

RULINGS REGARDING PHOTOGRAPHY, VIDEO FILMING AND TELEVISION

Permanent Committee
for Scholarly Research and Ifta'

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Rulings regarding Photography, Video filming and Television

Question:

"Is photographing or video filming permissible? Is it permissible to watch television, especially for the news?"

Answer:

"It is not permissible to take photographs of animate beings using cameras or other means of photographing machines, or to keep pictures of animate beings, except for necessity, such as photographs used in identification documents or passports.

As far as television sets are concerned, the ruling does not relate to the machine itself as much as it relates to the purposes for which it is used. If it is used in Haram (prohibited) matters, such as showing erotic songs and nude scenes, distorting facts, promoting sensuality and the like, then it is Haram. On the other hand, if it is used to promote goodness, such as showing reciters of the Qur'an, clarifying the truth, propagating virtues and preventing vices, and the like, then it is permissible. It should be taken into consideration that if television is used for both purposes, or mostly used for unlawful purposes, then it is emphatically Haram.

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

Permanent Committee for Scholarly Research and Ifta'
Shaykh 'Abdul-'Azeez bin 'Abdullah bin Baaz
Shaykh 'Abdur-Razzaq al-'Afeefee
Shaykh 'Abdullah al-Ghudayyaan
Shaykh `Abdullah ibn Qa`ud

The fourth question of Fatwa no. 2358

Question:

"I would like to open a store for rentals and sales of video tapes which are approved by the Ministry of Information and adhere to their regulations remaining in accord with Islamic guidelines. Is this business or the profit gained from it Haram (prohibited), bearing in mind that I do not want to involve myself in any work which is displeasing to Allah? Video sales is the only small business project needing no great capital, yet can produce a good income. Please advise as I am unclear regarding this matter."

Answer:

"Video, television, radio and other mass media may not be judged on their own to be Halal (lawful) or Haram, for they are no more than devices. It is the manner in which these instruments are used that can be judged. Thus, if they are used for purely prohibited or most likely prohibited purposes, they will be prohibited. Otherwise, they will be Halal. Accordingly, if you use video for good purposes only as you mentioned, it will be good; otherwise, it will be evil.

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

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Shaykh 'Abdur-Razzaaq al-'Afeefee
Shaykh 'Abdullah al-Ghudayyaan

The first question of Fatwa no. 8162

Question:

"In the school of teaching the Glorious Qur'an in Huraymela, we have a small lecture hall that does not have enough room for all the attendees not to mention the students. We give lectures and hold scientific seminars and parties in this hall. We would like to record these lectures by videotape, so they may be watched elsewhere. Respected shaykh, we hope to get your advice with regard to the following:

1. Is it permissible to broadcast these lectures and seminars by videotape? It should be noted that they will be broadcast only and will not be recorded on video tapes.
2. Is it permissible to record these lectures and seminars on video tapes, so that they may be replayed for much benefit?"

Answer:

"First: If the lectures and scientific seminars are not against the rulings of Islam, it will be permissible to broadcast them by videotape to circulate the benefit and spread knowledge.

Second: It is permissible to record the lectures and seminars on video tapes to broadcast them again for more benefit when necessary. Indeed, the legal judgment of permissibility and impermissibility has nothing to do with the set itself, for it may be used to serve lawful or unlawful purposes. Hence, if it is used for a lawful purpose, it will be lawful and vice versa.

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

Permanent Committee for Scholarly Research and Ifta'
Shaykh 'Abdul-'Azeez bin 'Abdullah bin Baaz
Shaykh 'Abdur-Razzaaq al-'Afeefee

Fatwa no. 8923

Rulings regarding Photography, Video filming and Television

Question:

"Does video recording take the same ruling as photography?"

Answer:

"Yes, the ruling of video recording has the same ruling of photography which is deemed unlawful due to the purport of related religious proofs.

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Shaykh 'Abdur-Razzaaq al-'Afeefee
Shaykh 'Abdullah al-Ghudayyaan
Shaykh Saalih al-Fawzan
Shaykh 'Abdul-'Azeez Aal ash-Shaykh
Shaykh Bakr Abu Zayd

Fatwas of the Permanent Committee> Group 2> Volume 1: `Aqidah> Taswir>
Video cameras

Question:

"When we go on a trip with a group of youth, some may use video cameras to record the event to be watched later. The trip may include religious talks, or the like. What is the ruling of Islam on that? May Allah preserve you with His guidance!"

Answer:

"It is not permissible for the Muslim to take photographs of beings with a soul by a camcorder or any other device based on the general meaning of the texts that forbid photographing. There is also a severe warning for doing this, and Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) cursed those who do so.

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Fatwas of the Permanent Committee> Group 2> Volume 1: `Aqidah> Taswir>
Taking photographs of beings with a soul

Rulings regarding Photography, Video filming and Television

Question:

"What is the legal ruling on video recording of lectures to use them in other places, and maximize their benefit?"

Answer:

"This is a controversial issue and subject to different views. Recording lectures on audio cassettes, where there is no need for visualizing images, is permissible. Yet, sometimes there is a need for recording videos so that the identity of the speaker can be clearly known. There may be other reasons which make recording a necessity. Nevertheless, I have great reservation about visual recording due to the Hadiths narrated regarding the ruling on Taswir (painting, drawing, sculpture, and photography) of animate beings and the severe warning associated to this. However, a group Muslim of scholars nowadays viewed that there is no harm in this if there is some warranting public interest. But I myself am reluctant to approve this practice due to the great danger in Taswir (painting, drawing, sculpture, and photography) and the pertinent directions given in authentic Hadiths that are mentioned in the Two Sahih (authentic) Books of Hadith (i.e. Al-Bukhari and Muslim) as well as other collections. These Hadiths make it quite clear that The people who will be most severely punished on the Day of Resurrection will be those who make images. In fact, the Hadiths that curse Musawwirs (those who make pictures and statues, or photographs of living beings), are numerous. May Allah grant us success!"

Shaykh 'Abdul-'Azeez ibn Baaz

Fatwas of Ibn Baz > Volume 5 > Miscellaneous questions and their answers > Recording lectures on videotape

Question:

"We have disputed over the issue of photography which you did not mention in your letter. Does it fall under the same ruling of portraying or not? Some (scholars) have argued that it is permissible, for it is not drawing but nothing more than imaging the figure of a person without exerting any effort other than pressing the button (of the camera) to bring out a photograph identical to the figure being photographed. Some of my friends showed me a photograph of your Eminence in the Kuwaiti magazine of "Al-Mujtama`" and the Egyptian magazine of "Al-I`tisam." It was published with your Fatwa regarding the rulings of Sawm (Fast) during the blessed month of Ramadan. Is displaying your photograph in the magazine a proof of the permissibility of photography or was it taken without your knowledge?"

Moreover, if photography is not permissible, then what is the Islamic ruling on buying the newspapers and magazines replete with pictures, although they contain important news and other useful and useless information? Please advise us in this regard.

Is it permissible to put these magazines in Al-Musalla (place for prayer) even

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if they are covered by a cloth or suchlike? Or should they be destroyed after reading them? What is the ruling on watching moving images on television? Is it permissible to turn on the television in Al-Musalla? Please enlighten us in these regards, may Allah enlighten you.”

Answer:

“Firstly: Photography falls under the forbidden types of image making, for its ruling is the same as portraying, making images on cloths with color paints and statue making. The difference in the means and tools of making images does not entail having a different ruling. Likewise, the disparity in terms of difficulty and easiness makes no difference. Rather, what is to be considered is the image itself, for it is prohibited regardless of the means leading to making it or the effort exerted. Having my pictures appearing with my Fatwa regarding the rulings of Sawm in Ramadan in Al-Mujtama' and Al-I'tisam magazines is not a proof that I permit image making, or agree to it, as I was not aware of them.

Secondly: It is permissible to buy newspapers and magazines with pictures of animate beings, only if they include important news or useful scientific issues and if the aim behind buying them is benefiting. Besides, images are secondary to the predominant i.e. information, news, etc.; the ruling is to be applied to the predominant not the subordinate. Also, it is permissible to put them in Al-Musalla on condition that the pictures are being hidden or effaced somehow so as to benefit from the articles included.

Thirdly: It is not permissible to put a television set in Al-Musalla due to the distraction that may result, as it is impermissible to watch any dissolute or uncovered images to avoid Fitnah (sedition) and any resulting bad consequences.

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

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Fatwa no. 3374

Question:

“What is the ruling on watching TV and listening to radio? What is the ruling on praying behind a person who watches and listens to them?”

Answer:

“The ruling on listening to TV or radio and watching TV differs based on what is broadcast on them, whether good or evil. The TV can show lawful as well as

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unlawful pictures. The same applies to the radio but it is less harmful than the TV since it does not show any pictures. As for praying behind someone who watches or listens to the TV or radio, it depends on what they watch, whether it is lawful or unlawful, but the prayer will be valid in both cases.

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

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Shaykh `Abdullah ibn Qa`ud

The fifth question of Fatwa no. 3303

Question:

"Suspensions are raised about the unlawfulness of photography. May Your Eminence give a detailed answer about 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.

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 does not commit theft to perform Hajj, neither is he photographed to perform Hajj or to issue an identification card, or for other necessary reasons."

Answer:

"According to the Committee, it is impermissible to photograph soul-possessing creatures because of the authentic evidences reported from Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) regarding this matter. These evidences 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

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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 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. 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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The sixth question of Fatwa no. 4513

Question:

"Is it permissible to purchase a television for my home in order to watch all types of drama series and game shows? Is it permissible to purchase a cassette recorder and listen to songs on it? Or is it impermissible during Salah (Prayer) time or any other time?"

Answer:

"Most television programs are a waste of time and are evil. Thus, when the evil of a thing outweighs its good, it becomes impermissible. It is prohibited for a Muslim to buy, possess, watch or listen to it. The same applies to musical devices.

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The seventh question of Fatwa no. 2742

Question:

"If the house where there are images of animate objects is not entered by angels, what is the ruling on images that enter the house against our will through the television? I do not think there is a house nowadays that does not include a television."

Answer:

"The images displayed through the television do not take the same ruling as the fixed images in the house, as the former are displayed and then disappear.

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Rulings regarding Photography, Video filming and Television

Shaykh `Abdullah ibn Qa`ud

The sixth question of Fatwa no. 8128

Question:

"In our city, some people who are not scholars, but who mix with scholars and learn from them, deem the television to be unlawful. They say that by having a television set in the house, the husband, wife and children are as sinful as those who commit Zina (sexual intercourse outside marriage), Allah forbid! Is having a television set at home and watching it Haram (prohibited) or not?"

Answer:

"Watching television becomes permissible when a Muslim is watching something lawful, such as Qur'an recitation, religious talks, business reports and political news. It becomes impermissible when watching something unlawful, such as dissolute songs with evil lyrics, when men listen to women singers even if it is while performing decent songs and when watching men sway and dance while singing. In general, having a television set and watching it depends on the ruling on what is watched, whether lawful or unlawful.

Furthermore, even permissible shows can be prohibited if the person exceeds the limits in watching them and wastes much time that is better used to benefit the person, their family and their nation. To be on the safe side, a Muslim should better abstain from buying a television set and watching it, for it can be a means to watching and listening to what is unlawful. It can lead to Fitnah (temptation) through watching naked pictures and tempting movements. Moreover, the person who considered having a television set in the house an equal sin to Zina may have been referring to the ear committing Zina by listening to music and the eye committing Zina by watching unlawful pictures. They probably meant to repel you from having a television set and disapprove of those who have. This explanation is true but it needs elaboration to be more convincing. Allah is the One sought for help and is the source of success.

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

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Shaykh 'Abdullah al-Ghudayyaan

Shaykh `Abdullah ibn Qa`ud

The first question of Fatwa no. 2133

Question:

"You have called for making use of mass media for the sake of spreading Da`wah (calling to Islam) and guidance, permitting appearance in media,

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which include Taswir (photography). However, some Du`at (callers to Islam) still refrain from appearing in such photography-based media. What is your opinion regarding this matter?"

Answer:

"Undoubtedly, it is one of the greatest duties to employ mass media in calling to Al-Haqq (the Truth), spreading the rulings of Shari`ah (Islamic law), exposing Shirk (associating others with Allah in His Divinity or worship) and its means, and warning against everything which Allah has forbidden. In fact, this is one of the most important duties and one of the great blessings which Allah bestows on those who employ these means for the good and in making up for any deficiency in their Iman (Faith).

Definitely, some scholars refrain from appearing on television because of the Hadith Sahih (authentic Hadith), which stress the prohibition of Taswir and curse Musawwirs (those who make photographs of living beings).

On the other hand, some other scholars believe that there is no objection to appear on television so long as it is for the purpose of calling to Al-Haqq, spreading the rulings of Islam, and refuting the callers to falsehood. This belief is based on the Shari`ah-based principle stating that it is permissible to commit the lesser of two evils to ward off the greater evil; in the case where it is not possible to avoid both evils, as it is permissible to bring about the greater of two interests by sacrificing the least of them, if both of them cannot be brought about.

The same applies to the case of there being many evils and interests. If it is not possible to ward off all evils, rulers and scholars must exert themselves to ward off the greatest and most sinful evil. Likewise, they are required to try hard to bring about the greatest interest, if they are unable to bring about all interests. There are a lot of examples and evidences from the Qur'an and Sunnah (whatever is reported from the Prophet); one of them is the following Ayah (Qur'anic verse):

{And insult not those whom they (disbelievers) worship besides Allâh, lest they insult Allâh wrongfully without knowledge.} [Suran Al-An'am 6:108]

Another evidence is the Sahih Hadith in which the Prophet (peace be upon him) said to `Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her):

"If your people had not been recent converts to Islam, I would have destroyed Al-Ka`bah and rebuilt it on the original foundation laid by Ibrahim." (Agreed upon by Al-Bukhari and Muslim) [1]

Thus, it is to be known that the ruling on appearing on television for the sake of calling to Allah (Glorified be He) and spreading Al-Haqq differs according to the people's knowledge, deep insight, and their consideration of the consequences of this act. Whoever Allah has opened their heart to this matter and granted them good knowledge and they agree to appear on television for the sake of spreading Al-Haqq and conveying Allah's messages, there is no

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blame on them and they will be rewarded by Allah (Glorified be He). Whoever feels uncertain about this, we hope that they will be excused because the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated: "Leave what causes you doubt and turn to what does not cause you doubt." [2] He (peace be upon him) also said: "Piety is that which contents the soul and comforts the heart." [3] There is no doubt that scholars appearing on television is one of the greatest means to spread Islam and refute the callers and followers of falsehood because most people watch television, whether they are males, females, Muslims, or disbelievers. Also, by seeing the picture of a person known for calling to Al-Haqq on television, the followers of Al-Haqq will feel assured and benefit from what they watch. Moreover, this is a means to resisting the followers of falsehood and bearing down on them. Allah (Glorified and Exalted be He) states:

{As for those who strive hard in Us (Our Cause), We will surely guide them to Our Paths (i.e. Allâh's religion - Islâmic Monotheism). And verily, Allâh is with the Muhsinûn (good doers).} [Surah Al-'Ankabut 29:69]

Allah (Glorified be He) also says:

{Invite (mankind, O Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم) to the Way of your Lord (i.e. Islâm) with wisdom (i.e. with the Divine Revelation and the Qur'ân) and fair preaching, and argue with them in a way that is better.} [Surah An-Nahl 16:125]

He (Glorified be He) also states:

{And who is better in speech than he who [says: "My Lord is Allâh (believes in His Oneness)," and then stands firm (acts upon His Order), and] invites (men) to Allâh's (Islâmic Monotheism), and does righteous deeds, and says: "I am one of the Muslims."} [Surah Fussilat 41:33]

The Prophet (peace be upon him) stated:

"One who guides to something good has a reward similar to that of its doer. The Prophet (may Allah's Peace and Blessings be upon him) also says: If anyone calls others to follow right guidance, their reward will be equivalent to those who follow them (in righteousness) without their reward being diminished in any respect, and if anyone invites others to follow error, the sin will be equivalent to that of the people who follow them (in sinfulness) without their sins being diminished in any respect." (Both Hadith are related by Muslim in his Sahih Book of Hadith) [4]

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said to Amir Al-Mu'minin (Commander of the Believers) `Ali ibn Abu Talib (may Allah be pleased with him) when he sent him to call the Jews of Khaybar to Islam:

"Invite them to Islam and inform them of the rights which Allah has ordained upon them. By Allah! If a single person embraces Islam at your hands (i.e. through you), that will be better for you than (possessing) red camels." (Agreed upon by Al-Bukhari and Muslim) [5]

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These Ayahs and Sahih Hadith are all applicable to calling to Allah (Glorified be He) via modern mass media and other means of communication, such as through lectures, compiling books, publishing treatises, calling to Allah through the phone, in addition to other means of conveying Al-Haqq that may be used by whomever Allah has granted sincere intention and useful knowledge and has guided to working in accordance to it. It is authentically reported from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) that he stated:

“The reward of deeds depends upon the intentions and every person will get the reward according to what they have intended.” (Agreed upon by Al-Bukhari and Muslim)[6]

The Prophet (may Allah's Peace and Blessings be upon him) also says:

“Verily, Allah does not look to your faces and your wealth but He looks to your heart and deeds.” (Related by Muslim in His Sahih Book of Hadith).

I ask Allah (Glorified and Exalted be He) to guide Muslim scholars and rulers to the best that benefits the people and the country. Indeed, He alone is Able to do so.”

[1] Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book on Hajj, no. 1583; Muslim, Sahih, Book on Hajj, no. 1333; Al-Nasa'y, Sunan, Book on Hajj rituals, no. 2900; and Malik, Al-Muwatta', Book on Hajj, no. 813.

[2] Al-Tirmidhy, Sunan, Book on Resurrection, heart-softening narrations, and piety, no. 2518; Al-Nasa'y, Sunan, Book on drinks, no. 5711; Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 1, p. 200; and Al-Darimy, Sunan, Book on transactions, no. 2532.

[3] Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 4, p. 228; and Al-Darimy, Sunan, Book on transactions, no. 2533.

[4] Muslim, Sahih, Book on Knowledge, no. 2674; Al-Tirmidhy, Sunan, Book on Knowledge, no. 2674; Abu Dawud, Sunan, Book on Sunnah, no. 4609; Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 2, p. 397; and Al-Darimy, Sunan, Introduction, no. 513.

[5] Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book on merits and virtues, no. 3701; Muslim, Sahih, Book on merits of the Companions, no. 2406; and Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 5, p. 333.

[6] Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book on revelation, no. 1; Muslim, Sahih, Book on rulership, no. 1907; Al-Tirmidhy, Sunan, Book on the virtues of Jihad, no. 1647; Al-Nasa'y, Sunan, Book on purification, no. 75; Abu Dawud, Sunan, Book on divorce, no. 2201; Ibn Majah, Sunan, Book on asceticism, no. 4227; and Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 1, p. 43.

[7] Muslim, Sahih, Book on righteousness, upholding ties of kinship, and good manners, no. 2564.

Shaykh 'Abdul-'Azeez ibn Baaz

Fatwas of Ibn Baz > Volume 5 > Refraining from appearing in the media