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(Folder)

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Question and Answer Details

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Name of Questioner Title Question Date Name of Mufti Topic	Ahmad Freedom of Belief & Minority Rights in Muslim Countries One of my Christian friends raised the issue of why Islam dictates that converters from Islam to Christianity be killed while Christians can freely convert to Islam. Can you please comment on this so as to convince people about the Islamic point of view? Also, can you please comment about minority rights in Islamic communities such as practicing their religion and building churches? Finally, can you please comment about Christian rights to make outreach for Christianity as Muslim do outreach (<i>da`wah</i>) for Islam? In other words, do they have the right to make an effort to spread Christianity among Muslims as Muslims are instructed to spread Islam among Christians? Thanks a lot. 18/Apr/2006 Jamal Badawi , Muhammad Nur Abdullah Muslim Belief
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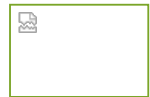
Answer

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

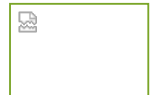
All praise and thanks are due to Allah, and peace and blessings be upon His Messenger.

Dear questioner, thank you very much for having confidence in us, and we hope our efforts, which are purely for Allah's Sake, meet your expectations.

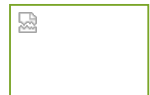
In Islam, freedom in its general sense is a well-established fact. At a time when people were enslaved intellectually, politically, socially, religiously, and economically, Islam came to establish the freedom of belief, freedom of thought, freedom of speech, and freedom to criticize. Islam strictly forbids that people be forced to adopt a certain creed or to believe in a particular religion. Allah Almighty



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(Folder)



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(Folder)



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says: **[If it had been thy Lord's Will, they would all have believed, all who are on earth; wilt thou then compel mankind, against their will, to believe?]** (Yunus 10: 99) This was in the Makkan era. In the Madinan period, Allah also revealed: **[Let there be no compulsion in religion: truth stands out clear from error.]** (Al-Baqarah 2: 256)

Responding to the question, **Dr. Jamal Badawi**, Member of the European Council for Fatwa and Research and the Fiqh Council of North America, states the following:

There are scholars who distinguish between apostasy on a personal level, which is not punishable by death, and apostasy that is accompanied by what we call today high treason, in which case the punishment is for high treason, not for apostasy.

However, some scholars do not distinguish between the two types. The issue pertains to the way of interpreting texts in the Qur'an and the Hadith that deal with that subject. A detailed answer to this question requires many more pages and Allah willing it will be made available in the future.

As for the second question, minority rights under Muslim rule is summed up in the rule "for them (minorities) are rights like ours and on them are responsibilities like ours."

Furthermore, the Qur'an clearly protects the freedom of belief (Al-Baqarah: 256). It also protects the right of worship and respects all places of worship (Al-Hajj: 40).

On the outreach issue, the Qur'an does not forbid engagement in respectful and peaceful dialogue with others, especially the People of the Book, provided that neither side exploit the illiteracy or dire financial need of others so as to psychologically manipulate them in the name of outreach.

Moreover, **Sheikh Muhammad Nur Abdullah**, ISNA President and Member of the Fiqh Council of North America, adds:

In brief, Islam believes in freedom of choice. Faith itself is a choice in Islam. The Qur'an states: **[No compulsion in religion...]** (Al-Baqarah 2: 256). All have the freedom to practice their own faith without harassment or any kind of threat.

The history of Islam proves this very well when Muslims, Christians, and Jews lived together in dominant Islamic societies. We can contrast this to the Muslims who lived in Christian Spain when they were persecuted and prejudiced against on account of their faith.

Second, anyone has the right to choose to convert to Islam or keep practicing his faith. But once a person converts to Islam, he should practice his faith and never change it. If he changes it, it is a major sin. Whether it is punishable by Islamic law is a debatable matter among Muslim scholars. Some believe he should be punished because they count this crime as betrayal, while others say that if someone changes his faith and does not challenge the Islamic society, they consider it a private matter between him and Allah and it is not punishable by the Islamic faith according to their view. However, both opinions agree that it is a sin punishable by Allah and that it is the worst form of sin.

As for minority rights, the Shari`ah protects the rights of non-Muslims living in an Islamic society. The Islamic state has to guarantee protection for their life, property, and the places of worship. The hadith states: **"Whoever harms a non-Muslim (Dhimmi) will not enter Paradise."** (Reported by Muslim)

As for spreading any other faith in the Islamic state, non-Muslims are allowed to teach their followers about their religion, but they are not allowed to go against the mainstream of the society.

Related Questions

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- Concept of Minorities in Islam

Allah Almighty knows best.



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