



16 November 2016 – Over 120 Islamic scholars, the ulama, gathered in a conference on 3 November 2016 in Jalalabad, Nangarhar province, to express their support for Afghanistan's polio eradication programme. The ulama highlighted that the polio vaccine was crucial for children's health, called on all Afghans to cooperate with health workers during polio vaccination campaigns, and endorsed a national Ulama Declaration on polio issued in February this year.

"It is not only the responsibility of the Government to eradicate polio from Afghanistan but we are all responsible and must cooperate in eradicating this devastating disease and paying attention to the improvement of our children's health", said Mawlawi Abdul Zahir Haqani, director of Hajj and Islamic Affairs in Nangarhar province.

The Islamic scholars committed to spreading messages to their communities, for example during religious sermons on Fridays, about the safety and benefits of the polio vaccine, highlighting that it is the only effective prevention for the disease.

The Nangarhar ulama endorsed the national Ulama Declaration on polio issued at a conference held in Kabul earlier this year with the support of the Al-Azhar University of Egypt, the International Fiqh Academy, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Islamic Development Bank. The Declaration states that "the polio vaccine is allowed according to Islam and is fully in accordance with the rulings of Shariah."

In the Declaration, the ulama strictly condemn all attacks and aggression toward vaccinators and health workers and highlight the importance of Islamic solidarity for polio eradication, both

at the national and international level.

Polio has been eradicated in most countries but it remains endemic in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nigeria, with 12 cases being reported in Afghanistan so far in 2016. The support of religious leaders and scholars is crucial in the battle to eradicate polio as they play a key role in spreading information about the importance of vaccination and convincing communities to vaccinate their children to protect them.

"The polio vaccine is halal and the only way to protect our children from this crippling disease. Islam emphasizes the importance of good hygiene and prevention of diseases," said Mawlawi Essanul Haq Hanafi, an Islamic scholar who spoke at the conference.

During the one-day conference, local government officials from Nangarhar province and representatives from the Ministry of Public Health highlighted the progress and remaining challenges of the polio programme, encouraging the Ulama to continue their valuable support for vaccination campaigns.

Earlier this year, influential ulama and Afghan religious scholars have gathered for similar conferences to endorse polio vaccination in Kunar and Kandahar provinces. Religious leaders around the country continue their support for polio eradication to ensure that every child under the age of 5 is reached during every vaccination campaign.

Related links

[Statement by the Islamic Advisory Group for Polio Eradication on the occasion of World Polio Day](#)

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