

Blasphemy – According to Islam and Other Religions

Blasphemy in Islam is any irreverent behavior toward holy personages, religious artifacts, customs, and beliefs that Muslims revere. Where Sharia pertains, the penalties for blasphemy can include fines, imprisonment, flogging, amputation, hanging, or beheading. Muslim clerics may call for the punishment of an alleged blasphemer by issuing a fatwā. Islamic legal authorities agree that a blasphemer can be Muslim or non-Muslim. To be convicted of blasphemy, an individual must be an adult, of sound mind, and not under duress. Some jurisdictions do not punish individuals who commit blasphemy accidentally. The Maliki school of jurisprudence permits the exoneration of accused individuals who are converts to Islam. We realize that not only Non-Muslims but some Muslims too are indulging themselves in a very serious sin or act of blasphemy or hate words against any religion whose repercussions don't stop at an individual or an organization but go onto whole humanity. Looking at this subject's importance we should explore it further and find the answers that pacify our questioning souls.

AS PER CHRISTIANITY & JUDAISM

The punishment for blasphemy in most of the major religions is death. It is stated in the Old Testament of the Bible, which is the authority for both the Jews and the Christians:

And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: [Book of Leviticus 24:16

AS PER HINDUISM

In the religious book of Manusmriti, the Law book of the Hindus, it says:

“If a man born of a lower class intentionally bothers a priest, the king should punish him physically with various forms of corporal and capital punishment that make men shudder.” [Manusmriti 9:248]

AS PER ISLAM

Regarding the punishment for blasphemy in Islam, it is mentioned in the Glorious Qur’an:

“The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger, and strive with might for mischief through the land 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;” [Surah Al-Maidah 5:33].

Hence, it is only Islam that gives 3 different options for blasphemy and apostasy punishment in addition to death.

In spite of all the negative propaganda against Islam, ironically Islam still happens to be the fastest growing religion, not just in the west but also across the world. The more people try to suppress Islam, the more it will prevail. Allah (swt) will make His Deen (Islam) to prevail over all the other



ways of life irrespective of people mocking and ridiculing His messengers. As Allah says in the Glorious Quran:

“Mocked were (many) Messengers before thee; but the scoffers were hemmed in by the thing that they mocked.” [Surah Al-An’aam 6:10].

As a common Muslim or a peace-loving human being, we can also use the following tactics to stop this type of religious blasphemy;

1. Replies via the Media

The first way is to reply via the media i.e. using the same tool, which is often used against us. Replies can be in the form of letters, articles, pamphlets and books, which can be sent to newspapers and magazines and posted on the Internet. Appearances on satellite TV channels and giving public lectures in order to present the correct picture of Islam are also another possible way. Common non-Muslims throughout the world have become victims of a section of the media and its propaganda. One cannot blame a common non-Muslim for being against Islam unless we Muslims clarify their doubts and remove the misconceptions prevalent in their minds. It is the job of every Muslim to respond to allegations against Islam and clarify misconceptions.

2. Peaceful Protests and Demonstrations

There can be peaceful demonstrations or protests in the form of a congregation. A large number of Muslims can march to parliament house and protest against what has happened. Muslims can also give a letter to the



embassy of that particular country and request the Prime Minister to take action against the offender.

3. Filing a Legal Suit

We can even take legal action against the defamer in his country or file a case in the International Court of Law if the nation where the act has taken place is condoning the act. We can sue the offenders by pulling them to court, which is one of the good ways of preventing such things from occurring in the future.

A striking example in this respect can be cited of CAIR (Council on American - Islamic Relations), which is the largest Islamic civil liberties group in the U.S. In 1997, CAIR succeeded in shaking down Nike when they filed a defamation suit objecting to a pair of shoes manufactured by Nike, which had a design on the heel similar to the Arabic word for "God", Allah. However, there was an out-of-court settlement and Nike not only publicly apologized but also agreed to give several million dollars to the Muslim community, which were spent to build three playgrounds at Islamic Centers in the United States.

4. Economic Embargo

The fourth strategy is to put an economic embargo, a very effective weapon aimed at weakening the economy of any country. Muslim countries can get together and apply economic or business pressure against that country if it continues to publish defamatory things. It is advisable to boycott certain goods if we know that boycotting products of that country can create a huge



effect on the country's economy. During the gulf war, a few countries in the Middle East boycotted American products and caused a big loss to the U.S. If a section of the western media has "freedom of expression" then we Muslims too have the freedom to use or abstain from using a product. Say for example if the western countries wish not to procure oil from the Muslim world, it is their choice for which we cannot compel them. Similarly, if the Muslims do not want to buy products from a particular country, it is illogical for anyone to have any objections to their decision.

5. Political Pressure

This takes place on a higher level i.e. between political authorities of countries. The leaders of different Muslim nations can apply pressure on a political level. The Muslim governments can withdraw their ambassadors from that country and shut down its embassies as part of a political boycott, if they refuse to give a public apology and do not stop defaming the Prophet (pbuh).

6. Moderate Force

The sixth strategy is to carry out demonstrations using a limited amount of force. As far as the first five strategies are concerned, no Muslim or non-Muslim can have any objections. If there is freedom of speech then we Muslims also have the freedom to reply in the media, to participate in peaceful demonstrations, or take legal action seeking punishment or compensation. We can even boycott goods or apply political pressure since it's a matter of personal choice.