بسم اللہ الرحمن الرحیم

Offering Condolences to People Other Than the Deceased's Heirs

Darulifta Ahlesunnat (Dawateislami)

(Translated Fatwa)

Question

What do the noble scholars and jurists of Islamic law say about the following: Can condolences (taʿziyat) be offered to anyone other than the deceased's heirs, such as saying to the friends, disciples (murīd), or spiritual guide (pīr) of the deceased that I offer my condolences to you on the passing of your friend, pīr, or murid?

Answer

In sharīʿah, offering condolences upon the death of an individual is not restricted to the deceased's legal Islāmic heirs. Rather, it is permissible and even mustaḥab to offer condolences to his friends, students, teachers, pīr, murīds, and anyone else who is grieved and saddened by his passing. This is because offering condolences does not depend on being an heir; rather, it is based on being afflicted by a loss (Musāb) and being one who is grieving (Ḥazīn). Therefore, it is preferred and commendable in sharīʿah to console those who are grieving, encourage them to remain patient, and collectively supplicate for the forgiveness of the deceased. Doing so is also a means of attaining great reward from Allāh Almighty.
The one who suffers a loss due to the death of a person is a Musāb and the ḥadīth gives glad tidings to the one who offers condolences to a Musāb. Thus, the Noble Prophet ﷺ has stated:

من عزى مصابا فله مثل أجره

Translation: The one who offered condolences to anyone who has suffered a loss, Allāh will grant him reward equal to their patience. (Sunan Ibn Mājah, Vol. 02, p. 533, Publ. Dār al-Risālah al-ʿĀlamiyah)
In another narration, the term Ḥazīn (a grieving person) was used, which means that it is mustaḥab to offer condolences to a grieving person. Thus, it is stated:

من عز حزينا البسه الله التقوى

Translation: The one who offered condolences to a grieving person, Allāh will adorn him with the gown of piety. (Al-Muʿjam al-Awsat Lil-Tabrānī, Vol. 09, p. 117, Publ. Dār al-Ḥaramain, Cairo)
After the apparent demise of the Noble Prophet ﷺ, Khiḍr علیہ الصلوۃ والسلام offered his condolences to the blessed Companions. It is mentioned in Dalāʾil al-Nubuwwah Li-ʿAbī Nuʿaym al-Asbahānī and in many other books:

لما قبض رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم وكانت التعزية جاء آت يسمعون حسه ولا يرون شخصه فقال: السلام عليكم أهل البيت ورحمة الله إن في الله عزاء من كل مصيبة، وخلفا من كل هالك، ودركا من كل مافات، فبالله فثقوا وإياه فارجوا فإن المحروم من حرم الثواب والمصاب من حرم الثواب، والسلام عليكم فقال: هل تدرون من هذا؟ هذا الخضر صلوات الله عليه وعلى جميع الأنبياء

Translation: When the Noble Prophet ﷺ passed away and it was time to offer condolences, an individual came whose voice could be heard, but he could not be seen. He said: “Peace be upon you, O people of the house, and the mercy of Allāh. Indeed, Allāh Almighty consoles upon every hardship. He remains after everyone who passes. He is the one who grants compensation for every lost. Therefore, place your trust and hope in him, for the truly deprived and the one who suffers a true loss is the one who is deprived of reward. Peace be upon you all.” Then, ʿAlī رضي الله تعالى عنه asked: “Do you all know who this was? This was Khiḍr صلوات الله عليه وعلى جميع الأنبياء.”
(Dalāʾil al-Nubuwwah, p. 565, Publ. Dār al-Nafāʾis, Beirut)
The Imām of Ahl as-Sunnah رحمة الله تعالى عليه has also written:

حضرت خضر علیہ الصلوٰۃ والسّلام بعدِ وصال اقدس، حضور سید عالم ﷺ کی تعزیت کے لیے صحابہ کرام رَضِیَ اللہ تَعَالٰی عَنْہُم کے پاس تشریف لائے۔

Translation: After the apparent demise of the Prophet ﷺ, Khiḍr علیہ الصلوۃ والسلام went to the blessed Companions رضي الله تعالى عنهم to offer his condolences to them on the passing of the Prophet ﷺ. (Fatāwā Razawiyah, Vol. 29, p. 637, Publ. Razā Foundation, Lahore)
From the narrations mentioning Musāb and Ḥazīn, as well as the account reported in Dalāʾil al-Nubuwwah, we learn that the people to whom condolences may be offered are not merely the heir; rather, it is anyone who has suffered a loss and felt grief. Based on these narrations, not only the Ḥanafī school but all four schools of jurisprudence have declared it mustaḥab to offer condolences to anyone who is grieving, regardless of whether they are an heir or not.
It is stated in the famous text of Ḥanafī jurisprudence, Al-Fatāwā al-Hindiyah:

يستحب أن يعم بالتعزية جميع أقارب الميت؛ الكبار والصغار والرجال والنساء إلا أن يكون امرأة شابة فلا يعزيها إلا محارمها

Translation: It is mustaḥab to offer condolences to all the relatives of the deceased, whether old or young, male or female. But, if the female is young, only her maḥram relatives should offer condolences to her.
(This text supports the claim because it has declared it mustaḥab to offer condolences to all the relatives, whereas not all relatives are heirs.) (Al-Fatāwā al-Hindiyah, Vol. 01, p. 167, Publ. Quetta)
It is stated in the famous text of Shāfiʿī fiqh, ʾAsnā al-Matālib Fi-Sharḥ Rawḍ al-Tālib:

والمستحب أنه يعزي بكل من يحصل له عليه وجد كما ذكره الحسن البصري حتى بالزوجة والصديق وتعبيرهم بالأهل جرى على الغالب

Translation: It is mustaḥab to offer condolences to everyone who is grieving the loss, as mentioned by Imām Ḥasan al-Basrī, including the spouse and friends. The jurists have used the word ‘family’ based on the majority (of those individuals).
(ʾAsnā al-Matālib Fi-Sharḥ Rawḍ al-Tālib, Vol. 02, p. 353, Publ. Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyah, Beirut)
It is stated in the book Al-Qawānīn al-Fiqhiyah of ʿAllāmah Ibn Juzzay Mālikī Gharnātī رحمة الله تعالى عليه (d. 741 AH / 1340 CE):

ويستحب التعزية والدعاء للميت والمصاب

Translation: It is mustaḥab to offer condolences to those who are grieving and make duʿā for the deceased. (Al-Qawānīn al-Fiqhiyah, p. 178, Publ. Dār Ibn Ḥazm)
It is stated in Al-Mughnī Li-Ibn Qudāmah al-Ḥanbalī:

يستحب تعزية جميع أهل المصيبة، كبارهم وصغارهم، ويخص خيارهم، والمنظور إليه من بينهم؛ ليستن به غيره، وذا الضعف منهم عن تحمل المصيبة، لحاجته إليها

Translation: It is mustaḥab to offer condolences to all of those who are grieving, whether they are old or young. However, it should especially be offered to those who are righteous and influential and those who are followed so that others may also observe patience like them. Similarly, condolences should especially be offered to those who are unable to endure loss, for they are in need of consolation. (Al-Mughnī Li-Ibn Qudāmah, Vol. 02, p. 405, Publ. Maktabah al-Qāhirah)

وَاللّٰہُ اَعْلَمُ عَزَّوَجَلَّ وَرَسُوْلُہ اَعْلَم صَلَّی اللّٰہُ تَعَالٰی عَلَیْہِ وَاٰلِہٖ وَسَلَّم

(Allah Almighty knows best and His Messenger صَلَّی اللّٰہُ عَلَیْہِ وَاٰلِہٖ وَسَلَّم knows best.)

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