FW-1004 29 July 2026

Ruling on Making Up Uncounted Missed Fasts

THE QUESTION

My friend has some fasts to make up, they were from 2 years ago, and he doesn't even know how many, what should he do now?

THE SCHOLARLY RESPONSE

He has two separate matters to take care of here: one concerns how many fasts he owes, and the other concerns the delay in making them up. Both must be dealt with.

1. How Many Fasts He Must Make Up

He no longer knows how many fasts he missed. In this situation, the rule is that he must make up every fast he is not sure he has already done. The principle behind this is called barāʾat al-dhimma: his responsibility must be cleared with certainty, not merely with a guess or a "probably."

In practice, he goes back to what he is sure about. Any fast he is certain he has already made-up counts as done, and anything he is still in doubt about, he must make up. When he is unsure between two numbers (say, was it 20 or 25?), he takes the higher number and fasts on that basis. He keeps going until he is confident that nothing is left.

This is the view chosen by al-Qāḍī, graded as correct by Imām al-Nawawī in al-Majmūʿ, and supported by Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī in his Fatāwā: the responsibility must be cleared with certainty even if there are hardship and difficulty in it. So, although he does not know the exact count, the path is clear: he estimates on the safe (higher) side and keeps fasting until he is sure the debt is fully paid.

2. The Fidya (Food Payment) for the Delay

Because these fasts are from two years ago, and he let later Ramadāns pass

without making them up, a second obligation may apply. Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn al-Makhdūm al-Malībārī explains it this way in Fatḥ al-Muʿīn: if someone delays making up his fasts until the next Ramadān arrives, without a valid excuse - meaning he was free of travel and illness in between, and had the time and ability to fast — then, on top of the fast itself, he owes one mudd of the local staple food (rice, here in Kerala) for each missed fast, given to the poor.

And this mudd increases with each year that passes. So, a fast that was delayed across two Ramadāns without excuse means roughly two mudd for that fast. There is an important exception. If the delay was caused by an ongoing excuse - his travel, his illness, or, in a woman's case, pregnancy or breastfeeding continued right up until the next Ramadān - then there is no fidya at all, no matter how many years pass, as long as the excuse lasted. In that case, only the fasts themselves need to be made up.

In Short
• First: Count safely. Estimate the missed fasts on the higher side, and keep fasting until he is certain the count is fully cleared.
• Second: Pay the fidya if the delay was without excuse. He must also pay one mudd of food per fast, for each year of delay, to the poor.
• Exception: If the delay itself was excused (such as continuing illness or travel), then only the fasts are owed and there is no fidya.

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