

# The Quran and its Message

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سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

## DEATH PENALTY FOR BLASPHEMY

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The world is well aware of the furore that has been caused by the attempted burning of the Quran by Pastor Terry Jones or the backlash caused earlier by the Prophetic cartoons controversy. Indeed very recently, voicing concerns over blasphemy laws in Pakistan resulted in the assassination of the Pakistani Governor of Punjab and businessman, Salman Taseer.

Seasoned readers would be able to recall the outrage of Salman Rushdie's 'Satanic Verses' from living memory which attracted a fatwa of death from an Iranian Shi'a Muslim scholar.

The Quran does not prescribe the death penalty for blasphemy.

From the Quran's perspective, the right to take life is only allowable in **two** circumstances (5:32).

### TWO CIRCUMSTANCES

(1) As a retribution for causing 'fasaad' (gross mischief, spreading corruption, evil, beyond all bounds) in the land (punishable by the state).

(2) As a retribution for murder (punishable by the state).

It is to be noted that 'fasaad' has to constitute a repeated, gross mischief, corruption and an evil beyond bounds which becomes a societal ill. The offending party (parties) must be apprehended, questioned and allowed to give a suitable defence. This must be actioned by the state or those in governance. They would have recourse to many judgments depending on the crime and extent which would not always attract death. We note from the following verse:

#### 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**"

What is also significant to note from the above verse is that those that repented before they were captured would not attract a punishment.

The Quran informs the reader that the Prophet was mocked, ridiculed (37:12) like the messengers before him (13:32; 15:11; 21:41). He was called an inventor, forger, a liar (16:101; 25:4), a man who was bewitched (17:47; 25:8), that he was a possessed poet (37:36). Insults were even hurled at the Quran, in that it was called 'muddled dreams' (21:5), 'foreign, outlandish' (16:103), an invention, a forgery (38:7) and tales of the men of the past (25:5).

However, the single most grave blasphemy was undoubtedly the blasphemy against God Himself.

#### **007.180**

**"The most beautiful names belong to God: so call on him by them; but shun such men as use profanity (Arabic: Yul'hiduna) in his names: for what they do, they will soon be requited"**

**Arabic: Yul'hiduna - Blaspheme, deviate, violate, distort, pervert.**

At no point did any of these insults attract the death penalty.

Rather, the advice was:

#### **038.017**

**"Be patient over what they say and remember our servant David, the man of strength for he was repeatedly turning (to God)"**

#### **020.130**

**"Therefore be patient with what they say, and celebrate (constantly) the praises of thy Lord, before the rising of the sun and before its setting, yea, celebrate them for part of the hours of the night, and at the sides of the day: that you may have (spiritual) joy"**

Whether repeated insults and evil transgression which incite hatred, terrorism and evil in the land can be classed as 'fasaad' remains a matter for the state to decide. However, this is very different from the general 'blasphemy' understood by many Muslims today who believe it correct to murder anyone for uttering anything against the Prophet.

Many renowned Muslims clerics today misquote the Quran to garner support for the death penalty for blasphemy. An example can be seen below.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B a aYeFbDE>

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## FINAL THOUGHTS

There is no death penalty for blasphemy in the Quran.

However, as noted above, if repeated, unrelenting blasphemy is to such an extent which incites hatred, terrorism and outright evil in the land then this is a matter for the state to decide whether it can be classed as 'fasaad'. This is especially the case, if the perpetrator has no intention to curtail it, repent nor has any suitable defence.

Even if it is deemed that the matter is so grave that it is classed as 'fasaad', the state has many judgments to its avail which do not always necessarily amount to the death penalty. One example was cited from verse (5:33) which included banishment from the land.

### Related Article:

- (1) [Apostasy](#)
- (2) [Quranic Punishment - Murder vs Manslaughter](#)

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