



The sixth question of Fatwa no. 4513

Q 6: Suspicions are raised about the unlawfulness of photography. May Your Eminence give a detailed response to the following claims:

1- It is claimed that photography is not an imitation of Allah's Creation. Rather, it is the reflection of a person's shadow on a film. Man has nothing to do with shaping the picture.

2- Photography is likened to a mirror, which reflects the visual image of a person looking at it. Would it also be unlawful if the image reflected in the mirror is fixed?

3- It is claimed that whoever permits watching television, in a case where it broadcasts nothing unlawful, should permit photography as well. This is because television is the transmission of visual images moved quickly to give the viewers the illusion that they are really moving.

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4- It is claimed that if photography is prohibited, then taking photos for essential reasons, such as issuing a passport necessary for the residents of Egypt, for example, or to perform Hajj, will also be prohibited. This is because Hajj is not to be sought by unlawful means, that is, a person can not commit theft to perform Hajj, neither can he be, accordingly, photographed to perform Hajj or to issue an identification card, or for other necessary reasons.

A: According to the Committee, it is impermissible to photograph soul-possessing creatures because of the authentic evidence reported from Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) regarding this matter. These pieces of evidence are general and applicable to those who earn a living by photography and those who do not. In addition, it is impermissible to fashion soul-possessing creatures whether by hand, by devices in studios or by any other equipment. However, photography is permissible when necessary; for example, to issue identification cards or passports, to show pictures of suspects who may commit crimes and escape, and other necessary reasons. As for keeping soul-possessing pictures at home, this is permissible only if these pictures are assigned no importance and are not looked at with reverence. It is also permissible to carry pictures or keep them at home if they are in a passport, identification card or the like. On the other hand, it is impermissible to keep photos for reverence. The ruling on this action varies from being deemed as an act of Al-Shirk-ul-Akbar (major form of associating others in worship with Allah) to being a mere sin, according to the intention of the doer. Likewise, it is impermissible to keep photos for the sake of remembering the photographed person because

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the original ruling is the prohibition of photography and because it is impermissible to take photos or keep them except for a lawful purpose, and remembering a person is not a lawful purpose. As for the magazines including obscene pictures, they should neither be bought nor brought into houses. Impermissibility stands for causing more evils than the benefit of remembering the photographed

person. In case there is no benefit, it is more prohibited. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: «What is lawful is evident and what is unlawful is evident, and in between them are doubtful matters which many people do not know. So he who guards against doubtful matters keeps his religion and honor blameless, and he who indulges in doubtful matters indulges, in fact, in unlawful matters, just as a shepherd who pastures his animals round a preserve will soon pasture them in it. Beware, every king has a preserve, and the things Allah has declared unlawful are His preserves.» He (peace be upon him) also said: «Leave what causes you doubt and turn to what does not cause you doubt.» The Prophet (peace be upon him) said to a person who asked him about Al-Birr (righteousness): «Al-Birr is that about which the soul feels tranquil and the heart feels tranquil, and Al-Ithm (wrongdoing) is that which wavers in the soul and moves to and from in the breast even though people again and again have given you their legal opinion [in its favor].»

Photography is unlike the reflection of an image in a mirror, for the image no longer exists when a person moves away from the mirror while photographs remain after a person moves away from the photographic device. Hence, photographs can represent a sort of Fitnah (temptation) to one's `Aqidah (creed) and manners because of their beauty. At the same time, they can be useful in necessary cases, such as in passports, identification cards, resident cards, driving licenses, etc.

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Moreover, photography is not just copying. In fact, it is copying produced by a device. Hence, it is an imitation of Allah's Creation through this machine's industry. In addition, the prohibition of photography is general, because it entails imitation of Allah's Creation and is dangerous for `Aqidah and manners, without considering the device used or how photography is carried out.

Regarding television, it is prohibited to watch singers, music, photos, scenes and other broadcasted sorts of evils. It is permissible, on the other hand, to watch religious lectures, commercial or political news, etc. Which are not prohibited by the Shari`ah (Islamic law). If the evils outweigh the benefits brought as a result of watching television, then it is prohibited.

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

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