

United Nations General Assembly

RESOLUTION PROPOSAL

TO EMBED LANGUAGE CALLING
FOR SAFEGUARDS AGAINST
EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS ON
THE BASIS OF THOUGHT,
CONSCIENCE, RELIGION OR
BELIEF

January 2024



PROPOSAL

A. ISSUE

Apostasy: an act of refusing to continue to recognize, subscribe to, or obey a faith; renouncing a faith (typically the religion with which the majority of a nation's population identifies)

Blasphemy: an act of insulting, disparaging, or displaying contempt or irreverence towards a religion and/or its sacred figures, texts, or objects

Currently, there are at least 11 nations that maintain the death penalty for apostasy and/or blasphemy: Afghanistan, Brunei, Iran, Maldives, Mauritania, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.¹ Some of the 11 above-listed nations classify only apostasy as a capital offense, either explicitly via penal codes' inclusion of "apostasy" as a crime (Qatar, Yemen) or implicitly via provisions requiring Sharia punishments for religious offenses outlined in Islamic jurisprudence (Maldives, Somalia, United Arab Emirates). Brunei only directly identifies apostasy as a capital offense, however its definition of apostasy (*irtidad*) includes conduct which falls more under the scope of blasphemy (i.e., insulting the Muslim faith and religious figures) and it can therefore be deduced that allegedly blasphemous conduct can be punishable via execution. Iran's penal code only mandates the death penalty specifically for blasphemy; it indirectly stipulates the death penalty for apostasy by requiring judges to issue sentences for religious offenses in line with Sharia jurisprudence. It is noteworthy, however, that Iran equates criticism/questioning of Islam (blasphemy) with apostasy and therefore persons executed for blasphemy can also be deemed apostates. Saudi Arabia, unlike the other countries listed herein, does not have a written penal code; however, customary

judicial precedent identifies apostasy and blasphemy as religious offenses to be penalized in accordance with Sharia law and therefore such conduct carries the risk of capital punishment. Mauritania is the only country whose legislation specifically mandates the death penalty for both apostasy and blasphemy, and Pakistan is the sole country which stipulates the death penalty for blasphemy rather than apostasy. Afghanistan, currently under control of the Islamist militant Taliban following American troops' withdrawal in August 2021, is in a state of relative uncertainty regarding legal permissions and prohibitions. The nation's most recent penal code enacted by the previous government in 2017 does not list any faith-related capital offenses; however, the federal constitution permits Sharia courts to punish religious crimes (i.e., apostasy and blasphemy) in line with Islamic precepts when there is an absence of customary law addressing such offenses.²

Two countries do not mandate capital punishment for apostasy or blasphemy on a nationwide level but have multiple states whose penal codes prescribe such penalties: Nigeria and Malaysia. In Nigeria, 12 states in the predominantly Muslim northern half of the country have enacted criminal provisions stipulating the death penalty for apostasy and/or blasphemy: Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara.³ In Malaysia, the states of Kelantan and Terengganu have laws categorizing apostasy as a capital offense, though these legislations remain dormant and the Attorney General noted that capital punishment in these states cannot be enforced in the absence of a constitutional amendment permitting it.⁴

Approximately 40% of United Nations Member States have laws criminalizing blasphemy, including 90% of all Middle East/North African countries, 38% of Sub-Saharan African countries, 34% of Asia-Pacific countries, 34% of countries in the Americas, and 31% of European countries.⁵

"...five special procedure mandate holders voiced concern at State actions that were incompatible with freedoms of religion, belief, opinion and expression, including the use of anti-blasphemy and anti-apostasy laws, which rendered religious or belief minorities, including atheists and dissenters, vulnerable to discrimination and violence."⁶

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

With regards to the above we are proposing to embed language into the existing UNGA resolution on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. The language that will be embedded draws from reports by the UN Secretary General and UN Special Procedures and are referenced in the footnotes.

THE UNGA RESOLUTION ON EXTRAJUDICIAL, SUMMARY OR ARBITRARY EXECUTIONS

Penholder(s): Sweden

Logistical Concern(s): Sweden would like the resolution to pass by without triggering a vote.

Motivation(s): The call for a vote last voting session, was not triggered by the new freedom of religion or belief language introduced and moreover received support from diverse countries, including Saudi Arabia. In light of the increase of extrajudicial executions occurring around the world and ignited by posts on social media, the new language proposed will offer additional support to take concrete action measures to protect life.

The December 2022 United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Extrajudicial,

summary or arbitrary executions noted that it was "deeply concerned about acts that can amount to extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions committed against persons exercising their rights to peaceful assembly, freedom of religion or belief and freedom of expression..." The Resolution additionally urges nations to "ensure the effective protection to the right to life of all persons, to conduct, when required by obligations under international law, prompt, exhaustive and impartial investigations into all killings, including those targeted at specific groups of persons, such as [...] killings of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities."⁷

Proposed language highlighted in green:

Preamble

Pp12 *Noting with alarm* the growing number of civilians and persons hors de combat killed in situations of armed conflict and internal strife and strongly condemning such executions when they take place, and that women and girls, persons with disabilities and victims of violence on the basis of their religion or belief, including non-believers, are disproportionately affected by conflict, as recognized in Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000 on women and peace and security, Council resolution 2475 (2019) of 20 June 2019 on the protection of persons with disabilities in conflict, Security Council resolution 2686 (2023) and other resolutions on the matter,

Pp15 *Deeply concerned* about acts that can amount to extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions committed against persons exercising their rights to peaceful assembly, freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief and freedom of expression and against human rights defenders in all regions of the world,

Pp 19. *Underlining* the need to promote, protect and respect human rights and the rights to freedom of opinion, expression,

and freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief and to fight against all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on conscience, religion or belief.

Pp19 *Recognising* the importance of promoting freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief and freedom of expression in preventing extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions stemming from accusations of apostasy or blasphemy.

Pp20 *Recognising* the importance of repealing laws which criminalise freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief and freedom of expression in preventing extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions on the grounds of religion or belief.

Pp20 *Recognising* the importance of repealing the death penalty for apostasy and blasphemy, in law and in practice, to prevent extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions based on thought, conscience, religion and belief.

Main Text

XX. *Urges* States to take the necessary measures to address the root causes of acts that could amount to extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions committed against persons for exercising their rights to peaceful assembly, freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief and freedom of expression, by fully promoting, protecting and respecting human rights including by decriminalising apostasy and blasphemy in line with the Rabat Plan of Action.

XXI. B1. *Encourages* States to adopt the guidance provided by the Beirut Declaration on Faith for Rights and its 18 commitments to mobilize faith-based actors to promote the human rights framework and combat violence towards individuals on the grounds of their choice or expression of religion or belief.

XXII. C1. *Emphasizes* that, to prevent extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions motivated by religion, States should take effective measures to repeal laws which provide for the death penalty for religious offences and which criminalize conversion and expression of religion or belief; (A/HRC/40/58)”

XXIII. C2. *Recognises* that to prevent extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, all members of the society must be fully engaged, and calls upon States to adopt guidelines that could help to promote the human rights framework and combat violence, such as the Beirut Declaration and the Faith for Rights framework.

¹ UN News, “UN human rights chief calls on all nations to abolish death penalty”, 28 February 2023. ; United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), *Blasphemy Law Compendium*, 2023.

² Chris Alexander, Mai Sato, Nadirsyah Hosen, & James McLaren, *Killing in the Name of God: State-sanctioned Violations of Religious Freedom*, Monash University & Elios Justice, October 2021.

³ Heather Bourbeau, Dr. Muhammad Sani Umar, & Peter Bauman, *Shari’ah Criminal Law in Northern Nigeria*, USCIRF, December 2019.

⁴ End Blasphemy Laws, *Malaysia*.

⁵ Jubilee Campaign [YouTube], “Freedom to Believe Or Not | A Parliamentary Fringe Event to the 2022 UK FoRB Ministerial”, 8 August 2022.

⁶ *Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance: follow-up to and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action*.

⁷ United Nations General Assembly, *Extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions*, A/RES/77/218, 15 December 2022.

C. RATIONALE

In August 2019, the Human Rights Council reported that “a number of States have expanded the application of the death penalty to behavior and conduct the criminalization of which may already be in breach of the International Covenant on

Civil and Political Rights, such as adultery, consensual same-sex relations, blasphemy and apostasy. Implementation of such cases could thus constitute arbitrary deprivation of life.”

Even when and where there is a moratorium on the death penalty in place, “such laws can have a significant chilling effect on the legitimate exercise of human rights, in particular by religious or sexual minorities”.⁸ Indeed, in Mauritania, where a de facto moratorium on the death penalty has been in place since 1987, blogger Mohamed Cheikh Ould Mkhaitir was convicted of apostasy and sentenced to death as recently as December 2014 for an article he wrote in which he criticized the use of Islam to justify slavery and the caste system in Mauritania.¹⁰ Though his death sentence was commuted to two years’ imprisonment in 2017, Muslim clerics issued fatwas calling for his execution¹¹, and a businessman offered a 10,000 ouguiya reward for any individual who could kill Mkhaitir.¹² Mkhaitir was finally released from prison in July 2019. Most recently, in July 2023, 19-year-old Mauritanian high school student Mariya Oubed was charged with blasphemy on allegations that she had written derogatory remarks about the Prophet on a mock exam paper. Despite Mariya’s young age, the Association of Mauritanian Ulama (religious scholars) castigated the government for its leniency towards the girl and issued a fatwa for her execution if her guilt was ‘proven’. Mariya’s family has publicly appealed for clemency, noting the girl’s psychological problems, but their pleas have fallen on deaf ears.¹³

In many of the nations in which the death penalty is prescribed for apostasy and blasphemy, while this sentence is handed out and prisoners are placed on death row, the execution is rarely, if ever, carried out. Often, however, legal codification of capital punishment for apostasy and blasphemy emboldens state and non-state actors to commit extrajudicial killings of alleged blasphemers and apostates. In May 2022,

Nigerian Christian college student Deborah Yakubu Samuel was stoned to death and set on fire by her Muslim classmates who claimed she had committed blasphemy a day earlier when she questioned why her class’ WhatsApp group was discussing religious affairs and asserted that she was able to pass her exams by believing in Jesus.¹⁴ Just over a year after Deborah’s killing, Nigerian butcher Usman Buda was stoned to death by a mob angered over allegedly blasphemous remarks he made while arguing with a local market trader.¹⁵

Meanwhile, in Pakistan in 2020, Ahmadi Muslim man Tahir Ahmad Naseem was shot and killed by a teenager who had snuck into the court room where Naseem was on trial for allegedly committing blasphemy by engaging in a religious debate over Facebook.¹⁶ A year later, in July 2021, a rookie Pakistani police constable “hacked to death” a man named Muhammad Waqas who had previously been charged with blasphemy in 2016 and subsequently acquitted.¹⁷ In August 2023, the Christian community of Jaranwala, Punjab, was targeted for mob activity following allegations that two local Christian brothers had written their names and blasphemous remarks on torn pages of the Quran which they subsequently disposed of in the streets.¹⁸ Despite the absence of proof of these accusations - and the absurd suggestion that a Pakistani Christian would willfully incriminate himself/herself by writing their name on desecrated holy text in a nation where such conduct is liable to extrajudicial lynching - within hours the entire community erupted in furor. Videos circulating on social media depicted mob participants scaling church walls, removing crosses, and setting fire to various buildings; in all, no fewer than 26 churches and nearly 100 Christian homes were destroyed. The criminality was exacerbated by inconsistent remarks by local Muslim leaders, some of whom joined officials in dispelling the mob, and some of whom summoned irate Muslims to mosques and provoked them to participate in the frenzied activities.¹⁹

The trend towards abolition of capital punishment for apostasy and blasphemy has experienced some setbacks as of late. In Iran in 2023, Yousef Mehrdad and Seyyed Sadrollah Fazeli-Zare were executed in accordance with the death sentence for blasphemy issued to them two years earlier for their creation of a social media group called “Critique of Superstition and Religion”.²⁰ The execution of Mehrdad and Fazeli-Zare was a disgraceful turn of events as it effectively ended the nation’s decade-long moratorium on the death penalty for all criminal conduct with the exception of egregious drug offenses and murder. In December 2022, Yemen voted against the UNGA Resolution for a moratorium on the use of the death penalty, a further step backwards from its vote of abstention two years prior in 2020.²¹ Also in December 2022, Nigeria placed a vote of abstention regarding the UNGA Resolution on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary execution, which the nation voted in favor of in 2020.²²

We hold the belief that laws should protect the rights of belief holders and people of faith rather than protect religion itself, and we refer to Dr. Mai Sato’s²³ remarks at one of our Human Rights Council 49th Session side events that “the idea that the sacred needs forceful protection – and in some cases to the extent of lethal violence – is created, or at the very least, legitimized in these societies by the presence of the death penalty for religious offenses.”²⁴ It is with this notion that we would also like to refer to some remarks made by Rose Richter, Special Advisor to Dr. Ahmed Shaheed, the Former United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief. Speaking at Jubilee Campaign’s UK FoRB Ministerial fringe event in July 2022, Richter noted that, “in reality, anti-blasphemy laws are generally focused on the degree to which speech causes offense or outrage to religious sentiments, and not to the extent to which that speech undermines the safety or quality of life of the individuals holding such views”.²⁵ In

summary, anti-blasphemy laws are often justified as protecting individual belief-holders, when in reality they appear to protect only the majority religious sentiments themselves, and do so at the detriment of the rights to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion of faith minorities with dissenting beliefs.

It is worth noting that all of the nations identified in this report in which capital punishment may be imposed as the penalty for apostasy and/or blasphemy - pursuant to legislation explicitly or implicitly criminalizing such conduct, or to unwritten customary practice - are member nations of the the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. Moreover, in nearly half (32) of the 71 nations that criminalize blasphemy, the majority religion is Islam. Half of the world’s 49 Muslim-majority nations similarly criminalize apostasy; moreover, all nations with apostasy laws are majority Muslim, except for India - where approximately 80% of citizens identify with Hinduism, followed by Islam (14%) - and Nigeria where the religious identity of civilians is split relatively equally between Muslim (50%) and Christian (48%) followed by minority faiths (2%). Perhaps the most important fact to note, however, is that in 12 of the 13 nations in which the death penalty is an available punishment for apostasy and blasphemy, the national constitutions designate Islam as the official religion, and the vast majority of civilians identify as Muslims.²⁶ The sole exception is Nigeria, whose constitution prohibits the selection of a state-sanctioned religion.

We echo remarks from Dr. Mai Sato, however, that “there’s a growing consensus that the Qur’an prescribes no temporal punishment for offenses against religion.” Dr. Sato expounded on this observation, stating the following:

“In all 12 jurisdictions the death penalty for religious offenses either stems from or is justified on the basis of Islamic law. In our report, we argue that Islamic

law and human rights are fully reconcilable. [...] The Qur'an is silent on any punishment for *ridā* – and *ridā* means turning back from Islam, which is probably the closest to what is known in the west as 'religious offenses', including offenses such as apostasy and blasphemy.”²⁷

We also would like to emphasize remarks of Pakistani Judge Muhammad Khalid Masud²⁸, who stated the following:

“The general consensus as previously Dr. Sato has mentioned is that there is a problem with blasphemy and apostasy laws; scholars found that it is against the spirit of Islamic law, because the two primary sources of the Islamic law are the Qur'an and the Prophet's sayings or Prophet's life, and both of them do not support any punishment, do not speak of the death penalty for these two crimes that have been condemned but criminalized mostly in the late medieval period and in the modern period.”²⁹

Indeed, many verses in the Qur'an can be interpreted to promote religious freedom, stating “to you be your way and to me mine” (109:1-6), “there shall be no compulsion in religion” (2:256), and “and whoever wills – let him disbelieve” (18:29). Moreover, certain excerpts from the Qur'an indicate that religious offenses are not to be punished temporally but in the “Hereafter” (i.e., 16:106-109; 2:217).³⁰ In Surah An-Nisa 4:137, Allah describes a situation in which someone “believes, then disbelieves, then increases in disbelief”, warning them that such individuals will have a painful punishment in the Hereafter; he makes no remarks about penalizing this individual with death, but suggests that an individual will face the result of their faith not in the physical world but in the afterlife.

protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty, A/HRC/42/28, 28 August 2019.

⁹ World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, Together against the death penalty, Mauritanian Association for Human Rights, & The Advocates for Human Rights, *Statement on the occasion of the adoption of the UPR report of Mauritania*, 2 August 2021.

¹⁰ Amnesty International, “I slept with voices demanding my death and woke up with shouts calling for me to be killed”, 28 August 2019.

¹¹ Reuters, “Mauritanian clerics urge for blogger's death penalty to be applied”, 13 November 2016.

¹² Memri, “Enforcement Of Shari'a Law In The Muslim World For Insulting Islam, Prophet Muhammad: A Review Of Recent Arrests, Imprisonment, Flogging, Death Sentences”, 12 January 2015.

¹³ Mariam Ahmed Abbe, “A Mauritanian high school student faces the death penalty over blasphemy”, *Global Voices*, 29 August 2023.

¹⁴ Jubilee Campaign, *Imposition of Capital Punishment for Apostasy, Blasphemy, and Religious Offenses in the 21st Century*, May 2022.

¹⁵ Luminous Jannamike, “Sokoto 'Blasphemy' Killing: Tragic end of Buda stoned to death by extremists”, *Vanguard Nigeria*, 2 July 2023.

¹⁶ Emma Graham-Harrison, “'He was such a kind soul': daughter's fight for US man killed at Pakistan blasphemy trial”, *The Guardian*, 30 August 2020.

¹⁷ David Averre, “Man cleared of committing blasphemy in Pakistan is hacked to death 'by policemen who refused to believe he was innocent'”, *Daily Mail*, 3 July 2021.

¹⁸ Abid Hussain, “Mobs burn Christian churches, homes in Pakistan after blasphemy allegations”, *Al Jazeera*, 16 August 2023.

¹⁹ Asif Aqeel & Brian Isaac Asaph, “After 26 Churches Burned, Pakistan Christians Brace for More Blasphemy Accusations”, *Christianity Today*, 23 August 2023.

²⁰ Jon Gambrell, “Iran hangs 2 in rare blasphemy case as executions surge”, *Associated Press*, 8 May 2023.

²¹ World Coalition against the Death Penalty, “Statement on the Adoption of the 8th UN General Assembly Resolution for a Moratorium on the Use of the Death Penalty”, 17 December 2020. ; World Coalition against the Death Penalty, “9th Resolution for a moratorium on the death penalty: the trend is crowing”, 20 December 2022.

²² United Nations General Assembly, *46th plenary meeting, A/75/PV.46*, 16 December 2020. ; UNGA, *54th plenary meeting, A/77/PV.54*, 15 December 2022.

²³ Co-author of *Killing in the Name of God: State-Sanctioned Violations of Religious Freedom*.

²⁴ Jubilee Campaign [YouTube], “#HRC49 Protecting Life: Repealing the Death Penalty for Apostasy and Blasphemy”, 30 March 2022.

²⁵ *Supra* note 5.

²⁶ Ahmet T. Kuru, “Execution for a Facebook post? Why blasphemy is a capital offense in some Muslim countries”, *The Conversation*, 20 February 2020.

²⁷ *Supra* note 24.

²⁸ Former Director General, Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Islamabad; Former Chairman, Council of Islamic Ideology, Pakistan; Former Academic Director, International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World, The Netherlands; Current Ad Hoc Member, Shariat Appellate Bench, Supreme Court of Pakistan.

²⁹ *Supra* note 24.

³⁰ *Supra* note 14.

³¹ Abu Amina Elias, “Did the Prophet kill apostates who renounce Islam?”, *Faith in Allah*, 1 April 2013.

⁸ United Nations Human Rights Council, *Capital punishment and the implementation of the safeguards guaranteeing*

D. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

“Repealing those laws that put lives at risk must be given the highest priority. Moreover, where domestic laws provide for the death penalty for religious offence, it is more likely that the existence of such laws will encourage vigilante mobs or zealots to murder those alleged to have violated those laws.”³²

“The death penalty should never be imposed as a sanction for non-violent conduct such as apostasy, blasphemy, witchcraft, adultery and same-sex relations.”³³

“Research and advocacy on the death penalty tend to treat individuals on death row as a homogenous group and have paid little attention to how certain existing capital offences, including as they exist in some countries, same-sex sexual acts and blasphemy, target specific minorities. Little information is available on prisoners on death row, including their gender, sexual orientation, as well as their ethnic and religious identities.”³⁴

“The Government of the Sudan made amendments to the Criminal Code of 1991, abolishing several provisions that restricted personal freedoms and impeded women's rights, including criminalizing actions that discriminate against individuals on the basis of gender and eradicating the crime of apostasy, which carried the death penalty. The amendments provided for better protection of individual rights.”³⁵

of religion or belief, A/HRC/40/58, 5 March 2019.

³³ United Nations General Assembly, *Moratorium on the use of the death penalty - Report of the Secretary General, A/75/309*, 13 August 2020.

³⁴ United Nations General Assembly, *Report of the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, A/76/264*, 3 August 2021.

³⁵ United Nations General Assembly, *Budget performance of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur for the period from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020, A/75/865*, 28 April 2021.

CHARTER IN SUPPORT OF EMBEDDING FORB LANGUAGE INTO UNGA RESOLUTION ON EXTRAJUDICIAL, SUMMARY OR ARBITRARY EXECUTIONS

As individuals and organizations who represent diverse religious, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds, we stand united in our goal of promoting freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, and expression for everyone.

We firmly oppose laws that restrict an individual's right to choose a faith, practice a faith, change their religion, not have a religion, tell others about their beliefs and practices, or openly debate and discuss aspects of faith or belief. Restricting the freedom to choose one's religion, to change it or to question religion or belief doctrines is an assault on the very core of human nature.

Today at least 70 countries criminalise blasphemy and at least 21 countries criminalize apostasy, including 13 countries which maintain federal and/or regional legislations mandating the death penalty for apostasy and/or blasphemy: the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Brunei Darussalam, the Islamic Republic of Iran, two states in the Federation of Malaysia, the Republic of Maldives, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, several states in the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan,

³² United Nations Human Rights Council, *Freedom of religion or belief**, ** Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom

the State of Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Federal Republic of Somalia, United Arab Emirates, and the Republic of Yemen.³⁶

Even where the death penalty is not applied it has a “chilling effect” on the legitimate exercise of fundamental human rights as noted by the UN Secretary General in his report on the death penalty.³⁷ It is used to justify the incommunicado detention, physical and psychological torture, denial of legal representation and medical care, and prolonged detention that often coincide with death sentences on the grounds of religion or belief.

The UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief has noted how where domestic laws provide for the death penalty for apostasy or blasphemy, “it is more likely that the existence of such laws will encourage vigilante mobs or zealots to murder those alleged to have violated those laws.”³⁸

We therefore call on States to:

- *Embed* language into the biennial UN General Assembly resolution on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, demanding the removal of the punishment of the death penalty, both in practice and in law, for apostasy or blasphemy.
- *Take note* of the UN Human Rights Council statement of 9 March 2021, signed by over 50 UN member states which emphasises that there are no circumstances in which the death penalty should ever be imposed or carried out as a sanction against persons for exercising their human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- *Release* individuals currently on death row or otherwise imprisoned for these offences.
- *Speak* with one voice in the UN and other

- other multilateral fora and condemn unequivocally the imposition of the death penalty for the exercise of fundamental freedoms including freedom of religion or belief.

We call on civil society working for the repeal of the death penalty to:

- *Support* embedding language into the biennial UN General Assembly resolution on the extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, demanding the removal of the punishment of the death penalty, both in practice and in law, for apostasy or blasphemy.
- *Take note* of the UN Special Procedures’ recommendations and the Human Rights Council statement of 9 March 2021, signed by over 50 UN member states, all pointing to how capital offences for apostasy and blasphemy are used to target specific minorities.
- *Speak* with one voice in the UN and other multilateral fora and condemn unequivocally the imposition of the death penalty for the exercise of fundamental freedoms including freedom of religion or belief, in law and practice.

Organization Signatories:

ADO Alevi Philosophy Center Association • Adyan Foundation • Alliance of Former Muslims (Ireland) • American Humanist Association • Asian Children’s Education Fellowship • Baptist World Alliance • Black Non-Believers • CaoDai Today • Center for Inquiry • Center for Pluralism • Central Committee of Ex-Muslims of Scandinavia • Christian Freedom International • Church in Chains • Church of Scientology National Affairs Office • Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience • Coptic Solidarity • Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain • Council of Ex-Muslims of Sri Lanka • Eglise Protestante d’Algérie • Eleos Justice • European Office Church of

- *Scientology for Public Affairs and Human Rights*
- *Ex-Muslims of India*
- *Ex-Muslims of North America*
- *Ex-Muslims of Toronto*
- *Faithless Hijabi*
- *Federation of National Christian Nepal*
- *Forum for Religious Freedom - Europe*
- *Foundation for Religious Freedom*
- *Fundacion para la Mejora de la Vida, la Cultura y la Sociedad*
- *Genocide Watch*
- *Humanists Association of Sri Lanka*
- *Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust*
- *International Christian Concern*
- *International Human Rights Committee*
- *International Institute for Religious Freedom*
- *International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief Steering Group*
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- *Jubilee Campaign USA*
- *LEAH Foundation*
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- *M.A.L.I. Morocco*
- *Muslims for Progressive Values*
- *Muslim Women Speakers*
- *National Association of Evangelicals*
- *Parity*
- *Prayer Pioneers*
- *Rumi Forum*
- *Secular Coalition for America*
- *Set My People Free*
- *Society for Humanistic Judaism*
- *The Clergy Project*
- *The Washington Times Foundation*
- *Voice for Justice*
- *Widows and Orphans*
- *World Evangelical Alliance*

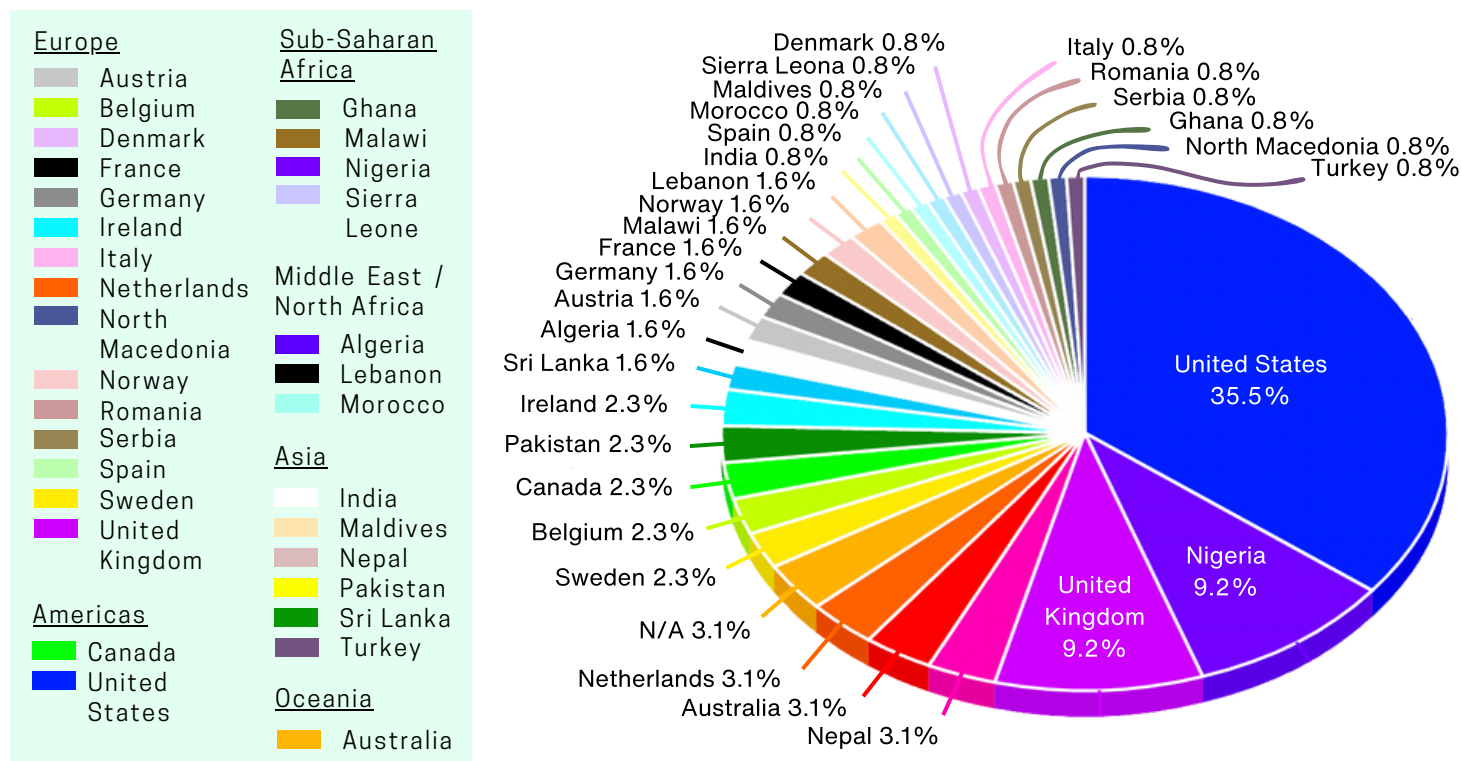
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- Kashif Mirza – American Muslim & Multifaith Women’s Empowerment Council
- Khan Sher Zaman Khan
- Kola Alapinni – Barrister & Solicitor, Supreme Court of Nigeria; General Counsel and Director of Operations, Foundation for Religious Freedom
- Lauren Homer – President, Law and Liberty Trust
- Magid Girgis
- Marco Munna
- Mikael Jespersen
- Mohamed Cheikh Ould Mkhaitir – Blogger/Journalist, Mauritanian survivor of sentencing for apostasy
- M.T. Hengst, LL.M.
- Nadeem Anthony
- Nadine Maenza – Former Chair, United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF); President, International Religious Freedom Secretariat
- Nayla Tabbara – President, Adyan Foundation
- Patrice Pederson – President, First Freedom Foundation
- Paul Diamond – UK Barrister
- Paul Marshall – Wilson Professor of Religious Freedom, Baylor University
- Rev. Marian Edmonds-Allen – Executive Director, Parity
- Rev. Susan Taylor – Church of Scientology National Affairs Office
- Rev. Youssef Ourahmane – Vice President, Eglise protestante d’Algérie
- Rita Thapa Magar – Federation of National Christian Nepal
- Rob Dale – Humanists UK
- Rouf Gazali
- Sara Ghaboush
- Sara Pierson
- Scott Morgan – President, Red Eagle Enterprises
- Scott Stearman – UN Representative, Baptist World Alliance
- Skarphendinn Holm
- Soraya Deen – Founder, Muslim Women Speakers
- Taiye Abu
- Vesna Marković – Former Member of Parliament, Serbia
- Victoria Sheahan – Chaplain Reverend, CaoDai Today

Distribution of Support - Respondents’ Countries
As of January 2024



Adyan Foundation



Alliance of Former Muslims (Ireland)



American Humanist Association



Asian Children Education Fellowship



Baptist World Alliance



Black Non-Believers



Center for Inquiry



Center for Pluralism



Central Committee of Ex-Muslims of Scandinavia



Christian Freedom International



Church in Chains



Church of Scientology



CAP Freedom of Conscience



Coptic Solidarity



Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain



Council of Ex-Muslims of Sri Lanka



Evangelical Protestant Church of Algeria



Elios Justice



Ex-Muslims of India



Ex-Muslims of North America



Ex-Muslims of Toronto



Faithless Hijabi



Federation of National Christian Nepal



Forum for Religious Freedom - Europe



Foundation for Religious Freedom



Fundacion para la Mejora de la Vida, la Cultura y la Sociedad



Genocide Watch



Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust



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International Institute for Religious Freedom



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Society for Humanistic Judaism



The Clergy Project



The Washington Times Foundation



Voice for Justice



Widows & Orphans



World Evangelical Alliance



Jubilee Campaign is a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 2003. Our work focuses on promoting the rights of religious minorities and ethnic minorities and raising the status of vulnerable women and children - to protect them from bodily harm and sexual exploitation.

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