

The Quran and its Message

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سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

APOSTASY

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Apostasy in Islam is often defined as the rejection of certain or all attributes (words, beliefs or deeds) of the religion of Islam by a former follower of the religion.

In many (if not most) schools of Islamic thought, this rejection is punishable by death.

There is nothing in the holy text of the Quran which prescribes death as a punishment for apostasy. Support for such a punishment is usually garnered from [Islamic secondary sources](#).

First and foremost, there is absolutely no compulsion in religion and freedom of belief is enshrined within the Quranic text as a human right granted by God.

018:029 (Part)

"And say: (It is) the truth from your Lord. Then whosoever will, let him believe, and whosoever will, let him disbelieve..."

See article: [Forced Faith is No Faith](#)

There will be people that believe and afterwards will disbelieve.

004:137

Those who believe, then reject faith, then believe (again) and (again) reject faith, and go on increasing in unbelief,- God will not forgive them nor guide them nor guide them on the way.

The matter of disbelief will be settled on the Day of Judgment and **only** God has the authority to punish apostates.

THE MATTER OF DISBELIEF WILL BE FINALLY SETTLED ON THE DAY OF JUDGMENT BY GOD

018:029

"And say: The truth is from your Lord, so let him who please believe, and let him who please **disbelieve**; surely We have prepared for the iniquitous a fire, the curtains of which shall encompass them about; and if they cry for water, they shall be given water like molten brass which will scald their faces; evil the drink and ill the resting-place"

003:086-87

"How shall God guide a people who disbelieved after their believing and (after) they had borne witness that the Messenger was true and clear arguments had come to them; and God does not guide unjust people. **(As for) these, their reward is that upon them is the curse of God and the angels and of men, all together"**

003.090

"But those who reject faith after they accepted it, and then go on adding to their defiance of faith, never will their repentance be accepted; for they are those who have gone astray"

Please also see verses: 2:217; 2:8-10; 5:54; 16:106 which resonate similar sentiments

DEATH IS PRESCRIBED BY THE QURAN IN ONLY TWO CIRCUMSTANCES. NEITHER REFER TO APOSTASY.

Both punishments of death are to be administered by the state and not by individual authorities.

- (a) For just retribution in the case of murder (for unintentional manslaughter, see 4:92)
- (b) For spreading sheer corruption in the land (5:33)

If one reads from verse 12 of Chapter 5 (Surah Maeda 5:12), a discourse is initiated with the Children of Israel which continues to a point where the story of the two sons of Adam^(pbuh) is recited to them (5:27). Most are familiar with the narrative of where one son of Adam^(pbuh) murdered the other merely because one's sacrifice was not accepted.

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005:032

"From that time We ordained on the children of Israel that whoever kills a soul, **unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief / corruption in the land**, it is as though he has killed all mankind; and whoever saves a soul, it is as though he has saved all mankind; and certainly Our messengers came to them with clear arguments, but even after that many of them certainly act extravagantly in the land"

There is simply no mention nor capacity from a Quran's perspective to legislate death for any other reason, in particular apostasy.

See also: [Stoning for Adultery](#)

It is absolutely inconceivable for a believer in the Quran to assert that a Prophet of God who was clearly instructed to follow the revelation being inspired in him would offer contrary commandments or to reveal something in God's name.

069:044-47

"And if he (Muhammad) were to invent any sayings in Our name, We would have certainly seized him by his right hand, And We should certainly then cut off the artery of his heart. Nor could any one of you withhold him (from Our wrath)"

017:074-75

"And had We not given you (Muhammad) strength, you would nearly have inclined to them a little. In that case We would have made you taste double portion (of punishment) in this life, and double (punishment) after death: and moreover you would have found none to help you against Us!"

MISUSE OF QURANIC VERSES

Isolated verses out of context are often utilised to support the death penalty for apostasy. Two oft used verses are quoted as examples.

004:089

"They desire that you should disbelieve as they have disbelieved, so that you might be (all) alike; so do not take from among them allies until they emigrate in God's way; but if they turn back (**Arabic: Tawallaw**), then seize them and kill them wherever you find them, and take not from among them any ally or a helper"

If read in full context of the surrounding verses, the implication of the verse is clear. The 'turning back' (Tawallaw) is clearly a reference to the enmity showed by the disbelievers to fight the believers and has nothing to do with their particular world views or beliefs.

There is no mention in the above verse of the 'disbelievers' turning back in 'faith' neither in the Arabic language nor an interpretation that can be sustained given the context of the surrounding verses. The next verse, cements the context as a reference to those who would fight the believers if given the chance.

004:090

"Except those who join a group between whom and you there is a treaty (of peace), or those who approach you **with hearts restraining them from fighting you as well as fighting their own people**. If God had pleased, He could have given them power over you, and they would have fought you:

Therefore if they withdraw from you but fight you not, and (instead) send you (Guarantees of) peace, then God has opened no way for you (to war against them)"

This is clearly not a reference to apostasy.

005:033-4

"The punishment of those who wage war against God and His Messenger, and strive with might and main for mischief through the land (Arabic: ardi-fasaadan) is: execution, or crucifixion, or the cutting off of hands and feet from opposite sides, or exile from the land: that is their disgrace in this world, and a heavy punishment is theirs in the Hereafter; Except for those who repent before they fall into your power: in that case, know that God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful"

In the second example above, we note that exile is given as an alternative punishment for waging war against the Prophet as opposed to killing the perpetrators. It should be noted that even in the serious case of spreading mischief in the land, exile is still granted as an option. It would be therefore inconceivable that in the case of apostasy that the death sentence would be a befitting retribution for one's personal beliefs.

Both examples quoted above have **nothing** to do with apostasy. Rather, they deal with the Quranic punishment for spreading mischief or sheer corruption in the land.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The killing of apostates as a punishment for the sole reason of one's choice of religious beliefs is not sanctioned by the Quran.

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