6.11 Sunni and Shia Muslim Attitudes to Euthanasia: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8062 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Short recall for Theme B Islam: Which phrase best summarises the Shia juristic position allowed in some cases about medical treatment at the end of life?

- ☐ A. Active killing is permitted to relieve suffering
- ☐ B. Withdrawal of futile treatment may be permissible while active killing remains forbidden
- ☐ C. All forms of death hastening are always encouraged
- ☐ D. No consultation with scholars is required

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

2 Give two reasons why many Sunni scholars say euthanasia is haram, in the context of Sunni teaching about life as amanah and qadar.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

3 Explain two ways Muslim healthcare professionals might put Islamic teachings into practice when caring for terminally ill patients where euthanasia is requested, focusing on Sunni and Shia perspectives.

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

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4 Explain two Muslim reasons for opposing euthanasia, referring to the concepts of amanah and qadar and to general Sunni or Shia concerns about intentionally ending life.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

5 Explain two ways belief in qadar, predestination, might affect how a Muslim family responds to a terminally ill relative when euthanasia is suggested.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

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6 Explain two contrasting Muslim attitudes to euthanasia among Sunni and Shia scholars. In your answer refer explicitly to a scripture or hadith source and state how it is used by each side.

(Total for Question 6 is 5 marks)

7 Evaluate whether Muslims can never agree that euthanasia is acceptable, focusing on differences between Sunni and Shia positions, the concepts of amanah and qadar, and scripture such as Qur'an 5:32.

(Total for Question 7 is 12 marks)

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Mark scheme · 6.11 Sunni and Shia Muslim Attitudes to Euthanasia: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

selects B, withdrawal of futile treatment may be permissible while active killing is forbidden, oe **B1**

Answer: B

Question 2

first reason: life is amanah, a trust from Allah, so only Allah may take life, oe **B1**

second reason: belief in qadar, God's predestination, means suffering and death are in Allah's plan and should not be humanly ended, oe **B1**

Answer: Any two: life is a trust from Allah so only Allah should end it; belief in qadar means humans must not interfere with the timing God has ordained.

Question 3

point 1: provide palliative care and pain relief while avoiding actions that directly cause death, oe **B1**

development: this balances compassion with the prohibition on intentional killing found in many Sunni rulings, oe **B1**

point 2: consult with family and religious scholars and consider withdrawing futile treatment if Shia juristic guidance allows it, oe **B1**

development: this shows respect for Shia juristic nuance and for the family's wishes while still avoiding active euthanasia, oe **B1**

Answer: E.g. offer strong palliative care and avoid actions that intentionally cause death; consult family and Shia scholars and consider withdrawal of futile treatment where permitted, while still forbidding active killing.

Question 4

point 1: amanah - life is a trust from Allah, so deliberately ending a life violates that duty, oe **B1**

development: this duty is taught across Sunni and Shia scholarship, and informs rulings that human agents must preserve life, oe **B1**

point 2: qadar - belief in predestination leads to opposing active intervention to end suffering, as death is part of Allah's plan, oe **B1**

development: many scholars argue that intentionally hastening death removes acceptance of Allah's decree and undermines trust in God, oe **B1**

Answer: E.g. amanah, life is a trust so intentionally ending it breaches duty to Allah; qadar, death is in Allah's plan so humans should not act to end life deliberately, both supported by mainstream scholarly views.

Question 5

point 1: acceptance - belief in qadar may lead the family to accept suffering and death as Allah's will, oe **B1**

development: this acceptance could make them reject euthanasia as interfering with Allah's decree, oe **B1**

point 2: trust in Allah's wisdom - qadar can encourage trust that Allah has a reason beyond human understanding, oe **B1**

development: this trust may lead to choosing palliative care and prayer rather than seeking to hasten death, oe **B1**

Answer: E.g. acceptance of Allah's will leads to rejecting euthanasia; trust in Allah's wisdom leads families to prefer palliative care and prayer rather than intervening to end life.

Question 6

attitude 1: many Sunni scholars treat both active and passive euthanasia as haram, oe **B1**

development: Sunnis cite Qur'an 5:32 or general Quranic prohibitions on taking life to support forbidding intentional ending of life, oe **B1**

attitude 2: some Shia scholars allow withdrawing futile or extraordinary treatment in certain situations while still forbidding active killing, oe **B1**

development: Shia jurists may distinguish between allowing natural death and actively causing death, using principles of necessity and mercy, oe **B1**

explicit reference: correct citation of Qur'an 5:32 or an appropriate hadith and explanation of how it supports the points, oe **B1**

Answer: Contrast example: Sunni majority say active and passive euthanasia are haram, using Qur'an 5:32 to stress unlawful killing; some Shia jurists permit withdrawing futile treatment while still forbidding active killing, applying principles of mercy and not causing death directly, and they also refer to scripture and juristic reasoning.

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Question 7

Level 4 A well-argued, balanced evaluation that offers developed reasons for and against the statement, refers to relevant Islamic teaching and scholarly positions, makes clear use of scripture or hadith such as Qur'an 5:32, and reaches a justified conclusion.	**10-12**
Level 3 A balanced answer with several relevant reasons for and against the statement, some reference to Islamic teaching or scholarly views, and a supported conclusion.	**7-9**
Level 2 A partially balanced answer giving some reasons for and/or against the statement, with limited reference to Islamic teaching and a basic conclusion.	**4-6**
Level 1 Simple or undeveloped points for or against the statement with little or no reference to Islamic teaching and no clear conclusion.	**1-3**
Level 0 No relevant material.	**0**

Indicative content:

- Arguments supporting the statement: clear Sunni majority view considers both active and passive euthanasia haram, citing the sanctity of life and Qur'anic prohibitions such as Qur'an 5:32; strong emphasis on amanah and that life must be protected as a trust from Allah; belief in qadar leads to opposing human interference with God's timing for death.
- Arguments supporting the counter view: Shia scholarly nuance permits withdrawing futile or extraordinary treatment in some cases, showing there is not absolute unanimity across all Muslim scholars; practical concerns for mercy and reducing suffering lead some jurists to allow limited leniency, showing potential agreement under defined circumstances.
- Use of scripture and sources: accurate reference to Qur'an 5:32 and to hadith or principles of fiqh can be used on both sides, with Sunnis using it to forbid killing and some Shia jurists using broader juristic principles such as necessity, public interest and mercy to justify withdrawal of futile treatment.
- Consideration of interpretation and context: diversity of legal schools, cultural context and modern medical ethics mean Muslims in different communities may reach different practical conclusions even if united by core principles, so absolute 'never agree' may be overstated.
- Conclusion guidance: weigh the strong shared principles that incline many Muslims against euthanasia, against the documented juristic nuance and contextual differences that allow limited exceptions, and reach a balanced conclusion that addresses both permanent disagreement and areas of qualified agreement.

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