

MISUSE OF LOUDSPEAKER

Q: 14- Admittedly the use of Loudspeakers installed outside the Masjid is of benefit to the Ummah when Azan is called for prayers five times a day. However, I have the following questions in respect of the use of these OUTSIDE LOUDSPEAKERS:

1. Shouldn't the volume of the Loudspeakers be restricted or controlled so as to reach a reasonable area around the particular Masjid? In the area surrounding my place of residence, there are five Masajid, two of which are within a one hundred yard radius. For Azan at Fajr and Isha, it seems that the Loudspeaker might as well be inside my house for the volume is so high windows would shatter if the house was sealed shut.
2. Each of the five Masajid, at Fajr in particular, recite the Azan 10 to 15 minutes apart. Is this necessary? Even if the Jama'ah is held at different times before sunrise could the Azan be recited at one "Universal" time in the area?
3. Is it permissible to use OUTSIDE LOUDSPEAKERS to recite Salat wa Salam and / or Sermons? One or two of the Masajid in our area do this daily after Fajr prayers and due to timing difference in Jama'ah prayers, this high volume clashes with the Jama'ah Namaz in progress at other Masajid. It also adversely affects individuals praying/ meditating at home after the Fajr prayers.
4. One of the Masajid in our area makes a daily announcement on the OUTSIDE LOUDSPEAKERS at sunrise to the effect that it is time for sunrise and it is forbidden to offer Namaz at this time and that Namaz can be offered a few minutes later. First, isn't it improper to use the OUTSIDE LOUDSPEAKERS for this purpose, and secondly does everyone have to be advised of this on a daily basis?
5. I do not think that the Masjid's OUTSIDE LOUDSPEAKERS be used for any announcement other than the AZAN, with the possible exception of calling people for Namaz-e-Janazah. However, one of our area Masjid makes announcements on death of people in and outside the immediate area as well as those outside our city and country: they announce for meetings to solve their Water Bill problems, for special sermon meetings for ladies etc. And these announcements are made without regard to time of day or night. I am sure ISLAM does not allow for such acts. Could you please comment on this and advise which judicial authority should be approached to rectify this as protests to the Masjid committee have fallen on DEAF EARS.

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A: You have raised a very important question which requires serious attention of the Imams and the management bodies of the mosques. No doubt, Loudspeaker is a very useful instrument to extend the voice of Azan, to a wider range and to enable all the audience sitting in the mosque to hear the sermon. But, like any other thing, if it is used indiscriminately without observing the limits prescribed by the Shariah, it becomes harmful and injurious. the way it is used in a large

number of the mosques in our country is not warranted by the principles of Shariah. It does not only hurt the people living around the mosques, but also creates adverse feelings against the mosque managements and other religious circles.

As far as Azan is concerned, the Holy Prophet 4 has emphasized its recitation with a loud voice which may reach distant places also. The use of Loudspeaker facilitates this objective. Hence it is not only allowed, but also advisable. Your suggestion that the Azan, in different mosques near to each other, should be recited at the same time is also a good suggestion which may be acted upon.

But while offering Salah or delivering a sermon, it is necessary according to the settled principles of Shariah that the voice of qira'ah or the sermon should not exceed the relevant musallis or the audience, as the case may be. If the voice spreads outside the mosque, it may disturb the people and prevent them from performing their activities properly. There may be patients who may suffer. There may be people performing acts of worship who lose their concentration. There may be numerous situations in which a loud voice may cause different harms. The Muslim jurists are also unanimous on the point that the recitation of the Holy Qur'an in a loud voice is not allowed before people who are engaged in their own activities and cannot listen to the Holy Qur'an with its due etiquette. So, the recitation of the Holy Qur'an on an outer Loudspeaker brings this additional problem.

It is mentioned in a number of Islamic authorities that the voice of sermon should not exceed its actual audience. Sayyida `A'ishah Rdi. advised a wa'iz (religious orator) in the following words,

"Restrict your voice to your audience and address them only as far as they are attentive to your speech. When they turn their faces from you, stop."

'Ata' ibn Abi Rabah, the famous tabi'i, muhaddith and jurists says,

"The voice of a learned man, should not exceed his audience."

It is reported by the Holy Companion `Abdullah ibn `Umar rdi. that an orator used to deliver his sermons before the door of Sayyidah `A'ishah Rdi. She wrote to Sayyidina Umar Rdi.

"This man has caused me discomfort and has left me in a position that I cannot hear anything (except the voice of the orator).

" Sayyidina Umar rdi. sent a message to the orator asking him to refrain from speaking so loudly before the door of the Mother of the Muslims. But the orator repeated his practice once again. When Sayyidina Umar rdi was informed about it, he himself went to him and subjected him to punishment.

These quotations are more than sufficient to prove that the voice of a sermon should never be

allowed to disturb the people engaged in their own activities.

In the light of this principle, the Loudspeaker should not be used at all where the number of musallis or the audience is such that they can hear the voice of qira'ah or of the sermon without a Loudspeaker. However, if there are many in number and cannot hear the voice directly, only the inner Loudspeaker should be used, and not the Loudspeaker installed outside the masjid.

On the basis of the above, the brief answers to your questions are as under:

1. Of course, even for the purpose of Azan the volume of the Loudspeaker should be within the reasonable limits according to the needs of the relevant locality.
2. As mentioned earlier, recitation of Azan, in all the mosques of at least one locality can be carried out at one time, like the current practice in Saudi Arabia.
3. As discussed above, no sermon or Salah wa Salam should be delivered from the outside loudspeaker. Intact, there is no reason to use a Loudspeaker at all? for offering Salah wa Salam because it is not a collective act in Shariah.
4. The announcement of sunrise may be useful for those sitting in the mosque, but the use of the Loudspeaker for this purpose seems to be unnecessary.
5. The use of the Loudspeaker for such announcements should also be avoided, except in cases of necessity.

Before parting with this question, I would like to emphasize that when the unnecessary use of Loudspeakers for such pious objectives is not allowed in Shariah, how can it be permissible to disturb people by the loud voices of songs or musical instruments used in different ceremonies or meetings? This practice' is far more objectional and sinful.

As for a judicial action against such activities, one can approach the law enforcing agencies to implement the relevant law, but one should try in the first instance to solve the problem by mutual understanding, on an amicable basis.

Contemporary fatawaa