

# ISLAMIC NATIONS KILL RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a new study of religious liberty:

“Respecting Rights? Measuring the World’s Blasphemy Laws” is a comprehensive report on the status of religious liberty throughout the world. Issued by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, its findings are illuminating on several counts.

Its definition of blasphemy is straightforward: it is defined as “the act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence for God.” Of the world’s 195 countries, 71 have such laws. Two of them, Malta and Denmark, repealed their blasphemy laws after the data were collected by the Commission.

There were some surprises and some predictable findings. Regarding the former, the following countries sanction imprisonment for blasphemy: Canada, Israel, Italy, New Zealand, and Poland. Not surprisingly, the five nations with the most oppressive blasphemy laws are Iran, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and Qatar. They all are Islamic states.

The official religion in Iran is Islam. Article 513 of its Penal Code says that anyone who insults Islam “should be executed if his insult equals to speaking disparagingly of Prophet Muhammad. Otherwise, should be imprisoned from one to five years.”

Pakistan is formally known as the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, with Islam as its state religion. Chapter XV, Section 295-C authorizes death for “innuendo” of an insulting nature. “Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representation or by any imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name

of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) shall be punished with death, or imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to fine.”

Islam is the state religion of Yemen. Those who ridicule Islam can be imprisoned. Article 260 of its Penal Code authorizes “Punishment with imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years or a fine” for anyone who “distorts willfully the Holy Quran in a manner which changes its meaning with the purpose of harming the natural Religion.”

Somalia is an African nation that practices slavery. It is run by Muslims; Islam is the official religion. Article 2 of the Constitution says that “No religion other than Islam can be propagated in the country.” Anyone who insults Islam shall be imprisoned. Also, “No law which is not compliant with the general principles of Shari’ah can be enacted.”

Qatar is another Islamic state. Article I of its Constitution says “Islam and Shari’a law shall be a main source of legislation.” Insulting the state religion results in imprisonment. Moreover, Article 256 of the Penal Code says offenders can get up to seven years for “Insulting any of the prophets in letter and spirit, in writing, drawing, gesturing or in any other way.” This includes those who use “disks, computer programs or magnetized tapes” to offend Islam.

In the United States, it is not uncommon for pundits, activists, talk-show hosts, comedians, and professors to contend that Christianity is no different from Islam—both are oppressive. Yet these sages can only voice such nonsense in Christian-majority nations. In Muslim-majority nations, they would either be imprisoned or executed.