

Healthcare Between Capitalist Greed and Islamic Care; Which System Preserves Human Life and Dignity?

(Translated)

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Healthcare is not merely a technical or service-oriented matter. Instead, healthcare is fundamentally an expression of a system's view of the humanitarian value: is it a value inherently respected, or simply a number in the market of interests and budgets? Hence, the reality of healthcare in Egypt and other Muslim countries today clearly reveals the nature of the capitalist system that governs them, and exposes the stark contradiction between it and the Islamic system, which makes looking after the people's affairs a Shariah obligation of the state, not a favor or a business transaction.

In Egypt, as in other Muslim countries, government hospitals are overflowing with patients, and people stand in long queues for a consultation, surgery, or an intensive care bed. There is broken equipment, shortages of medicine, a brain drain of doctors abroad, and a stark class disparity between those who can afford treatment in private hospitals, and those left to their fate in neglected public facilities. This situation is justified by limited resources, loan conditions, and financial reforms that subject every expenditure item to a profit-and-loss standard.

This reality is not a passing flaw. Instead, it is a natural consequence of a political and economic ideology that prioritizes material gain, and transforms the state into a custodian of markets, rather than a protector of its citizens. Since the capitalist model was imposed on Muslim lands following the collapse of the Khilafah (Caliphate), and the division of the Ummah through nationalistic borders, the health, education, and public utilities sectors have been privatized and exploited. Human beings are now measured by their ability to pay, not by their inherent right to life and care.

The capitalist system, which historically crystallized in Europe with the rise of the Industrial Revolution and subsequently spread throughout the West, was founded on the separation of religion from life, granting sovereignty to the people and legislation to human beings. On this same basis, health policies in the West are managed, where health insurance is run by commercial companies, hospitals are profit-driven institutions, and treatment is a commodity. It is true that some countries, such as America, Britain, and France, have developed different forms of public insurance, but the governing principle is the same: subjecting health to the logic of the market, budget, and taxes, not upon the basis of the Shariah obligation and due care.

In Muslim countries, however, the situation is even more dire. Political and economic dependence on the West, coupled with internal administrative corruption, has resulted in a fragile healthcare system where doctors are exploited, patients are humiliated, and the state raises taxes and borrows to pay interest on foreign loans, instead of building hospitals or establishing pharmaceutical factories. And the people are told, "Be patient, these are necessary reforms!"

However, what does Islam say about this? When the Prophet Muhammad (saw) established his state in Madinah, he did not leave the care of the people's affairs to individual initiatives or market mechanisms. Instead, he (saw) made the looking after all of the affairs, including health, one of his duties as ruler. Muslim narrated on the authority of Abdullah ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with them both) that the Messenger of Allah (saw) said, **«كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَمَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ؛ الْإِمَامُ رَاعٍ وَهُوَ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ»** **“All of you are guardians and are responsible for your wards. The ruler is a guardian and responsible for his subjects.”** This is a clear Shariah text stating that looking after the people's affairs is the ruler's responsibility, for which he will be held accountable before Allah (swt).

Throughout the history of the Khilafah, healthcare was not a business or a luxury. Instead, healthcare was a service and care provided free of charge to its subjects, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The Umayyads, Abbasids, and later the Ottomans established hospitals (bimaristans) in Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo, and Cordoba. These hospitals were equipped with doctors, pharmacists, and medicines, and their staff were paid from the state treasury, not from

the patients' pockets. Patients were not questioned about their ability to pay, but instead about their illness so that they could receive treatment.

The fundamental difference between the two systems lies not in administrative details, but in the underlying ideology. Capitalism views the individual as pursuing self-interest, establishes society on competition, and positions the state as the arbiter of competing interests. Islam, however, views humanity as honored servants of Allah (swt) and establishes the state as an instrument for implementing Shariah, achieving justice, and managing the public affairs. Therefore, healthcare in the Khilafah is not a matter for negotiation, but a Shariah obligation for which funds are allocated from the state treasury (Baytul-Mal).

Furthermore, Islam forbids monopolies and prohibits the exploitation of necessities for extortion. No company or individual is permitted to monopolize medicine, or raise its price by exploiting people's needs. The Prophet (saw) said, «مَنْ احْتَكَرَ فَهُوَ خَاطِئٌ» **“If anyone monopolizes he is a sinner.”** How, then, can capitalism allow pharmaceutical companies to control prices and private hospitals to charge exorbitant fees for surgeries?

Moreover, the Islamic economic system is not based on perpetual taxes that burden people, but instead on specific, Shariah revenues. It also categorically prohibits riba (interest), so the state does not deplete its budget to repay interest on loans, but instead directs its funds towards healthcare and services. This provides the resources to build a comprehensive healthcare system, independent of the dictates of Western financial institutions.

This does not mean that the Khilafah will be a state of mere emotional slogans. Instead, the Khilafah will be a modern state utilizing the latest technologies in medicine and scientific research. Islam is not opposed to science. Instead, Islam encourages it. During their golden age, Muslims were pioneers in medicine, surgery, and pharmacy, authoring numerous works, establishing medical schools, and preceding Europe by centuries. This progress was inseparable from the nature of the state, which fostered science and considered it a source of strength for the Ummah.

Today, the decline in healthcare in Egypt and other Muslim countries is the result of a specific political and economic choice: the choice to submit to capitalism, accept the fragmentation of the Muslim World, and leave each country to face its crises alone. If the Muslim World were unified in a single state, possessing its oil, mineral, and agricultural wealth, and distributing it wisely according to Shariah, it would have been able to establish a healthcare system superior to those of other nations.

The suffering endured by patients today, and the anguish of families who sell their possessions to pay for their children's treatment, are not merely human stories, but rather evidence of the failure of an entire system; a system that commodifies human life, turns hospitals into investment projects, and forces doctors to emigrate in search of financial rewards abroad.

The alternative is not administrative patching or a slight increase in the budget, but a fundamental transformation of the very foundations upon which the state and society are governed. A change that restores sovereignty to Shariah, establishes ruling governance according to the Revelation of Allah (swt), and establishes the Khilafah Rashidah on the Method of the Prophethood, so that healthcare, like all other matters, becomes a guaranteed right for every citizen.

In conclusion, the issue of health is not a technical matter to be discussed in parliamentary committees. Instead, healthcare is a trust placed upon the rulers, and a responsibility upon the Ummah to strive to establish a system that achieves it properly.

Allah (swt) said, «وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا» **“And whoever saves a life it is as if he had saved mankind entirely.”** [TMQ Surah Al-Ma'idah: 32].

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