

Is Straightening the Rows the Duty of the Imaam or the Mu'adhin?

Q: Salaah-617: Is it proper to impose on the Mu'adhin the duty of announcing "People! Straighten your rows" before the salaah begins?

Answer: The purpose of the Iqaamah is to draw the attention of the people in the Masjid to the fact that they need to stop all individual activities and get into their rows to commence the salaah in Jamaa'ah. It is therefore unnecessary to compel the Mu'adhin to make the announcement in question. If there are gaps between the rows, it is the duty of the Imaam to have them filled and not the duty of the Mu'adhin. If need be, the Imaam may appoint someone to see to the straightening of the back rows and he may delay the salaah until the rows are in order.

Tirmidhi states that Hadhrat Umar RADI. used to appoint someone to straighten the rows and would call out the Takbeer Tahreema only once the person informed him that the rows were straight. During their reigns as Khalifah, Hadhrat Uthmaan RADI. and Hadhrat Ali RADI. would also pay attention to this and always reminded the people to straighten their rows.

Another narration states that it seldom occurred that Hadhrat Uthmaan RADI. did not mention in his Khutbah, "When the Imaam stands up to deliver the Khutbah on the day of Jumu'ah, then be silent and listen attentively because the one who remains silent even though he cannot hear anything will receive the same rewards as the one who is silent and listening. Then when the Iqaamah is called out, straighten your rows and keep your shoulders together because straightening the rows lends to the perfection of the salaah." Hadhrat Uthmaan RADI. would then not start the salaah until the people he had appointed to straighten the rows reported to him that they had been straightened. Only then did he call out the Takbeer Tahreema.

Durrul Mukhtaar (Vol.1 Pg.531) makes it clear that the Imaam needs to instruct the people to form their rows properly, to fill all gaps, to straighten their rows and to stand shoulder-to-shoulder. And Allaah knows best what is most correct.

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