

Bid to use zakat to fund defence of Muslims accused in terror cases

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The zakat is given either to a needy person or to an organisation. Zakat in Arabic means that which purifies.

Now, a prominent Islamic group would like to use this 2.5 per cent annual tax, which every financially sound Muslim is supposed to distribute among the needy, as a consolidated fund to help cleanse terror-accused Muslim men of that taint.

The Jamiat Ulama-I-Hind, an organisation that has been financing the legal battles of several Muslim men arrested in terror cases across the country, has been urging Muslims, particularly during Friday sermons at mosques, to contribute to that effort this year. Zakat, one of the five pillars of the Islamic faith, is generally collected and distributed during the month of Ramzan.

“The Quran and Hadees spell out eight ways in which zakat can be used,” said Gulzar Azmi, head of the legal cell of Jamiat Ulama-I-Hind. “One of these ways is to help those who are in bondage and captivity. In today’s environment so many poor Muslims are getting caught in terror cases and languishing in jails for want of money to fight their cases. We are seeking zakat from the community to help fight the cases of such men...”

The organisation last year spent over Rs 2 crore on the legal defence of 410 Muslims embroiled in 52 terror-related cases across India, he said, “The other message is that the community needs to be aware that it needs to set up this legal corpus to handle the injustice meted out to Muslim youth.”

An analysis done last year by the Association of Muslim Professionals found that even if 10 per cent of India's 17.18 crore Muslims pay the bare minimum zakat, the total contribution would be Rs 7,500 crore. Any Muslim who owns assets worth more than 75 gm gold after deducting his liabilities is expected to pay 2.5 per cent of his total income, assets and savings.

Members of the Jamiat have now started going to Muslim localities and mosques and have been highlighting the need of raising money for the legal defence of Muslim men.

I don't imagine that this is solely happening in India.