

# Does Islam teach to Kill Apostates?

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## A. Welcome to the religion of peace?

“Welcome to Islam - the religion of peace! ! ! !”

“Islam stands for peace, justice and humanity. ! ! ! !”

“There is no compulsion in religion! ! ! !”

“Islam is religion of God. ! ! ! !”

“Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) is *Rahmatul-Aalemeen* i.e. mercy for all the worlds.”

Wait... learn one more teaching alleged-to-be-of-Islam...

If you want to leave Islam, then...you deserve death penalty!!!!

What??? Did not understand?

Your head MUST be cut off if you abandon Islam... Do you know why?

Because Islam says that apostates should be killed!

What? Barbaric religion?

No way, Islam is the religion of peace and gives utmost freedom of thought.

## B. What is this issue: Death-for-apostasy?

- A person who leaves / abandons / shuns a faith or religion is called an apostate.
- In Islamic context if a Muslim becomes an atheist or starts following another religion or just leaves Islam, he/she is called an apostate of Islam.
- The horrific understanding of majority of Muslims is that Islam prescribes death for apostasy.
- The interesting point is, this issue is in the limelight not because many Muslims become
- apostates, but because of hue and cry made by non-Muslims and a few Muslims. Common non-Muslims condemn Islam by saying why apostate deserves death. Anti-Islamic forces ridicule and lambaste Muslims, Quran and Prophet Muhammad saying “is this religion of peace? Is this freedom of thought in Islam?”
- Islam is barbaric and inhumane religion. Why should one accept a religion when it’s a one-way road-you enter alive but when you leave then you MUST die?”
- In today’s scenario; killing in the name of Shia–Sunni or sects is influenced by death-for-apostasy understanding. Equation is simple:

Equation A- a Sunni “scholar” declares Shia as apostates because of some reasons (in most cases silly reasons).

Equation B – Apostate should be killed

Matching equation, A and B – Shia should be killed and this is as per “teachings of Islam”. Hence proved.

## **Wait! Don't be biased. Let us be honest and just.**

- Whether Islam prescribes death penalty for apostasy or not – we will see later; but the billion-dollar question is - whom should we please? Muslims? Islamic scholars? Non-Muslims? Anti-Islamic forces? Or Allah, the almighty God? If we say Allah, then we must find out what Allah or Almighty God has told about this issue.
- If Almighty God guides us on any topic, then should we still follow what we have been following? Should we prefer your set of scholars over God?
- “I will follow what I found my forefathers doing” – this mentality is condemned by Almighty God.

*When it is said to them: “Follow what God has sent down,” they say, “Nay! We shall follow what we found our fathers following.” What! Even if their fathers did not understand (ya ‘qilun) anything and they were not guided? (Quran, Surah Baqrah 2:170)*

- *And when it is said to them: “Come to what God has sent down and to the Messenger,” they say, “Enough for us is that which we found our fathers following. What! Even if their fathers did not know anything and they were not guided? (Quran, Surah Maida 5:104)*

### **C. The Misconception and its reason**

The popular myth regarding apostasy is that “Apostates should be killed”. Proof: People cite a few *hadees* from which they conclude that Islam prescribes death penalty for apostasy. Most oft-repeatedly cited statement is that Prophet told to kill whoever changes religion.

#### **1. Reason for this misunderstanding**

Again, the most commonly repeated mistake of the majority of Muslims. Not understanding an issue **under the principle of quran**. When people don't look at Quran, don't analyze what Allah has revealed, don't ponder over how Quran has guided and directly try

to reach the conclusion just by looking at *hadees* in isolation then they are bound to make mistake.

## 2. Revisiting basics

*"The month of Ramadhan in which was revealed the Quran, a guidance for the people and clear proofs of guidance and criterion ....."* [Quran, Surah Baqrah 2: 185]

Please mark the purpose of Quran.

1. It is for whole mankind. Quran is not exclusive property of any particular sect, religion, group or race.
2. Quran is for guidance purpose. We MUST seek guidance from Quran.
3. Quran is the criterion. It means in any matter Quran will have the last say; what is right and what is wrong. What Quran decides will be final.

No wonder Muslims claim Quran to be the word of God verbally but when it comes to actually believe and practice it they fail miserably.

Quran says that one MUST judge as per the revelation of Almighty God.

*..... If any do fail to judge by what Allah has revealed, they are Unbelievers (kaferoon).* [Quran, Surah Maida 5:44]

*.....And if any fail to judge by what Allah has revealed, they are wrong-doers (Zalemoon).* [Quran, Surah Maida 5:45]

*..... If any do fail to judge by what Allah has revealed, they are those who rebel (Faseqoon).* [Quran, Surah Maida 5:47]

*To you We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the scriptures that came before it, and guarding it in safety: so judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the Truth that hath come to thee.....;*[Quran, Surah Maida 5:48]

*And this (He commands): you judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and follow not their vain desires,..* [Quran, Surah Maida 5:49]

***Above ayah of Quran make very clear that if we judge against the guidance of Quran then it is kufr / zulm / fisq / absolutely wrong. See how much emphasis Allah has given on judging from what He has revealed.***

### **D. There is absolutely NO punishment just for apostasy**

1. Almighty God and Quran give absolute freedom to believe or disbelieve.

*"There is no compulsion in religion"* [Quran, Surah Baqrah 2:256]

You cannot force anyone to become a Muslim. When we say that death should be awarded to apostate, it means we are forcing him not to leave Islam. We are threatening him with death if he/she leaves Islam.

*"Say, 'The truth is from your Lord': Let him who wills believe it, and let him who wills, reject (it)." [Quran, Surah Kahaf 18:29]*

*"If it had been your Lord's will, they all would have believed - all who are on earth. Will you, then, compel the people, against their will, to believe?" [Quran, Surah Yunus 10:99]*

It is illogical and unjust to force someone to believe or enter Islam. Neither physical nor psychological force can be applied on anyone to believe in Islam. Faith comes from inner conviction and not from external compulsion.

## 2. Killing of human being in the house of Islam

- Life is sacred. Killing of one innocent is like killing the whole mankind. [Quran, Surah Maidah 5:32]
- In order to safeguard peace and human life, Quran permits capital punishment but only in two cases – murder and spreading mischief. [Quran, Surah Maidah 5:32]

## 3. Quran is against death penalty for apostasy.

Does Quran mentions about apostasy? “YES” – “several times.”  
What punishment it prescribes? “No worldly punishment for sure. It always speaks about punishment in the life hereafter.”

Quran address the issue of apostasy at several places. Almighty God tells about the people leaving Islam but at not a single place God says that such people should be killed. Look at 2:217, 3:86-90, 4:137, 9:66,74, 16:106-109,47:25-27

A) “..And if anyone among you **turns back from his religion and dies as a disbeliever**, then the works of such as these will be lost in this life and in the hereafter they will be the dwellers of the fire, abiding therein forever. [Quran, Surah Baqarah 2:217]

B) How shall God guide those **who reject faith after their belief and after they bore witness that the Messenger was true and after clear (signs) had come unto them?** God guides not unjust people.

They are those whose recompense is that on them (rests) the curse of God, of the angels, and of all humankind.

They will abide therein. Their torment will not be lightened and they will not be given any respite, except for those that repent after that, and make amends (by righteous deeds), for, verily God is forgiving, most merciful.

But surely **those who disbelieved after their belief and then went on increasing in their disbelief**, never will their repentance be accepted; for they are those who have gone astray. [Quran, Surah Ale Imran 3:86-90]

C) Surely **those who believe, then disbelieve, then believe (again) and (again) disbelieve, and go on increasing in disbelief**, God will not forgive them nor guide them nor guide them on the way. [Quran, Surah Nisa 4:137]

Please note: this ayah talks about an apostate coming back to Islam and then again becoming apostate. If we would kill an apostate, then how will he get a chance to again come to Islam?

D) Make no excuses. **You have disbelieved after your belief**. If We pardon some of you, We (may) punish others amongst you, for they are guilty. [Quran, Surah Tauba 9:66]

They swear by God that they did not say, **but they did say the word of disbelief and they disbelieved after their Islam and meditated a plot** which they were unable to carry out. And (by this) they avenged nothing except that God and his Messenger had enriched them of His bounty! If they repent, it will be better for them; but if they turn away, God will punish them with a grievous penalty in this world and in the hereafter. And there is none for them on earth as a protector or helper. [Quran, Surah Tauba 9:74]

E) Whoever **disbelieved in God after his belief**—not he who is forced to do so while his heart is content with faith but he who opens his breast to disbelief - on such wrath from God, and theirs will be a great torment. [Quran, Surah Nahal 16:106]  
No doubt, in the hereafter they will be losers. [Quran, Surah Nahal 16:109]

F) 47:25 Surely those **who have turned back (to their state of *kufr*) after the guidance was made manifest to them**, Shaytan has enticed them and filled them with false hopes. [Quran, Surah Muhammad 47:25]

**The crux of the issue:**

**1. Quran gives absolute freedom of belief / disbelief. None can be forced to believe in Islam. None can be threatened with death for leaving Islam.**

**2. Quran mentions apostasy issues several times, but not even a single time Allah says that apostate should be killed. Please bear in mind that at almost every place Almighty God talks about punishment in the life hereafter.**

**3. The biggest irony is that almost all ayah that deal with apostasy were revealed in Medina where Islamic state was established. Imagine – even Surah Taubah (which was revealed during war time) speaks about apostasy but stop short of execution of apostates. In Medina Islamic state was established and criminal laws were implemented. In this situation what big deal it was to reveal that apostates should be killed?**

**4. What difficulty was there to command that punishment for apostasy is capital punishment, if Allah had so willed? But no, Quran never says so.**

**5. Any unbiased Muslim / non-Muslim after going through above ayah of Quran will agree that Quran does NOT prescribe death penalty for apostasy.**

**6. Death-for-apostasy directly contradicts several ayah of Quran: 2:256, 3:90, 4:137**

**7 Quran clears in 5:32 the situations when capital punishment can be given – one is murder; another is spreading mischief in land. A person can be given death for apostasy if his apostasy falls under the category of “*fasad*” i.e. spreading mischief on the land or better to say – “misbalancing the peace of earth”. It will be up to the Islamic state rulers to decide whether a particular case of apostasy can be termed as *fasad-fil-ard* i.e. spreading mischief in land. This term *fasad* or spreading mischief on land is abstract term and its implementation will vary from time to time and case to case. Important point to note is that then death punishment will be because of spreading mischief in land and NOT because of apostasy ALONE.**

4. Can death punishment be left for *hadees*?

Some people come up with childish arguments. They say, “death for apostasy is not in Quran but in *hadees*.” These people fail to realize that it’s clear from Quran that death for apostasy contradicts several ayah of Quran.

Life is extremely scared in Islam; a crime that deserves death would have been stated in Quran clearly.

When Almighty God mentions about various crimes and their punishments, some even less severe than death, for example cutting off hands for theft, flogging for wrong accusation of *zina*, then how come Allah will leave a more severe crime and its punishment to *hadees*? As I mentioned earlier that apostasy may or may not come under spreading mischief on land depending upon the situation. However, to say that apostasy per-se is crime and deserves death penalty is against Quran.

*Note: For a true “Muslim” or believer in God and His teachings this article is complete at this stage in its purpose. However, since most of the so-called-Muslims have abandoned Quran and actually don’t believe in Quran in totality (practically) hence further information is being provided.*

**E. Analysis of *hadees* that allegedly prove that apostates should be killed**

1. *Hadees* - “WHOEVER CHANGED HIS RELIGION, KILLHIM”

As should become clear in the sequel, the only hadith that legislates or prescribes as a law the death penalty for apostasy is found, with some variations, in Bukhari 2794, 6411, Abu Da`ud 3787, Tirmidhi 1378, Nasa`i 3991-7, Ibn Majah 2526, Ahmad 1776, 2420, 2813 (cf. Ahmad 1802).

*Ahmad ibn Muhammad bin Hanbal related to us: Isma`il bin Ibrahim related to us: Ayyub informed us from `Ikrimah that `Ali, peace be upon him, burned some people who abandoned Islam. This reached Ibn `Abbas and he said: I would not have burnt them with fire. Indeed, the Messenger of God said: `Do not punish with the punishment of God.` I would have killed them in accordance with the word of the Messenger of God. For, surely the Messenger of God said: `Whoever changed his religion kill him`." This reached `Ali, peace be upon him, and he said: `Woe to Ibn `Abbas`. (Abu Da`ud 3787)*

Grave problems with this *hadees*:

1. This *hadees* mentioned in different books gives contradictory statement in the last part. There are several differences in the various narrations of the hadith, some of which are important. As per different traditions Hazrat Ali said different things:

“Woe to Ibn `Abbas” (wayha Ibn `Abbas).

“Woe to the mother of Ibn `Abbas” (wayha umm Ibn `Abbas)

“Ibn `Abbas said the truth.” (sadaqa Ibn `Abbas).

2. One of the crucial narrator of this *hadees*, Ikrimah, the slave of Ibn `Abbas, has received mixed reviews from the scholars of hadith. Though some have considered or are reported to consider him reasonably trustworthy, others considered him a liar or at least untrustworthy. He is reported by many as liar, cheater and saying wrong words in the name of hazrat ibn 'Abbas.

3. The hadith requires us to believe that either Sayyidna `Ali did not know the prohibition by the Messenger of God against burning people or he knowingly acted contrary to it. Both possibilities are extremely remote.

And even if for some reason Hazrat `Ali was ignorant about the hadith against burning, some of the many other senior Companions alive at the time would have known about it. We expect them to bring the Prophet’s words to `Ali’s notice when he was deciding to burn people or after he had done so.

4. Quite apart from the hadith prohibiting the burning of people, there is no report of burning of a human being by the Prophet, or Abu Bakr, or `Umar, or `Uthman. So why would `Ali depart from the practice of his illustrious predecessors? Perhaps he became very angry at those people and wanted to punish them in the severest way. But it was not the style of the *khulafa rashidun* to act in anger in this way. `Ali’s character was closer to the one depicted in the tradition in which he was about to kill a disbeliever during a battle when the man spat on him. `Ali withdrew his sword and let the man go. When asked about why he withdrew his sword, `Ali replied in effect that the man’s spitting on him might have tainted the purity of his intention of fighting only for the sake of God. Hence killing people because of excessive anger is not expected from `Ali. It was something that came after the time of al-khulafa al-rashidun when the rulers became power-loving, dictatorial and unjust.

5. Furthermore, had `Ali burned some people many Muslims would have come to know about it, at least because of the unprecedented nature of the punishment. Consequently,

reports about the burning would have found their way in many books of history. But we do not seem to have any independent report about it in any reputed source.

There are several other reasons that put big question marks over the authenticity of this *hadees*. For details – read [this](#).

## 2. A few apostates killed because of murder

It should not be difficult for any person with common sense to understand that in the following *hadees* where prophet ordered execution of some apostates who have murdered people, the execution was because of murder and not apostasy. This is in sync with Quran and Prophets come to implement Quran only.

A group of people from ‘Ukal and ‘Urainah came to Madinah and accepted Islam. Subsequently they became apostate, killed and tortured a Shepherd [other version say shepherds] and mutilated their bodies. The Prophet ordered their arrest and they were executed. Sahih Al-Bukhari, op. cit., Vol.8, Hadees # 794, 795, 796, 797, pp. 519-522.

## **F. Prophet did not order to kill Apostates**

There are proofs from the book of *hadees* where Prophet did not order execution of apostates. Had death been divine punishment from Allah then definitely Prophet would have followed the commandment. This is in sync with the Quranic spirit that apostasy does not require death punishment.

1. The below *hadees* says that how a person accepted Islam and then left it, yet the prophet didn't order his execution.

*Yahya related to me from Malik from Muhammad bin al-Munkadir from Jabir bin ‘Abd Allah: A Bedouin gave a pledge of allegiance for embracing Islam. The next day he came with fever and so came to the Prophet, saying: "O Messenger of God! Cancel my pledge." The Prophet refused. He came to him again and said: "Cancel my pledge". He refused. He came to him another time and said: "Cancel my pledge." He refused again. The Bedouin then went out. Then the Messenger of God said: "Madinah is exactly like a furnace; it expels out the impurities and retains the good." (Muwatta 1377)*

2. Also we know the famous case of **‘Abd Allah bin Abi Sarh. He became a Muslims, used to write for the Messenger of God but Shaytan made him slip and he joined the disbelievers.** The Messenger of God ordered his execution on the day of the conquest (of



Makkah). This order was because of him being an open enemy and not just because of apostasy. But ‘Uthman bin ‘Affan sought protection for him and the Messenger of God granted it to him. Now, we see he was not finally executed. If apostasy deserved a mandatory capital punishment, then definitely Prophet would have got him executed. (Refer to Abu Da`ud3792, see also Nasa`i 4001)

No wonder a large number of people are coming open against this Anti-Quranic concept of death-for-apostasy. Read [this](#).

## **G. Conclusion**

**1. It is one of the wide spread myth that Islam prescribe death penalty for apostates.**

**2. Islam gives utmost freedom of faith; one is free to believe or disbelieve. 2:256; 18:29; 10:99**

**3. Though Quran mentions about the issue of apostasy several times but not for once it prescribes any worldly punishment for it. In fact, at all such places, Allah speaks about punishment in the life hereafter. Read 2:217, 3:86-90, 4:137, 9:66,74, 16:106-109, 47:25-27**

**4. Death for apostasy contradicts several ayah of Quran. For ex- 4:137; 2:256**

**5. Almost all ayah dealing with apostasy were revealed in Medina where Islamic state was established and Islamic criminal system was implemented. In this favorable situation it was not difficult for Allah to reveal that apostasy deserves death penalty.**

**6. God cannot leave it to hadees to prescribe divine punishment for apostasy when Quran clearly mentions about crimes and their punishments less severe compared to apostasy. 5:32-33; 5:38; 24:2**

**7. Few *hadees* that give the idea that apostates should be killed are full of contradictions and have several flaws.**

**8. Prophet Mohammad never ever ordered execution for apostasy. Several instances from *hadees* books prove that even though people left Islam, yet the Prophet did not order their execution.**

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