

Misconception: Islam promotes honour killings of women/men



Background: An honour killing is when a family member is murdered by one or more fellow family members, when they believe the victim to have brought dishonour upon the family. The victims are usually female but can also be male.

The Quran has a very high regard for a person's life and only accepts the taking of a life in very limited circumstances:

It is because of this that We have decreed for the Children of Israel: "Anyone who kills a person who has not committed murder, or who has not committed corruption in the land; then it is as if he has killed all of mankind! And whoever spares a life, then it is as if he has given life to all the people."... [5:32]

...and do not kill the soul which God has forbidden, except in justice... [6:151]

And whoever kills a believer intentionally, then his reward shall be Hell, eternally abiding therein, and God will be angry with him, and curse him, and for him is prepared a great retribution. [4:93]

It should be noted that nowhere in The Quran is a person allowed to take the law into their own hands and act as judge, jury and executioner. "Justice" here refers to a court of law. Also, the only acts punishable by death in The Quran are for murder and causing corruption in the land (i.e. done on a large scale), as shown above.

Sometimes an honour killing is carried out due to sex out with marriage, but the punishment for this in The Quran is not death [see 24:2].

The recurring theme of equivalence in The Quran must be taken into account when deciding upon the punishment for any crime:

And those who, when gross injustice befalls them, they seek justice. The recompense for a crime shall be its equivalence, but whoever forgives and makes right, then his reward is upon God. He does not like the wrongdoers. [42:39-40]

Thus, the equivalent punishment for having one's honour or family honour compromised can never be murder.