



How Apostasy
& Blasphemy
Codes Are

silenced

Choking
Freedom
Worldwide

Paul Marshall & Nina Shea

"Islamists, claiming they want only respect for their religion, are imposing brutal punishments for apostasy and blasphemy in the non-Muslim as well as the Muslim world. In this eloquent and definitive work Marshall and Shea make a powerful case that for us to accommodate this, anywhere, would be disastrous—weakening truly moderate Muslims and those of us who support them, and seriously crippling our own freedoms of speech and religion."

—R. James Woolsey, Chairman, Foundation for Defense of Democracies and former United States Director of Central Intelligence

"The book offers an extensive survey of blasphemy and its effects on Muslim societies and individuals, with a consideration of analogous developments in the contemporary West. The ad hoc way of enforcing blasphemy laws is placed in the framework of classical Islamic discussion where blasphemy is a function of state jurisdiction rather than simply of vigilante activism. As the book makes clear, evidence of arbitrary use of blasphemy is evidence also of contested state jurisdiction. This is a most valuable study."

—Lamin Sanneh, D. Willis James Professor of Missions and World Christianity, Yale University

The fatwa against Salman Rushdie awakened many westerners to the danger of being accused of blasphemy in the Muslim world. As this eye-opening volume reveals, accusations of "blasphemy," "apostasy," or "insulting Islam" are increasingly used by authoritarian governments and extremist forces in the Muslim world to acquire and consolidate power. These charges, which traditionally carry a punishment of death, have proved effective in intimidating not only converts and heterodox groups, but also political and religious reformers. In his foreword, the late Indonesian President Wahid observes that coercively applied blasphemy laws "narrow the bounds of acceptable discourse . . . not only about religion, but about vast spheres of life, literature, science and culture in general."

Silenced provides the first survey of such accusations in the contemporary Muslim world, in international organizations, and in the West. The authors describe hundreds of victims, including political dissidents, religious reformers, journalists, writers, artists, moviemakers, and religious minorities throughout the Muslim world. They also document the political effects in Muslim societies of blasphemy and apostasy laws, as well as nongovernmental fatwas and vigilante violence. Finally, they address the move toward new blasphemy laws in the West and the increasing threat of violence to stifle commentary on Islam in the West even in the absence of law.

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