

To whom Muslims can give Zakat:

According to the Quran and authentic Sunnah (Ahadith), Zakat can ****only**** be given to eight specific categories of people, as explicitly defined in the Quran:

****Quranic Source:****

إِنَّمَا الصَّدَقَاتُ لِلْفُقَرَاءِ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْعَامِلِينَ عَلَيْهَا وَالْمُؤَلَّفَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ
وَالْغَارِمِينَ وَفِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ فَرِيضَةً مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ

> **"Zakat expenditures are only for the poor and for the needy and for those employed to collect [Zakat] and for bringing hearts together [for Islam] and for freeing captives [or slaves] and for those in debt and for the cause of Allah and for the [stranded] traveler - an obligation [imposed] by Allah. And Allah is Knowing and Wise."** ******(Surah At-Tawbah, 9:60)******

Categorizing in Numerical order:

As-sadaqat (i.e., Zakat) are only for:

1. Al-Fuqara (the poor),
2. Al-Masakin (the needy),
3. Those employed to collect Zakat,
4. To attract the hearts of those who have been inclined (towards Islam),

5. To free captives (slaves),
6. For those in debt,
7. For Allah's Cause (fi sabilillah),
8. For the wayfarer (traveler in need).

– An obligation from Allah. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.”
(Surah At-Tawbah 9:60)

This verse is the definitive source. Here's a detailed breakdown of each category (Asnaf):

1. ****Al-Fuqara' (The Poor):****

* ****Definition:**** Those who do not possess sufficient wealth to meet their basic necessities (food, shelter, clothing, health) for themselves and their dependents for one year. They may have **some** resources, but significantly below the Nisab threshold (minimum wealth liable for Zakat).

* ****Explanation:**** They lack the fundamental means of subsistence. Their condition is more severe than the "needy" (Masakin). They may beg out of necessity. The goal of Zakat here is to alleviate their extreme hardship and bring them to a state of sufficiency.

* ****Hadith Reference:**** The Prophet (ﷺ) said, ****"Begging is not permissible except for three (persons): a man who has incurred debt, so for him begging is permissible till he pays that off, after which he must stop it; a man whose property has been destroyed by a calamity which has smitten him, for him begging is permissible till he gets what will support life, or will provide him reasonable subsistence; and a man who has been smitten by**

poverty, the genuineness of which is confirmed by three intelligent members of his people, for him begging is permissible till he gets what will support him, or will provide him subsistence."* (Sahih Muslim 1044). This highlights the state of genuine need.

2. **Al-Masakin (The Needy):**

* **Definition:** Those who are in difficulty but whose condition is slightly better than the Fuqara'. They may have enough for basic survival but struggle significantly to meet all essential needs with dignity. They often refrain from asking.

* **Explanation:** While not destitute, they live precariously, lacking financial security. Zakat helps them become self-sufficient and prevents them from falling into absolute poverty. Scholars sometimes describe them as those who have *some* means but insufficient for a decent standard of living.

* **Distinction from Fuqara':** Fuqara' are utterly destitute; Masakin are severely constrained but not completely without resources. Both are eligible.

3. **Al-'Amilina 'Alayha (The Zakat Collectors/Administrators):**

* **Definition:** Those appointed by the legitimate Muslim authority (or a trustworthy organization in the absence of one) to collect, record, guard, distribute, and manage Zakat funds.

* **Explanation:** They receive a salary from Zakat funds for their work, even if they are personally wealthy. This includes accountants, distributors, guards, and managers essential for the Zakat system.

* **Conditions:** They must be appointed for this specific task. Their compensation should be fair for the work done, not a fixed share.

* **Hadith Reference:** The Prophet (ﷺ) appointed collectors and gave them instructions on how to collect and distribute. (Various narrations in Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud).

4. **Al-Mu'allafati Qulubuhum (Those Whose Hearts Are To Be Reconciled):**

* **Definition:** This category historically included:

- * New Muslims whose faith needed strengthening.
- * Non-Muslims inclined towards Islam or expected to embrace it.
- * Influential non-Muslims whose friendship was sought to prevent harm to Muslims or secure their neutrality/support.
- * Muslims inclined towards wrongdoing whose support was needed for the community's welfare.

* **Explanation:** The primary purpose is to foster goodwill, strengthen the Muslim community, or avert harm. Its application has significantly diminished in modern times, especially with strong Muslim states. Some scholars argue it's largely obsolete, while others say it applies to new Muslims needing support to integrate or influential figures whose support benefits the Ummah in specific contexts. **Important:** It cannot be used to appease tyrants or oppressors who harm Muslims.

5. **Fir-Riqab (Freeing Captives/Slaves):**

* **Definition:** Using Zakat funds to:

- * Free Muslim slaves or captives by purchasing their freedom.
- * Help slaves free themselves through contractual emancipation (Mukatabah).
- * Ransom Muslim prisoners of war.

* **Explanation:** This promotes human dignity and liberates those in bondage. While chattel slavery is largely abolished, modern applications include:

* Freeing victims of human trafficking, forced labor, or illegal detention.

* Paying ransoms for those kidnapped unjustly (subject to strict conditions to avoid encouraging further kidnapping).

* Supporting organizations working to liberate such individuals.

* **Hadith Reference:** Numerous instances of the Prophet (ﷺ) and companions using funds, including Zakat, to free slaves.

6. **Al-Gharimin (Those in Debt):**

* **Definition:** Individuals burdened by debt they cannot repay, provided the debt was incurred for **permissible (Halal)** purposes.

* **Explanation:** Debts can arise from genuine needs (e.g., medical expenses, business failure beyond control, feeding family during hardship, student loans) or through no fault (e.g., compensation payments). Zakat helps them regain financial stability and dignity.

* **Conditions:**

* The debt must be for a Halal cause (debts for gambling, extravagance, or sinful activities are **not** eligible).

* The debtor must be genuinely unable to repay from assets beyond their basic necessities and the value of the Nisab.

* The debt must be owed to another person, not to Allah (like expiations/Kaffarah - though some scholars allow it under specific conditions).

* **Hadith Reference:** The Prophet (ﷺ) said, **"Begging is not**

permissible except for three (persons): a man who has incurred debt..."* (Sahih Muslim 1044 - mentioned earlier).

7. **Fi Sabilillah (In the Cause of Allah):**

* **Definition:** Primarily understood by classical scholars as referring to **Jihad in the battlefield** (not general charitable causes). This includes:

- * Equipping and supporting volunteer fighters (mujahideen) who have no salary from the state.

- * Providing for their families while they are away.

- * Supporting military defense efforts for the Muslim community.

* **Explanation:** This ensures the defense and propagation of Islam. Some contemporary scholars extend it to include:

- * Islamic education and Dawah efforts crucial for preserving and spreading Islam.

- * Building essential Islamic institutions (mosques, schools) *only if* directly linked to immediate religious needs and defense *and* no other Zakat funds are available (highly debated; many scholars hold mosques are *not* eligible for Zakat, only Sadaqah).

- * **Crucially:** Most scholars *exclude* general charity, building roads, hospitals, etc., from this category. They fall under Sadaqah, not Zakat.

- * **Hadith Reference:** Narrations describing the Prophet (ﷺ) giving from Zakat to equip fighters.

8. **Ibnus-Sabil (The Stranded Traveler):**

- * **Definition:** A traveler who becomes stranded in a place, lacking sufficient means to return home or reach their destination,

even if they are wealthy *at home*.

- * **Explanation:** This is about providing immediate relief to someone cut off from their resources. Zakat helps them cover travel costs (transport, food, lodging) to return to their place of residence or intended destination.

- * **Conditions:** They must be genuinely stranded and unable to access their own funds or receive help from others. Their wealth at home doesn't disqualify them in their current predicament.

- * **Modern Application:** Includes refugees fleeing persecution or disaster who need assistance to reach safety or return home when possible, migrants in distress, students abroad facing sudden financial crisis.

****Crucial Principles & Clarifications:****

- * **Exclusivity:** Zakat can *only* be given to these eight categories. Giving it to others (e.g., building mosques, general charities, non-Muslim relatives for whom you are not financially responsible) *invalidates* the Zakat.

- * **Niyyah (Intention):** The giver *must* intend it as Zakat when giving. The recipient doesn't need to know it's Zakat.

- * **Transfer of Ownership:** Zakat must be given in a way that transfers full ownership to the recipient. You cannot build something and retain control.

- * **Wealthy & Prophetic Lineage:** It is impermissible to give Zakat to:

- * Someone who possesses wealth equal to or exceeding the Nisab (after accounting for basic needs and debts).
- * One's dependents whom one is already obligated to support (spouse, children, parents, grand parents). *However,* other needy relatives *outside* this circle *can* receive Zakat, and it is often highly recommended.
- * Descendants of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) (Banu Hashim), as per the Prophet's (ﷺ) instruction. They receive from the Khums (one-fifth share of war booty) instead.
- * **Non-Muslims:** The majority opinion is that Zakat is exclusively for Muslims, except *possibly* the *Mu'allafati Qulubuhum* category if it involves non-Muslims inclined towards Islam or goodwill. General charity (Sadaqah) can be given to non-Muslims.
- * **Local vs. Remote:** While it's preferable to distribute Zakat locally if needs are present, it is permissible to send it to Muslims in greater need elsewhere.
- * **Modern Institutions:** Reputable Zakat collection and distribution organizations often act as *Al-'Amilina 'Alayha*. Giving to them is valid, provided they distribute correctly to the eligible categories.

cholarly Opinions

- Hanafi School: Generally applies the 8 categories strictly.
- Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanbali: Also adhere to these but may differ slightly in interpreting “fi sabilillah” or “mu'allaf al-quloob”.
- Contemporary Scholars: Many expand “fi sabilillah” to include Islamic media, education, and community services.

****Conclusion:****

Understanding the eight categories (Asnaf) defined in Surah At-Tawbah (9:60) is essential for the valid fulfillment of the obligation of Zakat. Each category has specific definitions and conditions based on the Quran, Sunnah, and scholarly interpretation (Fiqh). Distributing Zakat outside these categories invalidates it.

Consulting local knowledgeable scholars or trustworthy Islamic organizations for guidance on specific cases is highly recommended.

Zakat is a system deeply rooted in social justice, not just charity. Each of the eight categories has a role in maintaining economic balance, community strength, and spiritual development in society.

Note: Zakat is obligatory, in addition person who is wealthy must not stop on this obligation only but spent his/her money on other categories of help to poor, society which are not included in this commandment of Allah (SWT).

Remember this Aya of Quran, where Allah (SWT) describes the core message of Islam. It clearly states that Righteous people spend money for righteous cause and then separately mentions they give obligatory Zakat also in addition.

لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُولُوا وَجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ
الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَى وَالْيَتَامَى
وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ
بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ
صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ

Righteousness does not consist of turning your faces towards the East and the West. But righteous is he who believes in Allah, and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Scripture, and the prophets. Who gives money, though dear, to near relatives, and orphans, and the needy, and the homeless, and the beggars, and for the freeing of slaves; those who perform the prayers, and pay the obligatory charity, and fulfill their promise when they promise, and patiently persevere in the face of persecution, hardship, and in the time of conflict. These are the sincere; these are the pious. [Q2/177].