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THE PARAMETERS OF AL-IJTIHAD IN ZAKAT: THE PAST AND THE PRESENT

By: Tahir, IN (Tahir, Ibrahim Nuhu)^[1]; Oziev, G (Oziev, Gapur)^[1]

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Abstract

Throughout the centuries the Muslim ummah, and their scholars in particular, have faced questions and challenges about zakat. However, there is a vast difference between raising questions for the sake of seeking knowledge and making allegations based on mere assumption rather than on ijihad. Zakat is the third pillar of Islam and it should therefore be realized that all the rulings and norms related to zakat are fixed by shariah texts which cannot be changed because of the mutability of time and space. To some people certain aspects of zakat seem irrelevant to our contemporary time and therefore they suggest revising the whole concept of zakat and applying it according to our modern era. However, anyone who ventures to challenge the established norms of zakat must at least be well versed in the major sources of shariah such as the Qur'an, sunnah, ijma, qiyas as well as in Islamic jurisprudence and the Arabic language. Otherwise what they pose are baseless claims rather than intellectual questions. The authors of this paper focus mainly on three aspects: concept and scope of ijihad, discussion and responses to various allegations raised by Volker Nienhaus and textual evidences for the proper understanding of zakat. The paper has adopted historical and descriptive methods of analysis.

Keywords

Author Keywords: zakat; al-ijihad; mujtahid; Qur'an; sunnah; al-hawi; al-nass; nusuk; income tax; wealth; redistribution; rate

Author Information

Reprint Address: Tahir, IN (reprint author)

Int Islamic Univ, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Addresses:

[1] Int Islamic Univ, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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