

## Eliminate Second-hand Smoking from Islamic Campuses in North America

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### Introduction

Second-hand smoking (passive smoking or environmental smoke exposure) refers to air inhaled by a nonsmoker that is contaminated by smoke released from a burning cigarette or in the exhaled air of a person smoking a cigarette. More than 4,000 chemicals, including at least 43 known cancer-causing agents, have been identified from environmental smoke.<sup>1</sup> In 1993, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) classified environmental smoke as a Class A carcinogen.

### Health Hazards of Passive Smoking

Cigarette smoke is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States and around the world. The surgeon general of the United States has identified smoking as the single most modifiable risk factor for cancer, heart, and lung diseases. In 1986, the surgeon general warned that involuntary smoking is a cause of multiple diseases including lung cancer, and cardiovascular and lung diseases in otherwise healthy nonsmokers. Recent scientific research also implicates exposure to environmental smoke as a cause of asthma, ear infections, upper respiratory tract infections, sudden infant death syndrome, spontaneous abortions, and as having negative effects on cognition and behavior in children.<sup>2</sup> Second-hand smoke is estimated to cause around 62,000 deaths in the United States per year from ischemic heart disease and 3,000 deaths per year from lung cancer.<sup>3</sup>

### Islamic Perspective

Smoking is against the teachings of Islam. The Holy Qur'an and the *hadith* both preach cleanliness, avoidance of intoxicants and addictive behaviors, as

well as knowingly harming one's body. Allah ﷻ says:

وَلَا تُلْفُؤْا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ

...Make not your own hands contribute to your destruction...<sup>4</sup>

A smoker is not only harming his own body, but is further endangering the lives of others. Allah ﷻ says:

مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ  
النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا

... Killing one person ... is like killing all of humanity ...<sup>5</sup>

Further, the Qur'an states:

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ بَغَيْرِ مَا اكْتَسَبُوا فَقَدِ  
احْتَمَلُوا بُهْتَانًا وَإِثْمًا مُّبِينًا

Those who annoy believing men and women undeservedly bear on themselves a glaring sin.<sup>6</sup>

The Prophet ﷺ said:

من كان يؤمن بالله واليوم الآخر فلا يؤذي جاره

Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should not hurt his neighbor.<sup>7,8</sup>

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Sheikh Attia Saqr, a member of the Fatwa Committee and the Islamic Research Academy at al-Azhar University, endorses anti-smoking campaigns.<sup>9-11</sup>

### Conclusion

On the basis of overwhelming scientific evidence and clear guidance from the Holy Qur'an and *ḥadīth*, the Islamic Medical Association of North America (IMANA) strongly recommends that all Muslim campuses, including their parking lots, be declared smoke-free. This would reinforce the idea of Islamic spaces such as mosques as places of purification, and self improvement. Banning smoking in Islamic spaces would Insha'Allah serve as a motivation for smokers to quit smoking, leading to a healthier ummah. IMANA's position on banning smoking on Islamic campuses serves to improve the general health and spirituality of the Muslim community in the United States.

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