

Beard Policy - Islamic Guidance Paper

Purpose of this paper:

1. To provide **perspective** and **guidance** to the Australian Defence Force in relation to the growing of a beard and moustache by Muslim (following the religion of Islam) men.
2. To highlight the **integral** and **obligatory** ruling of growing a beard for Muslim men

In Islam it is the tradition and practice (*Sunnah*) of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) for one to grow a full beard, up to the length of a fist, and trim the moustache. According to Islamic historical sources, the growing of a beard was the upheld practice and custom of all the Prophets and Messengers whom God has sent to Earth.

Muslims have two primary sources of legislation:

- The Holy Quran (*considered as the verbatim word of God revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him*)
- The Sunnah/Hadith (*a collection of sayings, character traits, and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him*)

According to a saying of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, **“There are ten acts that are from the primordial and innate nature of man (*al-fitrah*): to trim the moustache, to let the beard grow...”**

The majority of Muslim scholars consider that it is forbidden (*haram*) to shave the beard as it would be neglecting the tradition and established practice of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) who encouraged followers to strive to imitate him in every way.

A minority of Muslim scholars consider the maintaining of a beard as a highly recommended religious practice, and male Muslims are highly encouraged to fulfill this practice.

For Muslim men, the growing of a beard is seen as a sign of honour, beauty, and masculinity. It is also deemed an important act of worship and devotion to God. As such, a person is highly rewarded for this action in the afterlife.



The actions and customary practices of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, are deeply intertwined within the Islamic legal framework.

In this regard, God states in the Holy Quran: **“Say, (O Muhammad), ‘If you indeed love Allah, then follow me, and Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.’”** (Quran 3:31)

There are generally two opinions that practising, male Muslims will adhere to in connection with the keeping of a beard.

1. It is obligatory to maintain a beard, and to shave it off completely would be deemed sinful.
2. It is highly recommended to maintain a beard, and to trim or shave it off completely is considered highly disliked and would thus be a shunned practice. In effect, the shaving of one’s beard should be avoided by every Muslim man.

In considering exemptions for the growing of a beard for a member who identifies as Muslim (following the religion of Islam) within the Australian Defence Force, the following principles should be considered:

1. To preserve the religious identity and practice of the member, a waiver for religious reasons should be considered for a beard that is trimmed and kept well. This would include a beard that is up to a fist length. It is to be noted that some Muslim members may choose to grow a beard longer than a fist length, and this would be considered acceptable Islamic practice. The moustache should also be trimmed and kept well, so it is not protruding over the lips.
2. If in the event there is any safety or operational risk and/or harm to the person or others because of the beard, then in Islam there is also a principle of safety taking precedence.
3. In any possible situation of risk (during deployment or operations), if the risk is assessed, the individual could be directed to trim the beard to a safer length. If that is not suitable, then the member could be directed to remove the beard for that duration of time.
4. All requests for a waiver to allow the growing of a beard and moustache by a Muslim member of the Australian Defence Force should be forwarded to the Religious Advisory Committee to the Services for consideration and formal advice.

Issued by the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC)

Dated: 1st of September 2020