

First Global Islamic Advisory Group Meeting on Polio Eradication

Praise be to Allah and prayers and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah and on his kin and companions!

The protection of life and progeny is one of the maqasid al-shariah (the ultimate objectives of Islamic law). Allah, the Exalted, indicated that failure to protect children is prohibited. This follows His saying “They are losers who foolishly have slain their children without knowledge, and have forbidden that which Allah bestowed upon them, inventing a lie against Allah. They indeed have gone astray and are not guided” (Al-Anaam: 140); “Whosoever kills a human being for other than manslaughter or corruption in the earth, it shall be as if he had killed all mankind” (Al-Maeda:32).

It is also stated in the Hadith by Prophet Mohammad, peace and prayers upon him, "There is no disease that Allah has created, except that He also has created its treatment." Sahih Bukhari

The members of the Global Islamic Advisory Group (IAG) for Polio Eradication, meeting in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on 26-27 February 2014, under the co-sponsorship of the International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA), Al Azhar Al Sharif, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB):

Having taken into consideration,

1. The resolutions on child health and polio eradication adopted by the Islamic Summit and other OIC specialized conferences, including those of the Council of Foreign Ministers(CFM) and Islamic conferences of health ministers;
2. Al Azhar Declaration on Solidarity with the Children of the Muslim Ummah on 6th of March 2013;
3. The fatwas and statements issued by Islamic Fiqh academies, Iftah institutions as well as senior scholars in the Muslim world based on the rulings of Islamic Fiqh on the safety and importance of childhood immunization against polio;
4. Significant financial support provided by Islamic countries and Islamic financial institutions, including the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) to implement mass polio immunization activities in polio endemic and other polio-affected countries;
5. The resolutions adopted by all countries, including the OIC member states, at the World Health Assembly in May 2012 to declare the eradication of polio to be a global public health

emergency;

Having taken into consideration the commitment and dedicated efforts of OIC Member States' governments to eradicate polio;

Having noted that of 403 polio cases reported in 8 countries in 2013, around 95% of the children affected were living in OIC member states, and that a large number of them were from Pakistan, Somalia, Nigeria, Syria and Afghanistan;

Having recognized the progress made in Afghanistan and Nigeria in 2013, with more than a 60% decline in polio cases compared to 2012; and the challenges faced by the polio eradication programme in Pakistan and Somalia that resulted in an increase in the number of children paralysed by polio virus infection in these countries;

Acknowledging the urgency of rapidly stopping the transmission of polio virus in the polio-affected countries, and recognizing the need to prevent further spread of polio virus and avoid more outbreaks of this disease;

Noting the violence to which health workers are subjected in some polio-affected countries, which prevents them from performing their duties, poses a threat to their lives, and has a detrimental effect on immunization programmes, on the effectiveness of health workers, and on the acceptance of parents, and which poses a major constraint to reaching the target children;

Recognizing that there are still misconceptions about the purpose of vaccination campaigns, that those misconceptions have a serious impact on the acceptance by some communities of polio vaccination and on reaching children in those communities;

We, the members of IAG for Polio Eradication –having examined the different religious, cultural, social and health aspects of polio eradication, having reviewed the doubts and suspicions that were raised, and building on our knowledge, and the information provided by the trusted medical experts – declare as follows:

1. We strongly reaffirm the importance of Islamic solidarity in combating polio and our support for global polio eradication efforts; and acknowledge that it fully conforms to Islamic principles and religious rulings.
2. We commend 54 states among the OIC's 57 Member States for their success in stopping the spread of polio virus using Oral Polio Vaccines (OPV) given their safety and effectiveness, and the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for vaccinating all Haj and Umra visitors from polio-affected countries.
3. We express serious concern that the vast majority of children afflicted by polio-paralysis in 2013 were from the Islamic world, and we are distressed at the state of these innocent children who now suffer from life-long disability which could have been prevented.
4. We appeal to all communities, governments, civil society, and religious organizations to place the highest priority on the health and welfare of children and ensure that all children have access to the needed health services, including vaccine, knowing that children are the future of the Ummah and are incapable of protecting themselves; it is thus the duty of all parents and local communities to protect their children from all diseases, particularly polio and life-long paralysis that could ensue. We also call for all governments' commitment to provide the needed health services and social protection to the people.
5. We strongly condemn any misuse of public health activities for purposes other than the promotion of health and prevention of disease, and we call on all organizations and parties to maintain strict neutrality in the planning and implementation of all public health activities, including polio vaccination campaigns.
6. We condemn the attacks launched against health workers, as they contravene Islamic teachings and human values, and demand that governments, local societies, civil societies and religious organizations extend all necessary assistance to ensure the safety and security of all health workers who carry out their duties to protect our children from fatal diseases; we also call upon all governments, philanthropic, local and international organizations to take appreciate the services offered by those who were killed among them while discharging their duties and to provide support to their families who suffered the consequences, by establishing specialized funds for this purpose.
7. We express thanks to the governments of the states concerned for the efforts exerted to protect health workers, and strongly encouraged the adoption of more measures to ensure full protection of the vaccination campaign in all areas that are difficult to access.
8. We appeal to political and religious leadership in the Islamic world to expedite work to support the efforts aimed at putting an end to violent campaigns and lifting all kinds of bans imposed on vaccination activities in the states concerned.
9. We invite the media to provide full opportunity to experts in the field of health and religion to speak about issues of societal concern regarding the activities of polio vaccination, and to prepare and publish comprehensive reports on the issue, including awareness programmes aimed at correcting misconceptions, especially in areas deprived of health services. We appeal to media and community organizations not to publish misinformation or rumors that may cause confusion among parents and expose the lives of millions of children to danger, and to seek to obtain accurate information.
10. We call to fully benefit from Islamic academic institutions including Al-Azhar University, the International Islamic University in Pakistan, the Islamic University in Madinah Al Munawarah and the Islamic University of Imam Muhammad Bin Saud in Riyadh, in order to prepare students

of these universities from polio-endemic regions, to engage them in raising awareness of their communities on the importance of polio vaccination and supporting related activities.

11. We express sincere thanks to the International Islamic Fiqh Academy, Al-Azhar Al-Sharif, Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Islamic Development Bank for the support received by the Group in its endeavor to protect children from diseases including polio.

12. We express heartfelt thanks and gratitude to the government of Saudi Arabia for hosting this important meeting and appreciate the stand of the Custodian of the Two Holy Shrines King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz and his continued support, reflected in the announcement of an important initiative to eradicate this disease from Pakistan.

13. We express overwhelming gratitude to Islamic financial institutions, governments and Muslim philanthropists for financing activities related to polio eradication from Islamic States, and urge them to continue providing such support.

14. We set up an ad hoc committee to support efforts of the Executive Committee to implement the recommendation included in the final declaration.

Saturday 4th of May 2024 07:35:02 PM