



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Dakar Declaration on Vaccination

Upon completion of an intensive series of deliberations and consultative sessions at the International Conference on Vaccination and Religion in Dakar, Senegal, we, a network of prominent African Muslim scholars and medical professionals make the following declaration in support of efforts to vaccinate children in every part of the African continent. Vaccination remains to date the most effective method of protection against a variety of mankind's illnesses and epidemics, and safeguards the wellbeing of the body, which is God's gift to us.

On the basis of Islamic texts from Qur'an and the tradition of Prophet, peace be upon him (pbuh), Islam allows the protection from potential illness and treatment from a non-Muslim physician, provided the physician is competent and trustworthy. Examples of such texts include:

- The Prophet (pbuh) is reported to have said: "There is no disease that God has created for which He has not made a cure that is known by some people and unbeknownst to others, except death." (Authenticated by Ibn Majah)
- Abu Darda narrated that the Prophet (pbuh) said: "God sent down both the disease and the cure and He has made a cure for every disease. So, use medicine, but do not use that which is unlawful." (Authenticated by Abu Dawud)
- Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet (pbuh) said "Do not mix those who are sick with those who are healthy." (Authenticated by Ibn Hibban in his Sahih)
- Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet, PBUH, said "Flee from the leper the same way you will flee from the lion." (Authenticated by Bukhari in his Sahih)
- Abu Dawud narrated that bin Abi Waqas (may God be pleased with him) reported, "Once I became very ill and the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) came to visit me. He placed his hand on the center of my chest, until I felt its coldness in my heart. He then said: 'You are suffering from a heart malady. Go to Harith bin Kaladah, (from the tribe) of Thaqeef for he is a physician.' This the Prophet said, knowing fully well that Harith was not a Muslim.

Muslims knew about and practiced vaccination before other nations, as validated by historical records that confirm how Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762) learned about vaccination in Turkey in 1717 during the Ottoman Empire and had taken the practice to Britain.

- The World Health Organization estimates that immunization prevents between 2 and 3 million annual deaths. 7 of the 12 most deadly causes of child mortality are vaccine-preventable. These diseases account for nearly 20 percent of deaths, which amounts to nearly 1.8 million children under five who die of vaccine-preventable diseases each year.
- Vaccine approval permits are not issued by government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, or the World Health Organization without a rigorous series of tests and continued monitoring to assess their integrity and safety and to ensure that they will not be used until all necessary conditions have been met.

In light of the aforementioned sayings of the Prophet (pbuh), scientific considerations, and factual data, we declare:

- **The Safety of Materials Used:** Scientific research has proven that the safety of material used exceeds 90% and as such is fit for human use. They do not cause sterility nor do they endanger the reproductive system.

- **Condemnation of all forms of abuse and violence against workers in the field of immunization:** We condemn in the strongest terms all forms of defamation and harassment perpetrated against workers in immunization programs. It is not permissible within the Islamic tradition and culture to use any form of violence and hatred against any person for his/her different view. To the contrary, the Qur'an calls on us to respect the sanctity of life and to respect others' dignity and souls: *Because of this We ordained unto the children of Israel that if anyone kills a human being - unless it be [in punishment] for murder or for spreading mischief on earth - it shall be as though he had slain all mankind; whereas, if anyone saves a life, it shall be as though he had saved the lives of all mankind...* [Qur'an, Surah Ma'idah, 5:32].
- **Support for previous efforts by Islamic scholars:** We reiterate our full support for all statements previously made and reports previously issued by Muslim scholars regarding preventive vaccination. We also applaud all initiatives that have been made previously by Islamic scholars that advance health care and that seek to protect humankind from diseases and epidemics, whether through vaccination or any other permitted means.
- **Vaccination is a responsibility of parents and the right of children:** It is the responsibility of parents to look after the welfare of their children by providing them good education, righteous upbringing, nutrition and health care. To that end the Qur'an says: *Lost, indeed, are they who, in their weak-minded ignorance, kill their children and declare as forbidden that which God has provided for them as sustenance, falsely ascribing [such prohibitions] to God: they have gone astray and have not found the right path* [Qur'an, Surah An'am, 6:140].

We offer the following recommendations:

- **Changing the vision:** The primary challenges associated with vaccination include the lack of awareness, the prevalence of rumors, and the abundance of misinformation over facts and science. As such, it is critical to provide opportunities for open discussion of vaccination in order to disseminate factual and accurate information among the masses through sermons and during various other religious and social functions.
- **Integrating the approach:** It is important to link improved vaccination with other important development initiatives, such as joining clean water initiatives with immunization as both initiatives have the common goal of reducing child mortality. As such, while we promote vaccination as the primary purpose of this effort, we recognize that access to safe drinking water in sufficient quantities is also a requirement we have to continually strive to achieve.
- **Restructuring vaccination teams:** It is important to apply a more strategic approach to when building vaccination teams by making them a combination of men and women. This will allow for female staff to discuss the issues with other women whereas male staff can talk to men when the need arises. And if necessary, a religious leader and a person who survived through vaccination should also be added. This group will be more effective in responding to substantive questions, understanding local socio-cultural dynamics, and explaining the implications of refusal with firsthand knowledge and experience.
- **Advocacy to authorities:** It is important for supporters of vaccination to encourage government investments at both local and national levels for an expansion of social services for the poor as well as facilitating easier access to medicines and general health services.
- **Vaccine certification committee:** We call for the creation of an independent international body of Muslim scientists, scholars, and doctors that will develop a series of criteria for halal certification, then evaluate vaccines accordingly to ensure that they are both safe and permissible according to Islamic jurisprudence.

Finally, we note that we will be publishing, God willing, a scientific guide containing detailed medical and juristic evidences on the issue of immunization in accordance with the findings of the scholars and experts, who participated in this conference.

And Allah is the Guardian of success

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