# 156099 - A Christian student is objecting to the ruling of execution in Islam – her comments and our response to them

**the question**

Why does Islam permit execution, even if that is for reasons that dictate execution? Doesn’t this soul belong to Allah alone? I do not believe what it says in the Qur’an about execution. Please give me a logical answer.

**Detailed answer**

Praise be to Allah.

1.

It is good that questions from non-Muslims are put to those who specialise in Islamic knowledge, to ask them about the rulings of Islam and the wisdom behind these rulings. This is better for them than asking these questions of ordinary Muslims who may be overcome by emotion and speak without knowledge. Nevertheless, we hope that every questioner will be sincerely prepared to accept the truth when he finds it, and that it will not be a question solely for the purpose of criticism and objection.

2.

Let us begin our answer with what the questioner mentioned, which is “Doesn’t this soul belong to Allah alone?” We say: Yes, it does belong to Allah alone, and hence it is not to be killed except by the leave of its owner, namely Allah. If you see in the laws of Allah, may He be exalted, any killing of a soul that is not done by Allah’s leave, then this would be something embarrassing for us, because then you would have established proof against us!

Hence every time we say that So-and-so deserves to be killed or to have the hadd punishment of

execution carried out against him, if that is not in accordance with the laws of Allah and by His leave as mentioned in His Holy Book or on the lips of His Messenger who was sent by Him to His slaves with His laws, then it is injustice and transgression. In that case you have the right to object to the one who says that, no matter who he is, and you and others have the right to criticise the one who does that or thinks of it.

But if permission to execute the one who deserves to be executed, or the command to do so, is something that Allah has prescribed for His slaves in His holy Book, or on the lips of His Messenger, the most truthful one, then there is no room for you to ask such questions, because the easy and straightforward answer is that this soul of whom you are speaking belongs to the Lord of the Worlds; it is He Who gave it life and it is He Who has prescribed that it is to be executed in this situation.

In the answer to question no. 20824 we have explained the reasons for the punishment of execution in sharee'ah; please read this information there.

3.

So as to be fair-minded to other people, and be fair and just in our judgement of beliefs and ideas that we do not share, we must do two things

Firstly: we should see the image of the other person as it really is, complete and not lacking, realistic and not distorted.

Secondly: we should not reject from the other person that which we accept from ourselves or from those with whom we are pleased.

If we want to be fair-minded regarding the rulings of Islam, then we must examine the cases in which Islam permits killing or execution, or enjoins it, then we must complete the picture by finding out the measures and rulings that have been set out to prevent unlawful killing and protect society from that.

Among the great rulings of Islam that are aimed at protecting human life are the following:

(a) The prohibition on suicide and killing oneself

(b) The prohibition on everything that is harmful to the body and may lead to self-destruction, such as alcohol and drugs

(c) The prohibition on abortion

(d) The prohibition on unlawful killing. There is a stern warning against killing souls that are protected according to Islamic law, such as the words of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, (interpretation of the meaning): “And whoever kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell to abide therein, and the Wrath and the Curse of Allah are upon him, and a great punishment is prepared for him” [an-Nisa’ 4:93]. That even includes killing non-Muslims with whom the Muslims have treaties or who are living under Muslim rule. Concerning that, our Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever kills a non-Muslim with whose people the Muslims have a (peace) treaty will not smell the fragrance of Paradise, even though its fragrance may be detected from a distance of forty years.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari (2995).

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

What is meant is: a non-Muslim who has a treaty with the Muslims, whether it is an agreement to pay jizyah, a truce with a ruler, or a guarantee of protection from a Muslim.

End quote from Fath al-Baari (1/259)

(e) Hadd punishments are to be warded off where there is any doubt (that an offence occurred). If there is any doubt about a hadd punishment of execution, in such cases the person who is subject to that punishment is not to be executed, because of that doubt which wards off the hadd punishment of execution from him.

(f) The hadd punishment of execution is reserved only for the most serious crimes, such as apostasy, zina (unlawful sex) on the part of a married person, and unlawful killing (murder), out of recognition of the great importance of religion, honour and human life. There are many major sins for which the hadd punishment is not execution, such as riba (usury), theft, slander of chaste

women, gossip and many others. If Islam were as the unjust Western media portrays it, then the hadd punishment of execution would be for every sin and crime. Allah forbid that Islam should be such, when it has brought the most just and equitable rulings.

(g) There is a stern warning against killing, and it is taught that it may result in the killer becoming a disbeliever who is beyond the pale of Islam, and that is when he regards killing and murder as permissible, and does not forbid that to himself, because of his great audacity in killing a soul who was protected by sharee'ah. Concerning that our Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "The believer's religious commitment will remain sound (and he is subject to the mercy of Allah) so long as he does not shed blood that it is forbidden to shed." Narrated by al-Bukhaari (6469).

(h) The decision to carry out the hadd punishment in Islam is not to be made by ordinary individuals; rather that is something only for shar'i judges (qaadis) and people in authority.

Al-Qurtubi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

There is no difference of opinion among the scholars that retaliatory punishment of killing (qisaas) can only be carried out by people in authority who have been given the power to carry out qisaas and hadd punishments, and so on.

End quote from Tafseer al-Qurtubi (2/245)

If the matter of execution were left to people, so that each person would settle his own scores, then the killing would go beyond simple retaliation and the state of affairs would be as it was during the Jaahiliyyah; ten people would be killed in return for one, and one or more men would be killed in return for a woman, and all of these victims would have been killed wrongfully. But in Islam it is essential to prove that the accused did indeed kill the victim, and it is essential to establish that there is no doubt about that, and only then does he deserve to be executed. And the matter does not stop there; rather the family of the slain are encouraged to freely pardon the killer, or to accept the diyah (blood money, instead of calling for the killer to be executed). Islamic teaching encourages the next of kin of the victim to pardon the killer, and promises them an

immense reward if they do that, but it allows them to accept a deal giving them more than the prescribed blood money in order to win their agreement not to carry out the sentence of execution on the killer. Of course this encouragement to pardon and to seek intercession with the next of kin of the victim is not applicable in cases where the killer is a violent criminal who shows no signs of repentance or remorse for his deed. In fact in such cases it is prohibited to intercede for him, and he is to be executed in order to protect people's lives. Concerning that Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): "And there is (a saving of) life for you in Al-Qisas (the Law of Equality in punishment), O men of understanding, that you may become Al-Muttaqoon (the pious" [al-Baqarah 2:179]. This eloquent sentence sums up the wisdom behind qisaas or retaliatory execution of the killer, in a more eloquent and deep manner than the saying that was current during the Jaahiliyyah.

Shaykh ash-Shinqeeti (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

One of the teachings of the Qur'an which guides to that which is best is qisaas, because if a person gets angry and wants to kill someone else, but then he remembers that if he kills him, he will be killed (executed) in return, he will fear the consequences and thus will refrain from killing him. So the one whom he wanted to kill will live, and he himself will also live, because he did not kill him and was not killed in retaliation. And executing the killer will result in saving the lives of many people, whose number no one knows except Allah, as we have stated above. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): "And there is (a saving of) life for you in Al-Qisas (the Law of Equality in punishment), O men of understanding, that you may become Al-Muttaqoon (the pious" [al-Baqarah 2:179]. Undoubtedly this is one of the most equitable and fair of ways, and thus it has been noted throughout the world, in the past and at present, how little murder occurs in countries that are ruled in accordance with the Book of Allah, because qisaas is a deterrent to the crime of murder, as Allah says in the verse quoted above.

What the enemies of Islam claim, that qisaas is not in accordance with wisdom, because it reduces the numbers of people in society by killing a second person after the first one died, and that he should be punished in a way other than execution, such as being imprisoned, and he may father a

child whilst he is detained, thus increasing the numbers of people in society, all of that is an invalid argument and is devoid of wisdom, because detention does not deter people from killing, and if the punishment did not serve as a deterrent, then the foolish people would commit a lot of murders, thus exacerbating the reduction in numbers as a result of widespread killing.

End quote from Adwa' al-Bayaan (3/31, 32)

4.

Moreover, we say to you: do you know that the number of people killed at the time of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), of both Muslims and disbelievers – including the disbelievers who were slain in battle – was no more than one thousand people on both sides? Whereas you will find that thousands of people are killed in a single year under Western laws that prohibit qisaas (retaliatory execution).

5.

This objection is very strange on the part of a woman who follows the Christian religion and obviously must believe what it says in the Bible, which clearly prescribes execution. In fact it contains a command to kill entire nations, men women and children.

In the twentieth chapter of the book of Deuteronomy (v. 10 ff) it says:

"[10] When you march up to attack a city, make its people an offer of peace. [11] If they accept and open their gates, all the people in it shall be subject to forced labor and shall work for you. [12] If they refuse to make peace and they engage you in battle, lay siege to that city. [13] When the Lord your God delivers it into your hand, put to the sword all the men in it. [14] As for the women, the children, the livestock and everything else in the city, you may take these as plunder for yourselves. And you may use the plunder the Lord your God gives you from your enemies. [15] This is how you are to treat all the cities that are at a distance from you and do not belong to the nations nearby.

[16] However, in the cities of the nations the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not

leave alive anything that breathes. [17] Completely destroy them—the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—as the Lord your God has commanded you. [18] Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods, and you will sin against the Lord your God”

Deuteronomy 20:10-18 (New International Version)

From this text it is clear that God instructed (the Israelites) to put to the sword every living soul – man, woman and child – among those six peoples: the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.

With regard to other peoples, He commanded that they be called:

First of all, to a peace deal; if they agreed to it, and accepted to obey them, be subject to them and to pay the poll-tax, all well and good.

Secondly, if they did not agree, then they were to be fought.

Thirdly, when they were defeated, all their males were to be put to the sword, and their women and children were to be taken captive, and their livestock and wealth were to be plundered and divided among the fighters.

This is what was done to all the peoples who were at a distance from those six people.

In the twenty third chapter of the Book of Exodus (v. 23 f) it says:

“[23] My angel will go ahead of you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites and Jebusites, and I will wipe them out. [24] Do not bow down before their gods or worship them or follow their practices. You must demolish them and break their sacred stones to pieces.”

Exodus 23:23-24

See also Exodus 34:11f and Deuteronomy 7:1f

In order to know the number of those whose execution the Bible commanded, we have to know that these six peoples were more numerous than the Israelites, and according to the numbers mentioned, they may have reached several millions!

See: Numbers 1:20 ff

The bishop Dr Keith wrote a book in English about the stories of the Israelite Prophets in which he says:

It is known from ancient books that in the land of Judaea 550 years before the Exodus there were eighty million people. Therefore this is the number which the Bible commanded be killed and eradicated: eighty million.

Then if we look at the Bible texts that contain emphatic commands to kill and eradicate, we will find the following:

In the twenty-second chapter of the Book of Exodus (v. 20), it says:

“Whoever sacrifices to any god other than the Lord must be destroyed”

Exodus 22:20.

In the thirty-second chapter of the Book of Exodus (v. 25 ff) it says concerning the worshippers of the calf

“[25] Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies. [26] So he stood at the entrance to the camp and said, ‘Whoever is for the Lord, come to me.’ And all the Levites rallied to him.

[27] Then he said to them, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: “Each man strap a sword to his side. Go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other, each killing his brother and friend and neighbor.”’ [28] The Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about three thousand of the people died”

Exodus 32:25 ff

In the twenty-fifth chapter of the Book of Numbers (v. 1 ff) it says:

“While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, [2] who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate the sacrificial meal and bowed down before these gods. [3] So Israel yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor. And the Lord’s anger burned against them.

[4] The Lord said to Moses, ‘Take all the leaders of these people, kill them and expose them in broad daylight before the Lord, so that the Lord’s fierce anger may turn away from Israel.’

[5] So Moses said to Israel’s judges, ‘Each of you must put to death those of your people who have yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor.’

[6] Then an Israelite man brought into the camp a Midianite woman right before the eyes of Moses and the whole assembly of Israel while they were weeping at the entrance to the tent of meeting. [7] When Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, saw this, he left the assembly, took a spear in his hand [8] and followed the Israelite into the tent. He drove the spear into both of them, right through the Israelite man and into the woman’s stomach. Then the plague against the Israelites was stopped; [9] but those who died in the plague numbered 24,000”

Numbers 1:1ff

In the thirty-first chapter of the Book of Numbers it says (v. 5 ff):

“[5] So twelve thousand men armed for battle, a thousand from each tribe, were supplied from the clans of Israel.[6] Moses sent them into battle, a thousand from each tribe, along with Phinehas son of Eleazar…

[7] They fought against Midian, as the Lord commanded Moses, and killed every man. [8] Among their victims were Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur and Reba—the five kings of Midian. They also killed Balaam son of Beor with the sword. [9] The Israelites captured the Midianite women and children and took all the

Midianite herds, flocks and goods as plunder. [10] They burned all the towns where the Midianites had settled, as well as all their camps….

[14] Moses was angry with the officers of the army—the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds—who returned from the battle.

[15] ‘Have you allowed all the women to live?...

‘Now kill all the boys. And kill every woman who has slept with a man, [18] but save for yourselves every girl who has never slept with a man.’ …

So Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the Lord commanded Moses.

[32] The plunder remaining from the spoils that the soldiers took was 675,000 sheep, [33] 72,000 cattle, [34] 61,000 donkeys [35] and 32,000 women who had never slept with a man”

Numbers 31:5 ff

Here we may ask: if the number of virgins (women who had never slept with a man) was 32,000, how many must the total number of males who were killed – old men, young men and boys – have been? How many must the number of married women (women who had slept with a man) have been?

If we move on to the story of Joshua, we will find that he killed millions, after the death of Moses! (as is mentioned in the Book of Joshua).

In the fifteenth chapter of the Book of Judges (v. 15 ff) it says:

“[15] Finding a fresh jawbone of a donkey, he grabbed it and struck down a thousand men.

[16] Then Samson said,

‘With a donkey’s jawbone

I have made donkeys of them.

With a donkey’s jawbone

I have killed a thousand men.’”

Judges 15:15f

In the seventeenth chapter of the First Book of Samuel (v. 8f) it says:

“[8] Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites. (From ancient times these peoples had lived in the land extending to Shur and Egypt.) [9] Whenever David attacked an area, he did not leave a man or woman alive, but took sheep and cattle, donkeys and camels, and clothes. Then he returned to Achish.”

I Samuel 27:8f

“and brought out the people who were there, consigning them to labor [or cut them] with saws and with iron picks and axes. David did this to all the Ammonite towns”

1 Chronicles 20:3

And on and on it goes in the books of the Old Testament.

What do the books of the New Testament say?

What do the clergy who follow the New Testament believe?

Paul commented on all of this – and much, much more – when he said in his Epistle to the Hebrews (11:32-34):

“[32] And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, [33] who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, [34] quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies”

Hebrews 11:32-34

Paul thinks that the deeds of those whose names he listed were acts of righteousness, faith, piety, and goodness!

Thus the clergy in ancient and modern times transmitted stories of destruction, slaughter and banishment with glee, glorifying and praising God, and speaking of false signs and miracles.

And the hymns in the churches repeat the words of Christ: “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword” Matthew 10:34

After reviewing the texts that we have quoted to you from your own scriptures, we hope that, if time allows and you are sincere in seeking the truth, that you will read the book Debate Between Islam and Christianity (p. 342 ff) and Izhar ul-Haqq [the book is known in English by its Arabic title] by Shaykh Rahmatullah Kairanawi (4/1256 ff).

Here it may be said to the one who believes in the Bible:

“[41] Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? [42] How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”

Luke 6:41-42

Finally:

If you are someone who believes in religion and divinely revealed laws, then we have quoted to you what it says in your holy Book, from which it is clear that execution is prescribed far more frequently in the Bible than in the teachings of Islam.

If you rely on purely rational thinking, outside of religion, then we have explained the wisdom and mercy towards society in the prescription of qisaas (retaliatory execution) and punishment of the apostate by execution. We ask Allah, may He be exalted, to show you the truth as truth and

enable you to follow it. We would be happy to answer any further questions you may have.

May Allah grant you insight, open your heart, guide you and help you.

And Allah knows best.