

Ṣāliḥ Āli-Shaykh¹ on Political Demonstrations & the Principle: “The ends justify the means”²

As for what people state that: “The ends justify the means” – this is wrong and not from our Islamic legislation. On the contrary, in the legislation, the means have specific rulings and with the condition that they be initially permissible. If the means are forbidden, such as a person drinking alcohol for medicinal purposes, then even if there may be some sort of remedy in it, it is still forbidden. So, not all means may have the same ruling as the end result. Rather, the means must be permissible in themselves.

It is also not always the case that a servant (of Allah) may assume that since certain means are successful, he’s therefore allowed to take them. An example of this is political demonstrations. For example, if a large group of people comes and says, “If we stage a demonstration, this will pressure the leader and then consequently he will have to change and rectify the situation. The end justifies the means.” We say that this is completely false because the means in themselves are forbidden. These actions, even though the goal may be sincere and necessary, are still impermissible. It is just like a person using a forbidden substance for some cure. Thus, there are many means and methods someone’s intellect may come up with, yet they may not be justified by the end result. So, this is for sure a false principle.

The means must be permissible in origin and then the ruling of the end result is applied to them; if the end result is allowable, the means are allowed. If it is obligatory, then the means are likewise.³

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² This fatwā was taken from a book called “al-Fatāwā al-Shar’iyyah fī al-Qadhāyā Al-‘Asriyyah,” a collection of various rulings by Muhammad Ibn Fahd al-Ḥusayn.

³ Taken from the cassette: Fatāwā al-‘Ulamā fī Hukm al-Tafjīrāt wal-Muzāharāt wal-Ightiyālāt.