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Zakat Eligibility Of UNHCR's Islamic Philanthropy Program

Question:

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There are 60% of globally displaced persons today are from Muslim countries. In response, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees launched the Islamic Philanthropy program, which provides adequate support to refugee brothers and sisters in many countries including; Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Lebanon, Jordan among others.

I am reaching out to you today to request a letter of endorsement from AMJA for the benefit of UNHCR's Islamic Philanthropy Program, a trusted, effective and Sharia-compliant distributor of Zakat to refugees around the world and to discuss a prospect of cooperation.

Since UNHCR is the leading humanitarian organization responsible for protecting and aiding refugees, for 70 years now, and operating in 135 countries, you may agree with me that the establishment of an Islamic program within an organization like the United Nations is an important and valuable milestone for all Muslims around the world.

Please find below the main highlights of UNHCR's Refugee Zakat Fund:

- All Zakat money goes directly to refugees. UNHCR does not deduct any overhead cost on any Zakat money received.
- The Refugee Zakat Fund follows a 100% Zakat distribution policy, meaning all Zakat funds go directly to refugees, and UNHCR covers all other distribution costs.
- UNHCR opened a dedicated Zakat Bank Account, (Free Zero interest). Other Non-Zakat money does not mix with Zakat money.
- As per the Fatwas, the Zakat money is dedicated for refugee Muslims.
- Received 14 Fatwas from significant Muslim scholars and organizations around the world, allowing UNHCR to receive and distribute Zakat.
- UNHCR has an advantage in the accessibility of operations on a global scale. UNHCR leads humanitarian organization for the protection of refugees, operating in 135 countries.
- UNHCR can easily transfer funds to any operation in the world.
- UNHCR has the leverage of distributing Zakat in a form of Cash Assistance.
- UNHCR has a database for all refugees can easily identify vulnerable cases.



- UNHCR's Refugee Zakat Fund is Trusted, Compliant and Effective distribution partner.
- UNHCR's Islamic Philanthropy program is growing, (more than \$200 million received since 2017)
- The Refugee Zakat Fund alone has assisted more than 5 million of eligible refugees to date.
- The Refugee Zakat Fund is operating, exclusively, in the following countries; Jordan, Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq, Mauritania, Egypt, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Thailand, Iran, Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Somalia.

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Answer:

In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Grantor of Mercy
All praise is due to Allah and may His peace and blessings be upon His prophet Muhammad.

We have received your inquiry regarding UNHCR's Refugee Zakat Fund, and after looking into the operations of this program, we have concluded that:

It would be permissible to give them zakat funds to be distributed by them, with the condition that these funds are distributed to the proper zakat-recipient channels.

A scholar of Islamic law should be added to the staff of UNHCR's Refugee Zakat Fund program to oversee the distribution and verify that it is compliant with Islamic legal teachings, and the actual distribution to the recipients should preferably also be done by Muslims.

The program should inform recipients of these funds that this money is zakat money, whenever feasible.

We commend the UN Refugee Agency for this work, especially the fact that 100 percent of the funds they receive go directly to zakat-eligible Muslims.

And Allah knows best.

AMJA Resident Fatwa Committee