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The sixth question of Fatwa no. 4150

Q 6: What is the real meaning of Al-`Ubudiyyah (servitude)? Is it to enslave people even against the laws of Islam?

A: There are various kinds of `Ubudiyyah; (i) The general servitude of all creatures at all times; this kind of submission is confined to Allah alone, as He (Exalted be He) says: [﴿There is none in the heavens and the earth but comes unto the Most Gracious \(Allâh\) as a slave.﴾](#) [﴿Verily He knows each one of them, and has counted them a full counting.﴾](#) [﴿And everyone of them will come to Him alone on the Day of Resurrection \(without any helper, or protector or defender\).﴾](#) It is also related in the Hadith Qudsi (Revelation from Allah in the Prophet's words) narrated by Muslim on the authority of Abu Dhar Al-Ghifary (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, [﴿Allah \(Exalted be He\) said; "O My servants! I have forbidden injustice to Myself and I have made it Haram \(prohibited\) to you, so do not be unjust to one another."﴾](#) Likewise, it is also mentioned in the well-known supplication of the Prophet (peace be upon him): [﴿O Allah! I am Your Servant, son of Your Servant, son of Your Maid-servant. My forelock is in Your Hand, Your Judgment over me is assured, and Your Decree over me is just. I ask You by every name You have taken for Yourself, taught to any of Your Creation, revealed in Your Book, or that You have taken unto Yourself in the realm of the Unseen, to make the Qur'an the life of my heart, the light of my breast, the banisher of my sorrow, and the reliever of my despondency.﴾](#) This is a real universal predetermined servitude according to which Allah controls His Creations as He wills and they submit to Him willingly and unwillingly. None can overturn His Judgment, He is the Most Subtle, the Well-Acquainted (with all things), Who has no partners.

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(ii) Honorary servitude which Allah confers on His chosen creatures such as His Prophets, Angels, and pious people. For example, Allah says, [﴿Glorified \(and Exalted\) be He \(Allâh\) \[above all that \(evil\) they associate with Him\] Who took His slave \(Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم\) for a journey by night from Al-Masjid-al-Harâm \(at Makkah\) to Al-Masjid-al-Aqsâ \(in Jerusalem\), the neighbourhood whereof We have blessed﴾](#) Allah also says regarding the angels, [﴿...but honoured slaves.﴾](#) In regard to the pious people, Allah says, [﴿And the \(faithful\) slaves of the Most Gracious \(Allâh\) are those who walk on the earth in humility and sedateness, and when the foolish address them \(with bad words\) they reply back with mild words of gentleness.﴾](#) To the end of Surah Al-Furqan. This is a real honorary type of servitude that Allah bestows upon His chosen pious servants. (iii) Man's servitude to another. This type is limited and temporary. It may be lawful, if they are captured while fighting the Muslims and defending the disbelievers. Allah entitled the victorious Muslims to take captives. Later, they may sell the captives and thus they become servants to anyone who buys them under certain rights and obligations. It may also be unlawful, in case of kidnapping free people, gaining power over them unjustly, or buying any of them, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, [﴿Allah, Exalted be He, says: "I will contend on the Day of Resurrection against three \(types of\) people: One who makes](#)

a covenant in My Name and then breaks it; one who sells a free man as a slave and devours his price; and one who hires a workman and having taken full work from him, does not pay him his wages.")

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(Agreed upon by Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

May Allah grant us success. May peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, and Companions.

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