



EX-MUSLIMS  
OF NORTH AMERICA

PERSECUTION  
TRACKER  
SUMMARY  
REPORT

2025

***“For millions around the world,  
it’s not just an internal battle—  
it’s a crime.”***

***Aysha Khan  
EXMNA Director of Operations***

## WHAT IS THE PERSECUTION TRACKER?

Ex-Muslims of North America (EXMNA)'s Persecution Tracker catalogs global incidents of state prosecution and vigilante violence resulting from accusations of blasphemy against and apostasy from Islam.

Designed to provide a more holistic understanding of the true impact of apostasy and blasphemy accusations, the Persecution Tracker captures acts of persecution perpetrated by both state and extrajudicial actors. Incidents cover arrests, fines, prison sentences, death sentences, execution, death threats, kidnapping, torture, and murder and are cataloged by date, country, and victim name, when available. Each incident must be verifiably documented or reported from a reputable news outlet to be entered into the Tracker.

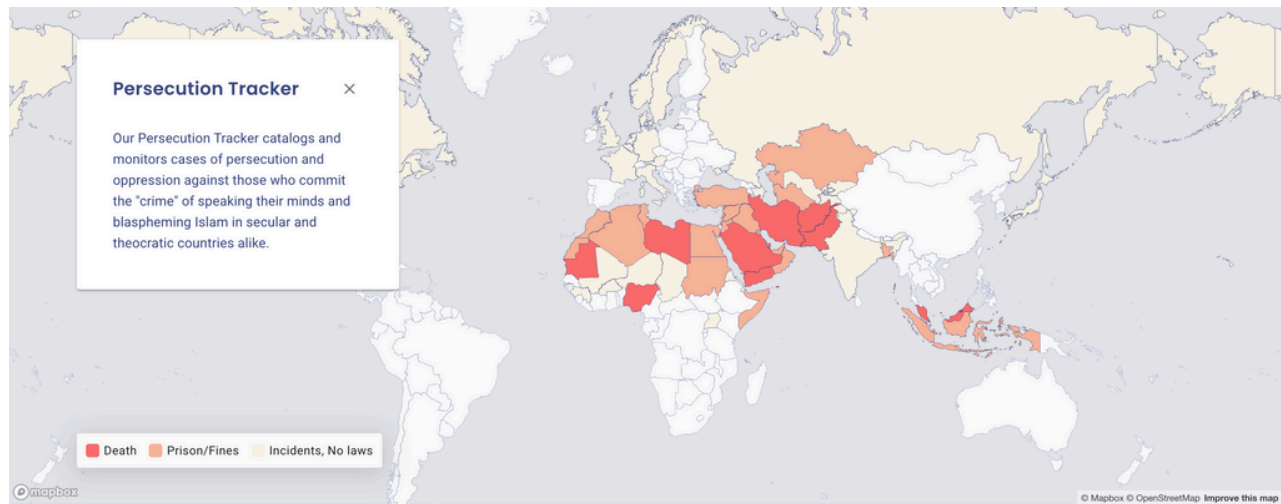
Muslim-majority countries continued to oversee widespread arrests, prosecutions, and extrajudicial violence against individuals accused of blasphemy and apostasy in 2025. This legal and extralegal persecution systematically undermines the right to free expression guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, harming Muslims and non-Muslims alike despite its motivation being rooted in religious fundamentalism and militancy.

The problem is particularly acute in Pakistan. Vigilante willingness to systematically target and entrap victims who are later referred to police on blasphemy charges remains high, as does the occurrence of vigilante murder. Pakistan again accounted for the majority of cases logged to the Persecution Tracker in 2025, including a significant number of death sentences doled out by courts.

Many of the year's incidents occurred in other countries USCIRF recommends be designated as Countries of Particular Concern (CPC) and Special Watch List countries. Among these, Iran, Nigeria, Turkey, and Afghanistan have all seen incidents of blasphemy prosecution or extrajudicial murder. Morocco, Qatar, and Bangladesh join these countries' ranks, and even the United Kingdom has opted to stifle nonbelievers' freedom of expression by prosecuting individuals for Qur'an burning.

Across all countries where legal or extralegal persecution over blasphemy accusations took place, no meaningful positive trends, law changes, or crackdowns on vigilante violence seem to have taken place.

## WHAT IS THE PERSECUTION TRACKER?



### Persecution Tracker: Key Figures & Updates:

- 554 total incidents cataloged from 1989 to present
- 45 new incidents added in 2025
- 38 of these new incidents occurred in 2025, while the remaining 9 occurred in years prior
- 22 of these new incidents occurred in Pakistan
- 22 of these new incidents involved arrests
- 9 of these new incidents involved death sentences
- **New in 2025:** The Persecution Tracker was integrated into a redesigned website, improving accessibility and usability

## NOTEWORTHY INCIDENTS IN 2025 FROM USCIRF COUNTRIES OF PARTICULAR CONCERN

### Pakistan

While blasphemy arrests and imprisonments did not rise significantly between 2024 and 2025, overall numbers remain alarmingly high, following a sharp surge in cases from 2021 to 2024. Christians continue to be disproportionately targeted, though Ahmadis and nonbelievers are also frequently prosecuted.

Additionally, Muslims themselves fall victim to these laws, as false accusations are regularly forwarded to police with the intent of retaliation in personal disputes or for economic gain.<sup>1</sup> This weaponization of blasphemy accusations has been systematized by vigilante groups in recent years, a phenomenon which received more international attention in 2025, although hundreds remain imprisoned.<sup>2</sup>

A Pakistani court this year ordered the formation of an investigatory body which would have probed “misuse” of the country’s blasphemy laws; however, this effort was quickly shut down following intense backlash from religious conservatives.<sup>3</sup>

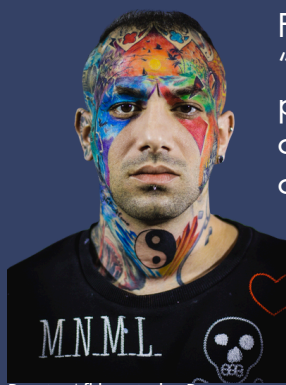
**Eight** of the nine death sentences for blasphemy logged to the Persecution Tracker in 2025 occurred in Pakistan.

This year:

- There were three known incidents of groups of people receiving death sentences for “blasphemous” social media posts. Two such incidents occurred in January<sup>4 5</sup> and another in March.<sup>6</sup>

- In July, an Ahmadi man named Faizan Ahmed was arrested for blasphemy after distributing food and soda on Ashura and “posing as a Muslim” (as most Muslims do not consider members of the Ahmadiyya faith to be Muslim).<sup>7</sup> He was reportedly jailed for at least seven days.<sup>8</sup>
- Engineer Muhammad Ali Mirza, a Muslim cleric, was accused of blasphemy in August. He reportedly “mentioned that another community referred to Prophet Muhammad by a certain name, and in doing so he repeated the same words.”<sup>9</sup> This sparked public outrage and led to his arrest, showing that blasphemy laws do not just harm religious minorities.<sup>10</sup>

### Iran



Pouria Afkhami aka Pixoos

Following the widespread “Women, life, freedom” protests in 2022, Iran continued to aggressively crack down on dissent in 2025. This is exemplified by the case of pop singer Amirhossein Maghsoudloo, better known as Tataloo, who was sentenced to death on charges of insulting the Prophet Muhammad this year.<sup>11</sup> Although he had at times expressed support for the Iranian regime, including through a 2015 song backing Iran’s nuclear program, authorities had long condemned Tataloo for allegedly promoting “sexual immorality” and “obscenity”.<sup>12</sup>

## Nigeria

Nigeria's 12 Muslim-majority northern states prescribe punishments for blasphemy including death, in addition to the country's general blasphemy codes.<sup>13</sup> This is exacerbated by a climate of extreme religious fundamentalism that regularly erupts in violence. This year, a woman named as "Amaye" was accused of blasphemy over an unspecified remark after "a man jokingly proposed marriage" to her. An angry mob subsequently burned her to death before police could effectively intervene.<sup>14</sup>

## Afghanistan

The Taliban continue to enforce a brutal theocratic vision of governance in Afghanistan following their return to power in 2021. This relies heavily on a persistent atmosphere of fear and intimidation, demonstrated by a willingness to punish those who dissent. This year, one such incident occurred in the case of teacher Abdul Alim Khamoosh, who reportedly told his students that "religious education is important, but modern education is more necessary."<sup>15</sup> He was sentenced to death for insulting Islam.<sup>16</sup>

## NOTEWORTHY CASES IN 2025 FROM USCIRF SPECIAL WATCH LIST COUNTRIES

### Turkey

In 2025, Turkish authorities continued to show a willingness to harass and prosecute individuals for perceived insults to Islam.

This year:

- Four staff members of the satirical magazine *LeMan* were arrested for "insulting religious values" on the basis of a cartoon authorities say depicted the

Prophet Muhammad.<sup>17</sup> The cartoon depicts the spirits of two men, one named Moses and the other Muhammad, meeting above the wreckage of a military conflict implied to be the war in Gaza.<sup>18</sup> *LeMan* denied the allegation and said the cartoon depicted an ordinary Muslim who simply happened to share a name with the Prophet.

- Murat Övüç, a social media influencer, posted a video of himself wearing a hijab online and was subsequently arrested on accusations of "insulting religious values."<sup>19</sup> He was briefly detained and released.<sup>20</sup>

## OTHER NOTEWORTHY CASES

### United Kingdom



PA Media

Despite a professed commitment to free expression and secular values, the United Kingdom in 2025 engaged in at least two prosecutions of individuals for publicly burning the Qur'an:

- Turkish-born Hamit Coskun burned a Qur'an outside the Turkish Embassy in London while insulting the religion of Islam. During this incident, he was assaulted by a man with a knife who claimed to be defending his religion's honor; the attacker was ultimately spared jail.<sup>21</sup> Hamit himself was initially found guilty of "religiously or racially motivated harassment or alarm" and fined. This conviction was overturned on appeal, but the Crown Prosecution Service has vowed to appeal the overturning.<sup>22</sup>

- A man pleaded guilty to charges of “religiously or racially aggravated harassment or alarm” after publicly burning a Qur’an in Manchester.<sup>23</sup> The accused stated that he had burned the Qur’an as an act of solidarity with Salwan Momika, an Iraqi refugee in Sweden who had also been charged with a crime for burning the Qur’an; Momika was murdered in January of this year, before a verdict in his case could be reached.<sup>24</sup>

Additionally, the Labour government appeared poised earlier this year to adopt an official definition of “Islamophobia,” a term which equates criticism of Islam with prejudice against Muslims. As a party, Labour has previously adopted a definition of the term which defines speech targeting “expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness” as Islamophobic, a dangerously broad criterion.<sup>25</sup> However, more recent reports indicate that the government has scrapped the plan for an “Islamophobia” definition and instead intends to publish guidance on “anti-Muslim hatred,” a welcome and laudable move if true.<sup>26</sup>

## Morocco



@IbtissameBetty/X

Activist Ibtissame Betty Lachgar was arrested and imprisoned for posting an image of herself to social media<sup>27</sup> wearing a T-shirt that read “Allah is lesbian.”<sup>28</sup> Moroccan

authorities have delayed and denied her urgent cancer-related medical care, and she was forced to endure solitary confinement without a mattress for months.

## Qatar

Remy Rowhani, leader of the Baha’i community in Qatar, was sentenced to five years’ imprisonment over social media posts that purportedly “cast doubt on the foundations of the Islamic religion,” a verdict that was condemned by USCIRF.<sup>29</sup>

## Bangladesh

Following the July Revolution of 2024 and the establishment of an interim government, Bangladesh in 2025 still continued to arrest individuals accused of blasphemy, and vigilante incidents, though curbed since the 2010s, also continue to occur.

This year:

- Apurbo Pal, a university student struggling with mental illness and drug addiction, was attacked by a mob and arrested after allegedly desecrating a Qur’an and insulting Islam. Students and teachers familiar with Apurbo said he suffered from mental health and substance abuse problems.<sup>30</sup>
- Baul singer Abul Sarkar was arrested for making allegedly blasphemous comments at a musical performance, video of which was subsequently shared on social media. Raju Sarkar, an “assistant artist” to Abul, said Abul’s remarks were misinterpreted and only directed against religious fundamentalism.<sup>31</sup>
- Dipu Chandra Das, a factory worker in his twenties, was accused of insulting the Prophet Muhammad and lynched by an angry mob.<sup>32</sup> No evidence was found that he had ever said anything blasphemous<sup>33</sup>, and his family believes the accusation was a malicious rumor created in response to an unrelated workplace dispute.<sup>34</sup>

## APPENDIX

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**PAGE THREE** What Is The  
Persecution Tracker?

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**PAGE FOUR** Noteworthy Incidents In  
2025 From USCIRF Countries Of  
Particular Concern

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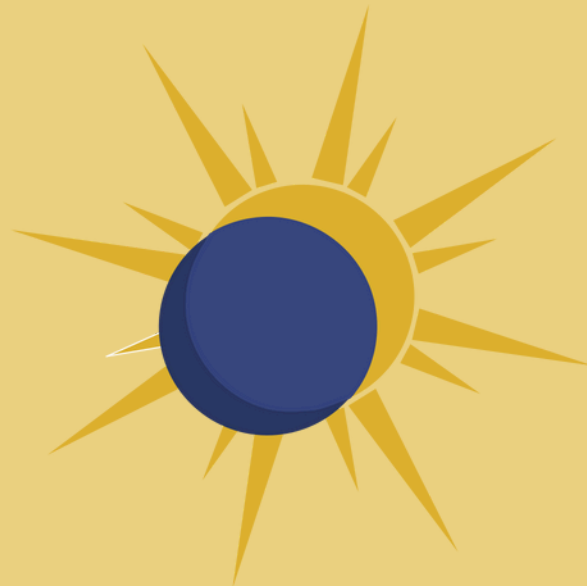
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**PAGE FIVE** Noteworthy Cases In 2025  
From USCIRF Special Watch List  
Countries  
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**PAGE SEVEN** Appendix



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