatment, i.e. there shall be no sin or punishment for discarding it.

Some Shafi'is (Mardawi) and some Hanbalis (Taymiyyah) believe that "medication ruling" is obligatory. However, the viewpoint that is adopted by Shafi'is (Nuwawi, 1405 HR) and Hanafis (Babarti) confirm that the medication rule is recommended. The Hanbalis in general believe that medication is not required and it shall be abandoned. It was reported that Imam Ahmed said, "It is much better for the one who believes in reliance and follows this route shall give up medication of all kinds". He could be ill, but he might deny it before a doctor (Taymiyyah). It was also narrated about Al-Marwazi & Al-Nuwawi (Maqdisi, 2007) saying that "Treatment is a concession and abandoning it is a higher degree".

As for evidence, the first group, who considers medication as obligatory, refers to a saying by Prophet Muhammad (BPUH), in which he says, "Medicate, as God Almighty has not created an ailment without determining a medication for it, except aging" (IBID). The imperative form of the word "Medicate" without having a dismissing indicator, undoubtedly, confirms obligation (Juwayni, 1996).

As for the second group who believe that medication is recommended rather than being obligatory, the support their claim by what God Almighty says: "And we send down from the Quran what is a healing and a mercy for the believers" (Surat Al-Isra':82), and also His saying "There comes out of bellies a drink of different colors in which is healing for people" (Surat Al-Nahl: 69). These two verses express generosity towards believers for what is a healing to them, indicating that seeking a cure through medication is something desirable. Similar to those of the first group, they have also supported their claim with what Prophet Muhammad (BPUH) said in the medication issue and as narrated by Abu Saeed Al-Khadri (may Allah be pleased with him), "that a man came to the Prophet (BPUH) and said: "My brother complains of a pain in his stomach". The Prophet said to him, "Give him honey". The man came again, and the Prophet told him, "Give him honey." The man came for the third time, and the Prophet said, "Give him honey." The man came again and said, "I did what you told me". The Prophet said, "God has said the truth and your brother's belly lied. Give him honey". He gave him honey again and he finally recovered" (Bukhari, 2217). It is argued that the prophet's command (BPUH) includes advice, and "advice" is something desirable not obligatory (Abdul, 1387 HR).

As for the third group, who believe that medication is not required and it shall be abandoned, they support their claim by the following:

As for the third group who believe that medication is not recommended, and it is better to leave It.

1. It is narrated by Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him), he said that the Messenger of God (BPUH) said, "The nations were shown before me, and the prophets started to pass with their people, or with nobody with them until I saw a huge mass of people, and I asked: "Is this my nation? They said, "This is Moses and his people". They added, "Look to the horizon". I saw a huge mass of people, and they said, "Look there and there in the horizons." I looked and I saw thousands of people there, and they said, "This is your nation, and seventy thousand of them shall enter Paradise with no expense". Then he entered without explaining to them, and the people gathered and said, "We have believed in God and followed his

Messenger, then it is us or our children who were born in Islam, as we were born in the pre-Islamic era". The prophet (BPUH) heard about that, and he came out and said to them, "it is those who do not enslave, nor do they believe in superstition, and they do not seek treatment and on their God, they rely". And Okasha asked, "Oh, Messenger of God, Am I one of them?" The Messenger replied, "Yes." Another stood up and asked, "Am I one of them?" The Messenger said, "Okasha preceded you." (Bukhari)

2. It is narrated by Ata' Ibn Abi Rabah (May Allah be pleased with him). He said, "Ibn Abbas (May Allah be pleased with him) said to me, "Shall I show you a woman of the people of Paradise?" I said, "Please, do." He said, "This black woman came to the Prophet (BPUH) and said to him, "I have epileptic attacks and I get uncovered. Pray to God for me." He said to her, "If you wish, you shall be patient and Paradise is yours, and if you wish, I shall pray to God to get you healed." She said, "I shall be patient, but I get uncovered, so pray for me I don't get uncovered." And he prayed for her" (Bukhari, 5652).

The two Hadiths stated above indicate that some of the Prophet's companions and followers denied taking medication, such as Ubay Bin Ka'b and Abu Dharr (May Allah be pleased with them both). Nevertheless, the Prophet (BPUH) did not revoke their denial to treatment (Muslim) and preferring to surrender to what has God Almighty determined to them.

## Discussion & Assessment

After investigating the jurists' viewpoints with their evidence, we are inclined to approve the first group, which confirms the requirement of medication because of the following:

- A. Referring to a saying by Prophet Muhammad (BPUH), in which he confirms, "Medicate, as God Almighty has not created an ailment without determining a medication", and this includes everything that may endanger human's life.
- B. Medication achieves one of the most essential purposes of Islamic law, which has been proclaimed by all monotheistic religions, and that is self-protection. Medication is one of the means that can be adopted to protect humans' lives, and such trend goes in line with what God Almighty has said, "Do not kill yourselves, for God has been merciful to you". This however does not contradict with the reliance on God due to the glorious meanings incorporated in the relying process. Besides, it generates the feeling that God Almighty is dominating the whole universe and everything in it. He creates the causes, and to Him everything refers, and therefore, medication is required in case of ailment. Both has been destined by God as the Caliph Omar Ibn Al-Khattab says, "We turn away from God's destiny to God's destiny". Medication has been created by God as a reason to reduce the effect of lethal diseases. It is obligatory for every man to protect himself from diseases by referring to medication whether before or after occurrence of ailment.

In accordance with what has been stated above, the International Islamic Jurisprudence Academy has approved treatment and medication. In its resolution No. 69/5/7, it confirms the necessity of medication, stating that "medication is obligatory sometimes, though jurists consider it as recommended because benefit of medication had been speculated with weak probability, but with contemporary medicines, it has become definitive like all other means of saving the soul that a person is obliged to comply with".

## Medical Vaccines & their Role in Treating and Protecting People

We shall investigate in this part two main issues: importance of medical vaccines and the rules that govern taking these vaccines according to Islamic Sharia.

### Medical Vaccines & their Importance in Protecting Human Soul

God Almighty says that "if you count the favors of God, you shall not be able to estimate". Health indeed is one of the greatest gifts that God has bequeathed upon people. Maintaining health therefore is a matter of necessity and obligation, and as God Almighty says, "Do not throw yourselves into annihilation" (Surat Al-Baqarah: 195).

Islamic Sharia is based on certain aspects. One of these aspects is taking care of human interests of all levels including the necessary, the basic, and remedial. Another aspect is to create

a balance between benefits and harms, taking into consideration that pushing harms away comes ahead of benefits due to consequences, and that harm shall inevitably occur in human life. Accordingly, Islam has not ignored the possible means of dealing with it and keep it away as far as possible without causing other harms.

Since the start of COVID19, that has caused fear and panic among people, health authorities everywhere in the world have been working on research and experimental studies until finally they have come up with different types of medical vaccines that could reduce infection of the virus. There is no doubt that vaccines through human history have played an essential role in protecting and saving people's lives (<https://www.who.int/ar/news-room/commentaries/detail/vaccines-the-powerful-innovations-bringing-who-s-mission-to-life-every-day>).

COVID19 has been classified as a global pandemic featured with rapid spread of infection, causing great damages to people's lives and their interests, and therefore it has necessitated medication with vaccines to limit the infection of this virus. Indeed, it has become an obligation and a necessity for every human to take the medical vaccine.

According to what has been reported by the Emirates News Agency, "vaccination is part of the medicine and the treatment imposed by Islamic Sharia. It is considered as a preventive medicine, especially during the spread of epidemic diseases, in which a healthy person is deemed unhealthy due to the high rate of getting the infection, and because it is a requirement for the whole society". As a matter of fact, medication with vaccines has become an obligation and a necessity whether before or after getting the infection.

Imam Al-Shatibi refers to a legal rule, and that is to consider the outcomes, the targets, the results, and the consequences. It is argued that "the outcomes are considered legal as per Sharia whether they are consistent or contradictory because a diligent does not judge an act committed by those who move ahead or retreat until he examines the consequences of that act and becomes sure that it brings a benefit or prevents a harm. If it has been considered as legal, the benefit might lead to an impairment that is equal to the benefit or exceeding it then it becomes illegal. However, if it is regarded as illegal, pushing a harm away might cause another harm equal to the first or exceeding it, and therefore we cannot go for illegality" (Shatibi).

As we can see, consequences of actions are taken into consideration, and in application to this concept, taking medical vaccines has a great impact on protecting human soul, especially, if we take into consideration that this epidemic is not confined to infected people, but transfers and so fast to others. Taking the vaccine, therefore, is necessary and legally binding to all people if we also consider the increasing number of the dead because of this virus (<https://covid19.who.int>).

### **Rules of Taking Medical Vaccines as per Islamic Sharia**

Many legal rules in fact emphasize that taking medical vaccines within the current circumstances is highly required and inevitable to maintain people's interests and protect them from anything that might endanger their lives. We shall deal with two of these rules and as follows:

#### **No harm that leads to harm**

This rule is taken from Hadith to Prophet Muhammad (BPUH), in which he says, "No harm leading to a harm" (Majah). This rule stipulates on negating all types of harm. In other words, man is not allowed to hurt himself, or bring harm to others. It is indeed a kind of prohibition, and in application of this rule, we may refer to current situation of the world with the spread of COVID19. People are required to resort to all possible and available means to avoid and prevent occurrence of harm. Taking the medical vaccine is a preventive procedure that shall be considered.

This rule, however, shall be applied without enlargement or carelessness. One familiar assumption confirms that there is no disease, but a medicine shall be found for it. If this medicine is taken more than estimated, it shall turn into another disease. Similarly, if the amount of the medicine taken is less than estimated, the treatment shall fail, and the cure is not achieved (Qayyim).

### **Harm is Removed**

Despite that the rule is written as a statement, it includes the meaning of obligation (Zarqa, 1415 HR). Removal of harm is a determined and obligatory issue as per the jurisdictions set by the tolerant Sharia of Islam for the purpose of achieving benefits. The methods utilized to remove harms could be implemented through one of the following stages:

- a. Preventing harm before its occurrence due to causes, effects, and available data.
- b. Removal of harm after it occurs by resorting to all safe and legitimate means that are consistent with the reasonable and sound thinking.
- c. Clarification of how to remove harm after its occurrence even if it is not eradicated completely as per the legal rule, which says, "Harm shall be avoided and pushed away as far as possible" (Zarqa).

Medical vaccine can be taken through all the stages stated above, before infection as a preventive procedure, after infection so as to confirm full recovery as stated in the second stage. Besides, the medical vaccine does not prevent the occurrence of infections, but it keeps it away as much as possible, limiting its spread to minimum rates according to what is mentioned in the third stage.

Accordingly, Taking the medical vaccine within the current situation of the global crisis is highly required and obligatory for all those who have not been infected with virus yet, and those who have got the disease and recovered as per the will of God Almighty, and this is assured by what Prophet Muhammad (BPUH) says, "The one who starts his day by eating seven dates, he shall not be harmed with any infection or being affected with fascination" (Zarqa). This Hadith clearly indicates the permissibility of medication before the occurrence of harm. This interpretation can be applied on COVID19 Pandemic.

Taking medical vaccine, therefore, if a person fears infection due to the existence of the pandemic, is an obligation as per Islamic Sharia, and such the safety of the community members shall be ensured, and all people are required to contribute in this campaign so as to reduce the rate of the dead as well as the infections (Sheikh, 1435). On the other hand, it is considered an acknowledgment and an application to the principle of defending and protecting people's interests and meanwhile fighting evils. Urging for medication by taking the medical vaccines available so as to reduce spread of the epidemic goes in line with the instructions of Islamic Sharia, which confirms the necessity of protecting the human soul.

Rulers anyway may compel everybody to take the medical vaccine as per requirement of public interests until the harm of this epidemic is removed of all the world, confirming that everybody shall not hurt himself nor causing harm to other people when being carriers to the virus and hence bringing them infection and death.

## **CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

We shall detail below our main conclusions as well as our recommendations.

### **Conclusions**

Our conclusions can be summarized as follows:

- Islam has confirmed the necessity of medication as God Almighty has created medicine for every disease, and therefore, medication ruling in Islam is obligatory for the purpose of preserving human soul.
- Spread of COVID19 Pandemic necessitates taking all possible and available precautions procedure that could help in protecting human life whether at the personal or societal level, and taking the medical vaccine is one of them.
- The Ruler can force people through issuance of orders to take medical vaccines to protect lives of all.

## Recommendations

Our recommendations are listed below:

- Governments shall issue orders, in which they compel people to take medical vaccines to contain the pandemic and confine its spread, considering these orders as aiming to achieve public interests.
- Cooperation between countries is highly required in the issue of providing medical vaccines for all since vaccinations is essential in confronting the threat of this pandemic.
- More studies and research are required to come up with more effective treatments that shall contribute to the elimination of this pandemic.

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