

For a Sinner to be an Imaam?

Q: Salaah-25: Our Imaam here is a sinner and Faasiq, who has no part of Deen in his life and perpetrates acts that oppose the Shari'ah. is our salaah behind him valid? Although many Musallis have complained, the trustees of the Masjid refuse to dismiss him. What is the ruling concerning a person who carries out acts of Bid'ah and whose beliefs are those of the Mushrikeen? Can he be an Imaam or not?

Answer: It is necessary for an Imaam to hold correct beliefs, to know the injunctions of salaah, to be able to recite Qur'aan properly, to be religious and to abstain from public sins. It is Makrooh Tahreemi for a Faasiq to be an Imaam. A Faasiq is a person who commits major sins or who habitually commits minor sins. It is therefore sinful to make him an Imaama. In fact, the Hadith states that a sinner may not lead a Mu'min in salaah.

When a Faasiq has no regard for the Deen, how can he be expected to give importance to salaah? Furthermore, giving any person the post of an Imaam is to give him honour and status, whereas he deserves dishonour. It is therefore necessary to dismiss such a person.

A narration of Abu Dawood states that Rasulullaah SAW. was once watching a man leading others in salaah, whilst the man spat in the direction of the Qibla. When the salaah was over, Rasulullaah SAW. told the people not to allow him to lead them again. Consequently, when the man stepped forward to lead the next salaah, the people stopped him, saying that Rasulullaah SAW. had given them the instruction. The man approached Rasulullaah SAW. who confirmed the action, adding that he had hurt Allaah and His Rasool SAW. by what he had done.

Durrul Mukhtaar (Vol.1 Pg.522) states that if people are displeased with an Imaam because of some fault in him or because there is someone more worthy than him of being the Imaam, it will be Makrooh Tahreemi for him to lead them in salaah. A narration of Abu Dawood states that Allaah does not accept the salaah of a person who leads people when they are displeased with him. However, if the people are displeased with an Imaam who is properly qualified to be the Imaam (he is pious and learned), then their displeasure will be to their detriment.

The above Ahadeeth and extracts from the books of jurisprudence make it clear that a sinner cannot be an Imaam and performing salaah behind him is Makrooh Tahreemi. He must therefore be dismissed without delay and if this is not done, you should perform your salaah in another Masjid. If there is no other Masjid, you will be forced to perform salaah by yourself because this is better than performing salaah behind such a person. The sin of this will have to be borne by the Imaam and those who have appointed him.

The same applies to an Imaam who perpetrates acts of Bid'ah. Hadhrat Mujaahid RAH. reports that they were with Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Umar RADI. in a Masjid when after the Zuhr Adhaan, the Mu'adhin called out "As Salaah! As Salaah!" Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Umar RADI. exclaimed, "take me away from this person who practices Bid'ah." He then left and performed his salaah elsewhere. Furthermore, if the beliefs of the Imaam are such that they lead to Kufr, it will not be

permissible for him to be the Imaam. And Allaah knows best what is most correct.

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