

Khalifa Ali bin Abu Talib - Administrative Instructions of Ali

Instructions to the Collectors of Zakat

Ali issued the following instructions to the Collectors of Zakat: "Proceed to your duty with pious intentions and faith in God. Do not threaten any Muslim. See that you do not indulge in any act which is not liked by the people. Do not collect anything beyond what is enjoined by the commandments of God. When you reach any settlement alight at the well outside the settlement. Do not alight at the house of anyone. Thereafter enter the residential area with due decorum and dignity. Greet the people. If they do not respond to your greeting, do not mind it? Thereafter tell them that the Caliph has sent you to them to seek compliance with the commandments of God. Ask them whether anything is due from them in accordance with the commandments of God. If anyone says that nothing is due from him, do not enter into argument with him. If he accepts the liability then proceed to collect the dues with due sympathy without harassing him in any way. If Zakat is due in the shape of animals or camels do not enter the animal fold without the permission of the owner. When you enter such fold do not do anything which would annoy the owner. Do not try to create the impression that you are an officer. In assessing, divide the property in two parts and give the owner the option to retain one part. Then divide the other part into two parts and give the owner the option to retain one part. Repeat the process of division until that part which is payable in Zakat is arrived at. If the owner objects to the process of division, repeat the process to the satisfaction of the owner. Whatever is collected as Zakat, place it in the custody of a man in whose piety and integrity you have confidence. If any animal is taken in Zakat, see that it is not lame, unhealthy, or disabled in any way. When a she animal is taken see that its young one is not deprived of milk. While taking the animals to the headquarters see that they are well fed, and are not subjected to any hardship.

In doing your duty be afraid of God in your heart of hearts. Do not comply with the commandment of God in such a way that outwardly it may appear to be in conformity with the commandment of God, but inwardly it may be repugnant to such a commandment. See that what you do is in complete accord with what you say. Do not make your subordinates feel that you are an officer over them. You should not harass them in any way, and you should not make them feel inferior for under Islam all persons are equal. You can take your share out of Zakat, but bear in mind that the poor, and the destitute should first have their due share. See that no one is deprived of what is due to him. See that what is in trust with you is not misappropriated in any way. The worst crime is the betrayal of trust and disloyalty to the Imam."

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