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# The Deadly Logic of Anti-Blasphemy Laws

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Blasphemy is a serious matter. Jesus himself underlined the importance with the statement: “And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.” [Luke 12:10] In this case, the meaning is clear — those who resist the work of the Holy Spirit in calling sinners to faith in Christ will never be forgiven.

Christianity is not an honor religion. Christ did not call upon his disciples to defend his honor, but to believe in him and to follow him in obedience. In this verse, Jesus affirms that even slander against him can be forgiven, but the unforgivable sin is obstinate rejection of the Gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit.

In recent weeks, a coalition of Muslim nations has demanded (again) that the United Nations criminalize blasphemy. A considerable number of Christians might, at least at first hearing, think this as a reasonable demand. After all, we do not disagree that slander against the honor of God is a very, very dangerous sin. But anti-blasphemy laws place the power of theological coercion into the hands of the state, and this is deadly dangerous.

In Pakistan, for example, Section 295C of the criminal code states that “derogatory remarks, etc., in respect of the Holy Prophet ... either spoken or written, or by visible representation, or by any imputation, innuendo or insinuation, directly or indirectly ... shall be punished with death, or imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to fine.”

On November 8, 2010, a woman named Asia Bibi, a Christian, was sentenced to death by hanging just because she had entered into what was claimed to be a religious argument with Muslims. She was arrested after an Islamic mob surrounded her house and demanded her death.

This past Monday the governor of Punjab, Salmaan Taseer, was assassinated by one of his own security guards after the Governor had stated words of support for Asia Bibi. The assassin said that he murdered Governor Taseer in an act of “protecting Allah’s religion.”

Saroop Ijaz, a human rights attorney in Lahore, Pakistan, explained in the *Los Angeles Times* that, though no one has yet been executed under the blasphemy laws, “at least 32 people have been killed while awaiting trial or after they have been acquitted of blasphemy charges.”

Anti-blasphemy laws serve the honor logic of Islam but not the evangelistic aims of Christianity. It is wrong to give governments the power of theological coercion. Seen in this light, blasphemy is no small matter, but anti-blasphemy laws are deadly barriers to the proclamation of the Gospel.



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Saroop Ijaz, “[The Real Blasphemy](#),” *Los Angeles Times*, Wednesday, January 5, 2011.

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