Offering Radd Maẓālim and Items of Unknown Ownership to Sayyid - 2 /Jul/ 2019

Q.1| Is it permissible to offer charity to a needy sayyid[1] as compensation for illegitimately obtained wealth (that is, as radd maẓālim[2])?
Q.2| Is it permissible to give something that has been found and whose owner is unknown to a needy sayyid?

A.| The answer to both questions is yes. It is permissible to offer radd maẓālim (charity intended as compensation for wealth one illegitimately appropriated from its rightful owner) and found items whose owners are unidentified to a needy sayyid. Yet, as a matter of advisory caution, it is preferable in both cases that the money or item be given to non-sayyid persons.

[1] A sayyid is any person (whether male or female) descended from Prophet Muhammad's grandfather, Hāshim, through patrilineal descent.
[2] If one takes some property from its rightful owner without the owner's consent, whether intentionally or unintentionally, one is duty-bound to return it to its rightful owner. Now, if one decides to return the property or its monetary equivalent (if the property itself is no longer available) to its owner after some time but is unable to locate the owner or has forgotten who the owner is, one must give the property or its monetary equivalent in the form of charity (ṣadaqah) to a needy person. The charity given for this purpose is commonly referred to in Shia law as radd maẓālim.