



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الحمد لله والصلاة والسلام على رسول الله وآله وصحبه ومن والاه،

Statement on Vaccination Ruling & Issues

September 16, 2021 – Safar 09, 1443

Summary

Given this unprecedented pandemic in our lifetime, the clear fact that a fourth wave is on the rise, and at the request of many Muslim medical practitioners, healthcare providers, and concerned Muslims, the Canadian Council of Imams and the Fiqh Majlis of Canada convened a special meeting on September 14, 2021 after a series of consultations with medical advisors to discuss some pertinent points regarding vaccination issues in the light of Islamic jurisprudence and principles as well as medical facts and reality.

Due to the strong compulsion and compelling urgency to save lives and stop the spread of the disease, vaccines are strongly recommended. The following statement addresses the vaccination ruling and issues in 10 points:

- (1) **Vaccines are strongly recommended based on Fiqh principles** as they are the best available protection and the main tool to curb the spread of this dangerous disease and reduce the number of infected people,
- (2) **Vaccine is to be taken for necessity (*darura*),**
- (3) **Harm is to be removed** to save as many lives as possible. The impact of individual choices has consequences to cause harm to others,
- (4) **There are only limited options** available to curb the spread,
- (5) **Islam is in favour of seeking medical treatments,**
- (6) **Lifesaving and evident benefits outweigh minor detriments,**
- (7) **Available Vaccines are free from Haram (forbidden) components,**
- (8) **There are historical precedents** for vaccination requirements like for Hajj and Umrah,
- (9) **Public Health authorities must try to do more to create awareness among the population to avert social divide and misinformation on the issue of vaccination,** and
- (10) **There is no valid reason for religious exemption for Muslims**

Present: Dr. Mohammad Iqbal al-Nadvi (CCI & FMC Chairman) – Dr. Abdalla Idris Ali (FMC Member)
Shaikh Refaat Mohammed (CCI President & FMC Member) - Dr. Hamid Slimi (CCI former Chair & FMC member)
Dr. Abdul Hai Patel (CCI former Chair & FMC member) - Dr. Jamal Taleb (CCI Director & FMC member)

FMC Medical Advisors: Dr. Hashim Khan (Respirologist & Co-chair of the Canadian Muslim COVID-19 Task Force)
Dr. Abdul Aziz Walele (Nephrologist & FMC Consultant on medical issues)

For details, please read the full statement below!

Vaccination Ruling & Issues

After consulting medical advisors in the field, the agreed upon ruling on COVID-19 vaccination is that the latter is strongly recommended for the following reasons:

1. Vaccines are strongly recommended to reduce the spread of the disease

The rule in the principles of Islamic Jurisprudence (*Usul-ul-Fiqh*): "Public interest is given priority over personal interest". Vaccination is a community response to protect the whole population. Undoubtedly, people who mingle with each other contribute to the spread of the disease and there are many traditions forbidding such behavior during a pandemic. Various Prophetic teachings instruct those who are infected with such diseases not to move around other people, communities, and countries... In the Islamic tradition, plague/disease was described like a fire and the people are like the wood that fuels it. Even for animals, they have to be isolated from each other to prevent infection. Muslims believe in destiny (*qadar*) but they also believe that they have to do what is within their abilities to ward off detriments. We certainly believe in divine intervention but also, we have to do our part. Our Prophet Muhammad (Blessings & Peace be upon him) said:

(لا يورد ممرض على مصحح). متفق عليه

(A person who is in contact/close to an infectious disease should not come near the one who is healthy/far from disease). Agreed upon

He also said,

(لَا عَدْوَى وَلَا طَيْرَةَ وَلَا هَامَةَ وَلَا صَفَرَ، وَفِرَّ مِنَ الْمَجْدُومِ كَمَا تَفِرُّ مِنَ الْأَسَدِ) البخاري (5707)

He also said:

(إِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ بِهِ [يعني: الطاعون] بِأَرْضٍ فَلَا تَقْدُمُوا عَلَيْهِ، وَإِذَا وَقَعَ بِأَرْضٍ وَأَنْتُمْ بِهَا فَلَا تَخْرُجُوا فِرَارًا مِنْهُ)
البخاري (5739) ومسلم (2219)

“When you hear about a plague (caused by a virus or similar things...) in a country do not go there. And if you happen to be in that country do not leave it running away from it.” Bukhari & Muslim

2. Vaccine is a Necessity

From a fiqh perspective, we see that vaccination has become - in our current circumstances - an indispensable measure (*daruriyah*) to curb the spread of this dangerous disease and avert an imminent threat to lives. If the disease becomes controlled and there is no more pandemic, then the ruling could change to the level of precaution (level of *hajah* instead of *darura*).

3. Harm is to be removed

During pandemics and rapid contagion, extreme measures might be taken by authorities to save the population especially the elderly, the vulnerable, and the weak. The issue is about carrying the disease to others and causing harm to them. Although the disease does not kill more than 1 or 2% of the population, it does spread mostly by healthy people to the vulnerable ones. In addition, this is a plague/pandemic which is a communal disease, not an individual disease. If our individual choices do not affect others then it is fine but when they do go beyond us and cause harm to others, the ruling could change from the ruling of recommendation (*al-Nadb*) to

obligation (*wujub*) stemming from the principles of social obligation and responsibility of preventing harm and causing harm. The Prophet (Blessings & Peace be upon him) said:

(لا ضرر ولا ضرار) رواه ابن ماجة

(There should be neither harming (causing *darar*) nor reciprocating harm (*dirar*))

A hasan hadith related by Ibn Majah

4. Limitation of options in severe circumstances

Following the above point, there aren't many options or a safe mechanism to ensure that those who choose not to vaccinate will not spread the disease knowingly and unknowingly. The protection and safety of the people is not only the responsibility of the government just because it has the authority to legislate laws and execute them, but it is also the social responsibility of all citizens as well to look after each other's safety. In case of imminent and inevitable threat to lives such as COVID-19 pandemic, vaccine passports and limited access to different public services and places could be the temporary solution till the number of infections is reduced. Otherwise, more lockdowns will be enforced which will impact the economy and more businesses and jobs will be lost.

5. Seeking Medical Treatment

Any medical treatment to stop any plague or disease, resulting in no harm to people, with no significant side effects, and not leading to worse medical conditions than COVID is the right course of action. Allah Almighty says:

(وَلَا تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ وَأَحْسِنُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ) البقرة: 195

(... and make not your own hands contribute to (your) destruction; but do good; for Allah loves those who do good) (2:195)

And the Prophet Muhammad (Blessings & Peace be upon him):

(تداووا عباد الله فإن الله تعالى لم يضع داءً إلا وضع له دواء غير داء واحد الهرم) صحيح أخرجه أبو داود (2015، 3855) مفرداً، الترمذي (2038)، والنسائي في ((السنن الكبرى)) (7553)، وابن ماجه (3436) واللفظ له، وأحمد (18454) باختلاف يسير

“Seek medical cure for Allah did not allow a disease (to exist on earth) except that he brought down medicine for it except one disease, old age...” Reported in the 4 Sunan and Ahmad

In another narration, it says,

(إن الله لم ينزل داءً، أو لم يخلق داءً. إلا أنزل. أو خلق. له دواء، علمه من علمه، وجهله من جهله إلا السام، قالوا: يا رسول الله، وما السام؟ قال: الموت) رواه الحاكم وأحمد والنسائي وصححه الالباني

“Truly Allah did not bring down (or created) a harmful disease except that he also brought down (or created) for it its cure, whether people know it or not ... except for death.” Reported by Ahmad, al-Nassa’I and al-Hakim

Allah has brought down medicine/cure to earth to be found and discovered both in nature or with human intellectual research.

6. Benefits compared to detriments

Like everything in life, not every medical intervention is 100% effective and without risk. But if the benefit outweighs the harm with a vast difference, then we judge based on the majority of the fact (الحكم بالغالب) due to the necessity and urgency of circumstance.

To this date, and Allah knows best, there are some common, limited side effects (e.g. sore arm, skin reactions, fever, fatigue, headache) and rare significant side effects (e.g. myocarditis, pericarditis, Bell's Palsy) that have been reported with mRNA vaccines which are being closely monitored by Health Canada. However, being in a state of disease like COVID-19 can cause more harm and threaten one's life, compared to possible side effects of the vaccine. From almost 6 billion reported doses of all COVID-19 vaccines given worldwide thus far, the overwhelming majority have not experienced any serious, long-term or life-threatening side effects. (References: 1. <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/covid-19/vaccine-safety/>2. <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>)

7. No Haram components in the vaccine

After thorough review of these aforementioned vaccines with our medical advisors, there are no Haram (unlawful) elements in them. The Prophet (Blessings & Peace be upon him) said,

(إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَجْعَلْ شِفَاءَكُمْ فِي مَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ) أَخْرَجَهُ الْبَيْهَقِيُّ، وَصَحَّحَهُ ابْنُ جَبَّان

"Allah did not make your cure in what He made Haram (unlawful) to you."

Related by al-Baihaqi and graded as Sahih by Ibn Hibban

8. Historical Precedents for Vaccine requirement

We have precedents in both human history and Islamic history where governments required vaccination for citizens who want to travel or enter a country such as in the Ottoman Turkish time in the beginning of the twentieth century as well as currently in Saudi Arabia where one of the most important requirements to obtain a visa for Hajj or Umrah is to be vaccinated against Meningitis, Hepatitis C, Yellow Fever and other diseases where applicable.

9. Divide caused by Myths and Social Media misinformation

Although it is an extremely difficult task to bring unity on this critical issue, we call the public health officials to run more awareness campaigns and debunk many conspiracy theories caused mainly by social media. The latter are leading to more social divide and misinformation. By the same token, we want to make it clear that we are against any discrimination or criminalization of those who choose not to take vaccines. We believe that dividing society into the good vaccinated ones and the bad unvaccinated ones is wrong and unacceptable. Everyone wants to be safe, healthy and free but misinformation caused by social media and contradicting statements by some so-called experts are the main problem. Understanding that safety of everyone has to be the priority for everyone. We also request the public health authorities to work in consultation with the different faith groups including Muslim representatives like the Council of Imams before issuing any directives.

10. Religious Exemption

We do not see any valid reason for individuals seeking a religious exemption from vaccination as mentioned above (see point 7). Since this is a medical issue, we believe that the exemption from vaccination should be issued by medical doctors where applicable.

Lastly, we have done our best to study and understand the issue at hand in consultation with medical advisors and we stress that this is a pressing issue since many lives are lost every day here and around the world. However, we still believe that nobody should be forced against their will to take vaccine or any treatment in spite of this recommendation. And Allah knows best!