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The Death Penalty in Traditional Islamic Law and as Interpreted in Saudi Arabia and Nigeria

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I. TRADITIONAL ISLAMIC LAW

Traditional Islamic law is derived from the Qur’an and the words and actions of the Prophet Muhammad. Although Islamic criminal law is based on ideals such as justice and due process, the international community generally understands Islamic law to be harsh, characterized by brutal punishments and inhumane treatment of defendants and those who are convicted. Many of these impressions are based on widely publicized events in countries that have adopted Islamic law as a basis for their criminal law systems, such as the recent convictions of Nigerian women for adultery, who have been sentenced to death by stoning. In order to properly evaluate Islamic criminal law and its use of the death penalty, however, it is necessary to first consider traditional Islamic law, Shari'a, as it is stated in the Qur’an and the Hadith. Then, countries which have implemented Islamic law can be compared to the paradigm system of traditional Shari'a to determine if they implement a truly Islamic legal system. This paper will examine the death penalty in Saudi Arabia, where the legal system is based solely on Islamic law, and Nigeria, where Shari'a criminal law has recently been established in several states. Each of these countries has been identified by the international community as a violator of human rights as a result of its implementation of the death penalty. In many instances, however, Saudi Arabia and Nigeria have failed to incorporate the procedural protections and safeguards that traditional Islamic law has associated with the death penalty.

A. Basic Principles and Sources of Islamic Law

The text of the Qur’an provides the basic principles for all of Islamic law, although it is a religious rather than legal document, designed to "regulate not the relationship of man with his fellows..."
but his relationship with his Creator." These principles include compassion and fair administration of justice, even though they are set forth as "desirable norms of behavior rather than . . . legally enforceable rules." Of the 6342 verses of the Qur'an, thirty deal with penal law.

The Qur'an mandates that that everyone has a right to life, unless a court of law demands killing: "Nor take life — which Allah has made sacred — except for just cause." Although the Qur'an provides for situations in which the death penalty can be imposed, the use of the death penalty is characterized by stringent evidentiary requirements and other means of avoiding imposition of the punishment.

Islamic law is derived from several sources. Primary guidance is obtained through Shari'a, the laws and ways of life prescribed by Allah. Shari'a is comprised of the Qur'an, considered to be Allah's direct words, and the Sunnah, the words and actions of the Prophet Muhammad. The Fiqh, Islamic jurisprudence, are the legal rulings that scholars have made based on Shari'a. There are three types of crimes recognized by Islamic law: the hudud, the qisas, and the ta'zir.

B. Hudud Crimes

The hudud, set forth in the Qur'an and Sunnah, are crimes that threaten Islam. The harsh punishments required for hudud crimes are intended to deter those who might commit crimes that are dangerous to an Islamic society. Punishments for these crimes are fixed: judges have no discretion once a person has been found guilty. Enforcement of hudud punishments are "the right of

2. Id.
3. Id.
6. Id.
7. Id.
9. Schabas, supra note 5, at 231.
11. Postawko, supra note 8, at 287.
Four of the seven hudud offenses are punishable by death. These crimes are adultery (zina); apostasy (riddah); armed robbery (hirabah); and rebellion (baghy). Although punishment for hudud crimes is fixed, available affirmative defenses and interpretations of the requirements for the offenses differ among the schools of Islam.

1. Adultery (Zina)

Adultery is a concern in Islam because of its effect on community stability; it is thought that adultery leads to family conflict, jealousy, illegitimate children, and the spreading of disease. The Qur’an provides that

The woman and the man
Guilty of adultery or fornication —
Flog each of them
With a hundred stripes.

The provision for death by stoning was not set forth in the Qur’an, but was inflicted by the first caliphs. The Hadith of the Prophet provides more detail:

Verily God has ordained a way for them (the woman who commits fornication); (When) a married man (commits adultery) with a married woman, and an unmarried male with an unmarried woman, then in the case of married (persons) there is (a punishment) of one hundred lashes and then stoning (to death). And in the case of unmarried persons, (the punishment) is one hundred lashes and exile for one year.

The difference between the general provision set forth in the Qur’an and the Prophet’s more detailed Hadith illustrates the complexity of even the fixed hudud punishments.

12. Id. at 286.
13. Id. at 287.
14. Id.
15. Id.
16. Lippman, supra note 1, at 40.
19. Postawko, supra note 8, at 288 (internal citation omitted).
The schools of Islam have differed in how they put this hadd into practice. The Kharjis follow the literal text of the Qur’ān and do not stone adulterers. Other schools differ in their views of whether offenders should be both flogged and stoned — the Hanafi, Maliki, and Ṣafā’i schools provide for only stoning, while the Hanbali, Zāhiri, and Zaydi schools require flogging followed by stoning. Another issue is whether unmarried offenders must be punished in the same way as married offenders; the Hanafi school does not exile unmarried offenders in addition to flogging them, but each of the other schools requires flogging as well as exile.

There are difficult hurdles on the path to proving adultery. In fact, some scholars claim that the number of evidentiary requirements for zina makes the implementation of the penalty “virtually impossible.” A confession of the accused or the declarations of four eye-witnesses to the act of intercourse are required. Some schools require that the confession be “repeated four times in definite and unambiguous words,” and on four separate occasions. A confession can be withdrawn at any time, which will overcome any finding that the person was guilty of zina by reason of that confession.

Witnesses must be of full legal capacity and of “good character.” Many schools also require that the witnesses be men. In addition, witnesses must all be able to testify that they saw the act at the same time, and that it was unlawful. False accusation by one who testified regarding zina is itself a hudud crime, punishable by eighty lashes.

20. Id.
21. Id.
22. Id. at 288-89.
23. Id. at 289.
24. FORTE, supra note 18, at 81.
25. Postawko, supra note 8, at 289.
26. Id. at 289 (explaining that the Hanafi and Shi’ah Imamiyyah schools impose this requirement).
27. Lippman, supra note 1, at 40.
28. FORTE, supra note 18, at 82. Some schools interpret this provision to include any attempt by the convicted person to escape before the execution as a retraction of confession. Id.
29. Postawko, supra note 8, at 289. Legal capacity requires sanity, mature age, and full responsibility. Id. Good character requires that a witness must not “have committed grave sins and must not persevere in small ones.” Id. (internal citations omitted).
30. Id.
31. FORTE, supra note 18, at 82.
32. Id. at 82, 83.
In addition, there are a number of possible defenses to an accusation of *zina*. First, a woman who was married before becoming pregnant can claim that the child was her former husband's; this is the "sleeping fetus" doctrine, which is based on the idea that a pregnancy can last four to seven years. Second, a woman can claim that the penetration requirement for *zina* did not occur. Lastly, a woman can claim that the intercourse took place during her sleep and she did not know it was occurring. The latter two instances do not require any evidence other than the woman's claim.

2. Apostasy (Riddah)

The changing of religion, or apostasy, is one of the greatest sins a Muslim can commit. Apostasy can be committed by converting to a non-Islamic religion or by rejecting a tenet of Islam. The Qur'ān imposes the penalty of eternal damnation. The Qur'ān states that:

> Anyone who, after accepting  
> Faith in Allah, utters Unbelief —  
> Except under compulsion,  
> His heart remaining firm  
> In Faith — but such as  
> Open their breast to Unbelief —  
> On them is Wrath from Allah,  
> And theirs will be  
> A dreadful Penalty.

The *Sunnah* later provided that an apostate is subject to the death penalty, based on the statement of Muhammad, "Whoever changed his Islamic religion, kill him."
Apostasy can be proven by circumstantial evidence. The crime can be proven by the actions of “impious behavior, such as failing to pray or offending Islamic morals,” statements contradicting or renouncing the principles of Islam, or conversion to another faith (unless under extreme threat of death). Proof must be presented by two witnesses, although the schools differ as to whether a description of the acts is required or whether a witness can merely affirm that the offender is an apostate.

In addition, most schools allow for recantation, although Shi'ites will not accept recantation if the apostate was born a Muslim. To encourage this recantation, there are requirements of waiting periods before execution, and some schools consider efforts to convince the apostate to return from his error an obligatory religious duty.

3. Armed Robbery (Hirabah)

This *hadd* crime is described in the Qur'an as:

The punishment of those
Who wage war against Allah
And His Messenger, and strive
With might and main
For mischief through the land
Is: execution, or crucifixion,
Or the cutting off of hands
And feet from opposite sides,
Or exile from the land:
That is their disgrace
In this world, and
A heavy punishment is theirs
In the Hereafter;
Except for those who repent
Before they fall

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44. Id.
45. Id.
46. Id. at 46-47.
47. Postawko, *supra* note 8, at 292-93. For example, the Maliki, Shafi'i, and Shi'ah Zaydiyyah schools find that efforts to convince the apostate to return to Islam is an obligatory religious duty. Id. at 293. The Shafi'i, Zahiri, and Shi'ah Zaydiyyah schools find that any repentance should be accepted without further questions. Id.
THE DEATH PENALTY IN TRADITIONAL ISLAMIC LAW

Into your power:
In that case, know
That Allah is Oft-Forgiving,
Most Merciful.48

This verse creates ambiguity about both the type of crime covered and the appropriate penalty.49 Islamic jurists have interpreted the crime as "troubling the security of the roads [in order] to acquire property by menace," and have set forth four ways in which to violate the law.50 These four possibilities include assaulting a victim with intent to acquire his property but without actually obtaining the property; assaulting a victim to obtain property and taking the property without killing the victim; assaulting the victim to acquire his property and killing the victim without taking the property; and assaulting the victim to acquire his property and both taking the property and killing the victim.51 Generally, the schools apply the punishments proportionally to the harm, using banishment in some cases and the death penalty in others.52 For example, the Hanafi and Shi'ah Imamiyyah schools punish troubling the roads without killing the victim or taking property with banishment; the Shafi'i and Shi'ah Zahdiyyah punish this with banishment, imprisonment, or a ta'zir punishment; the Maliki and Zahiris allow the qadi or sovereign to choose between amputation, execution, or crucifixion.53 When the victim dies, the penalty is death, although the schools give different amounts of power to the qadi in deciding if execution is necessary.54 To prove hirabah, two witnesses must testify or there must be a confession.55 In addition, an offender can still escape the death penalty if he "repents before he is arrested and willingly places himself in the hands of the authorities."56 Another safeguard against the imposition of the death penalty for hirabah is that if

48. 'ALL, supra note 4, at 5:33-34.
49. Postawko, supra note 8, at 294.
50. Id. (internal citation omitted).
51. Id. at 294-95 (citing Safia Safwat, Offences and Penalties in Islamic Law, 26 ISLAMIC Q. 149, 164-65 (1882)).
52. Id. at 295.
53. Id.
54. Id. at 296.
55. Id.
56. Id.
there was more than one perpetrator of the robbery, and one perpetrator cannot be given the hadd punishment because, for example, he is a minor, none of the other perpetrators can receive the hadd punishment.  

4. Rebellion (Baghy)

Baghy is the intentional and forceful overthrow, or attempted overthrow, of the leader of an Islamic state. The Qur’an defines al-baghy as

If two parties among
The Believers fall into
A quarrel, make ye peace
Between them: but if
One of them transgresses
Beyond bounds against the other,
Then fight ye (all) against
The one that transgresses
Until it complies with
The command of Allah;
But if it complies, then
Make peace between them
With justice, and be fair:
For Allah loves those
Who are fair (and just).

The purpose of this hadd is considered to be the reconciliation of the parties involved, rather than elimination of the rebellious. The offense consists of three elements: an act of rebellion, with interpretation or reason, while the offender is enjoying power.

The schools differ in their views of the three elements. For example, the Maliki school requires the rebellion to be of a religious nature, but many other schools believe that the rebellion can be motivated by politics or religion. All schools focus, however, on the order to seek peace among believers. In fact, the Imam is required to first consider the demands or interpretation of the law proffered by the rebels, then call upon the rebels to cease their

57. FORTE, supra note 18, at 85.
58. Lippman, supra note 1, at 42.
60. Postawko, supra note 8, at 298.
61. Id.
62. Id. at 298-99.
63. Id. at 299.
revolt.64 Only then can the Imam use force to pursue rebels.65 In addition, rebels who surrender are not subject to hadd, and even those who are wounded and captured are not put to death.66 This hadd is concerned only with rebels who are killed during battle, and therefore punished by the hadd.67 If claims of the rebels are just and the Imam was at fault, he will be subject to punishment, rather than the rebels.68

5. Factors Constraining the Imposition of Hudud Penalties

Although the penalties for hudud crimes are mandated, there are a number of factors which decrease the likelihood that these punishments will be carried out. These include high evidentiary safeguards and a narrow construction of the law.69 Generally, circumstantial evidence is not allowed to prove hudud crimes.70 The Maliki school makes an exception to this rule for zina; pregnancy of a woman who is not married is considered sufficient evidence of zina.71

There are strict rules regarding witnesses in Islamic law. One requirement specific to the crime of zina is that an individual who falsely accuses a Muslim of zina is punished for defamation.72 This punishment is eighty lashes for a free person and forty lashes for a slave.73 Witnesses must be male Muslims, sane, of

64. Mansour, supra note 10, at 197.
65. Id.
66. Id.
67. Id.
68. Id. at 198.
69. Postawko, supra note 8, at 287-88.
70. Peters, supra note 33, at 4.
71. Id.
72. Lippman, supra note 1, at 40.
73. Id.

And those who launch
A charge against chaste women,
And produce not four witnesses
(To support their allegations) —
Flog them with eighty stripes;
And reject their evidence
Ever after: for such men
Are wicked transgressors.

legal age, and not have been punished for a serious offense or “engaged in sinful behavior.” Witnesses to crimes must also agree in their descriptions of the event and the time and place of the event.

Confessions are subject to similar safeguards. A confession must be given in open court, and each confession must be given at a separate hearing. Confessions cannot be the product of “pressure, deception, coercion, abuse or encouragement.” A confession can be withdrawn until a sentence is executed, which will invalidate a judgment of guilt.

Doubt (shubha) prevents the application of a hadd penalty. For example, if a person who commits zina thought he was married to the woman in question, the punishment cannot be imposed. This requirement that there be no doubt has been considered to lead to the rare imposition of hudud punishments historically and currently in some Islamic criminal law countries.

C. Qisas Crimes

Qisas are offenses proscribed by the Qur’ān or Sunnah, but are the subject of personal claims, rather than offenses against Islam. They apply to the crimes of murder or bodily injury. The Qur’ān provides for retaliation against the individual who commits a qisas crime, but also expresses a preference for forgiveness:

We ordained therein for them:
"Life for life, eye for eye,
Nose for nose, ear for ear,
Tooth for tooth, and wounds
Equal for equal."
But if Anyone remits the retaliation
By way of charity, it is

74. Lippman, supra note 1, at 52-53. Some schools permit the testimony of two female witnesses in place of the testimony of one male witness. Id. at 52.
75. Id. at 53.
76. Id. at 54.
77. ISLAMIC CRIMINAL LAW AND PROCEDURE: AN INTRODUCTION 72 (Matthew Lippman et al. eds., 1988).
78. Lippman, supra note 1, at 54.
79. PETERS, supra note 33, at 4.
80. Id.
81. See id. (using Libya and Pakistan as examples of countries where hudud punishments are not often imposed).
82. Schabas, supra note 5, at 232.
83. Postawko, supra note 8, at 301.
An act of atonement for himself.
And if any fail to judge
By (the light of) what Allah
Hath revealed, they are
(No better than) wrongdoers.  

The law of equality
Is prescribed to you
In cases of murder:
The free for the free,
The Slave for the Slave,
The woman for the woman.
But if any remission
Is made by the brother
Of the slain, then grant
Any reasonable demand,
And compensate him
With handsome gratitude.

The schools all provide that the death penalty for qisas is appropriate only where killing is unjust and the murder was intentional. The charge of homicide must be brought by the nearest relative of the victim.

The right of the family to demand harm is mitigated by the possibility that family members can accept payment, or diya, for their loss instead of requiring punishment. The schools differ on whether this choice is allowed in cases of intentional murder, with the Shafi'is and Hanbalis granting the choice even in cases of intentional murder and the Hanafis and Malikis prohibiting it, although the family can still pardon the offender. Generally, the Qur'an expresses a preference for diya over qisas, saying that the Muslim who chooses diya will be rewarded in heaven.

84. 'Ali, supra note 4, at 5:45.
85. Id. at 2:178.
86. Postawko, supra note 8, at 302.
87. FORTE, supra note 18, at 93.
88. Postawko, supra note 8, at 303.
89. Id.
90. 'Ali, supra note 4, at 3:159.
The last limitation on qisas is the requirement of consideration of the sex and religion of murderer and victim. Although not considered by all schools, the Twelver Shi'ite school provides that since the blood-money for a woman would be half that of a man, the family of a woman killed by a man must pay the difference in order to choose qisas against the murderer. Only the Hanafi school allows for a Muslim to be retaliated against if he kills a non-Muslim, unless the victim is Christian or Jewish.

D. Ta'zir Crimes

Ta'zir are discretionary punishments imposed by a judge for offenses not covered by hudud or qisas. Punishment depends on a human determination of what is just. The victim of a ta'zir crime can request the sovereign to exercise grace or pardon, after which the sovereign can choose not to punish the accused. The purposes of ta'zir punishments are to prevent recurrence of crime, deter others from crime, and reform the guilty party. The judge considers factors about the case, the offender, and society in deciding upon a punishment.

There are four situations when ta'zir punishment is used: acts that do not meet the technical requirements for hudud or qisas, such as attempted adultery; offenses generally punished by hudud but involving extenuating circumstances or doubt; acts condemned in the Qur'ān or Sunnah or contrary to public welfare, but not subject to hudud or qisas, such as false testimony; and acts which...
violate social norms, such as obscenity.\textsuperscript{100} Most criminal offenses are \textit{ta'zir} crimes under Islamic law, although the discretion allowed to the judge in these cases has prevented the creation of a codification of offenses and punishments.\textsuperscript{101}

Most schools find that death cannot be imposed for these types of punishments, unless there are extraordinary circumstances.\textsuperscript{102} One such extraordinary case is recidivism — the Hanafi and Maliki schools provide that habitual offenders may be executed.\textsuperscript{103}

There is generally a lesser standard of proof in \textit{ta'zir} cases than in \textit{hudud} cases. For instance, a confession for \textit{ta'zir} cannot be retracted.\textsuperscript{104}

II. SAUDI ARABIA

Traditional Islamic law has become the basis for criminal law systems in Islamic countries. The most notable example of this is Saudi Arabia, where the Qur'an and Sunnah form the basis for the government and the legal system.

\textit{A. Political Background and Legal System}

The modern Saudi state was established in 1902 and is governed by a monarchy.\textsuperscript{105} The king's powers are limited, however, by the requirement that he must observe Shari'a and Saudi traditions.\textsuperscript{106}

Saudi Arabia is an Islamic state; the Qur'an and the Sunnah are the bases of government.\textsuperscript{107} In 1992, the Basic Law of Government was passed, marking a move away from the traditional monarchy to a constitution.\textsuperscript{108} In a speech about the Basic Law, however, King Fahd reaffirmed that the Saudi government had followed Islamic law throughout the country's history, and "the basis of the program of Islam is fixed and is not subject to

\textsuperscript{100} Id.
\textsuperscript{101} FORTE, supra note 18, at 87.
\textsuperscript{102} Postawko, supra note 8, at 307.
\textsuperscript{103} Id.
\textsuperscript{104} FORTE, supra note 18, at 87.
\textsuperscript{106} Id.
change or alteration.”

Article 1 of the Constitution states that “The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a sovereign Arab Islamic state with Islam as its religion; God’s Book and the Sunnah of His Prophet, God’s prayers and peace be upon him, are its constitution, Arabic is its language and Riyadh is its capital.” The legal system is, therefore, based on the divine revelation, rather than judicial decisions or written law.

Article 38 of the Saudi Constitution sets forth that “there shall be no crime or penalty except in accordance with a Shari'ah or organizational law. There shall be no punishment except for acts committed subsequent to the coming into force of the organizational law.” This indicates that crimes and their penalties must be specifically set forth before punishments may be imposed. The Saudi Constitution also provides that “[t]he state protects human rights in accordance with the Islamic Shari'ah.”

Saudi Arabian courts follow the Hanbali school. A judge in Saudi Arabia is called a qadi and must be trained as a scholar and a “great follower of Islam.” There are three levels of courts. Musta‘jalah courts are the local courts and do not have jurisdiction over any case that could result in death. The High Courts of Shari’a Law, or kubra, have jurisdiction over hudud and qisas crimes. Although usually only one qadi sits on each court, the hearing of a crime that would result in execution is heard by a panel of three judges. The three qadi conduct the investigation, examine witnesses, and issue a verdict. A defendant sentenced to death in a kubra court has a right of appeal to the Court of Cassation, and the case is heard by a five-qadi panel. During this review, the court does not examine the law or facts, but merely ensures that “the judge has

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111. Esmaeili & Gans, supra note 107, at 145.
112. Mayer, supra note 109, at 359.
113. Id.
115. Esmaeili & Gans, supra note 107, at 154.
117. Id. at 870.
118. Id.
119. Id.
120. Esmaeili & Gans, supra note 107, at 149-50.
paid sufficient attention to the point of objection." The Supreme Judicial Council reviews all death penalty cases. The King has final review. For death penalty cases for hudud crimes, the only review is of guilt; the penalty cannot be changed.

B. The Death Penalty

1. Offenses

There are four types of crimes in Saudi Arabia: hudud crimes; qisas crimes, ta'zir crimes, and crimes governed by royal decree. Saudi Arabia uses the death penalty for all four categories of crimes. For hudud crimes, the death penalty is prescribed for adultery, highway robbery, and apostasy.

i. Hudud Crimes

The penalty for adultery by one who is married or has previously been married is stoning. Zina can be proven in two ways: first, if the offender swears four times that he has actually committed adultery and his confession is detailed enough to dispel any doubts of the qadi; second, if four witnesses testify to actually seeing the crime.

In Saudi Arabia, those guilty of hirabah are sentenced to death, and have been executed even if the victim was not actually killed, differing from most scholars' interpretations of the proportional nature of punishment. Saudi Arabian law provides that if the armed robbers give themselves up and repent, their repentance will nullify the hadd punishment and they will

123. Esmaeili & Gans, supra note 107, at 149.
124. Id.
126. Walker, supra note 116, at 867-68.
127. Defying World Trends, supra note 122.
128. Id.
129. Al-Mutrak, supra note 125, at 431.
130. Id. at 434-35. For the second means of proof, it is "not enough to say that they saw the offenders naked and embraced." Id. at 435.
131. Defying World Trends, supra note 122.
be punished only in accordance with *qisas* as to the rights of the victim.\(^{132}\)

Saudi Arabian law provides that the penalty for *riddah* is beheading.\(^{133}\)

**ii. Taʿzir Crimes**

The death penalty can also be applied for *taʿzir* crimes. A judge bases the decision to impose the death penalty on the severity of the act and character of the accused.\(^{134}\) *Taʿzir* crimes punishable by death include sorcery, heresy, or spying by infidels.\(^{135}\) In addition, the death penalty can be imposed upon those who do not “desist from crime, or those from whose evil society can be saved only by their death.”\(^{136}\)

**iii. Government Edicts**

In addition, *fatwas* have been issued that delineate the death penalty as the mandatory sentence for drug smuggling and “corruption on the earth.”\(^{137}\)

*Fatwa* Number Eighty-Five was issued in 1981 and dealt with abduction, assault, and drug crimes.\(^{138}\) The first part of the *fatwa* declared that the *hadd* crime of highway robbery should apply to the crime of “abduction for sexual purposes,”\(^{139}\) extending the definition well beyond the traditional meanings of *hirabah*.\(^{140}\) First, *hirabah* is used in this instance to apply to crimes in cities (in addition to on highways), and without the use of arms.\(^{141}\) Second,
hirabah refers to offenses of sexual honor rather than just offenses against life and property. In addition, the type of punishment for hirabah, carefully laid out in traditional law as it related to robbery, becomes discretionary on the part of the judge, although murdering the victim still requires the death penalty.

The second part of Fatwa Number Eighty-Five established punishments for drug smugglers and distributors. The fatwa found these offenses so terrible as to fall under the prohibition against the “spreading of corruption on the earth.” Therefore, a second-time drug offender could be subject to the death penalty. Fatwa Number 138 subsequently made the death penalty mandatory in drug smuggling cases.

Fatwa Number 148, issued in 1988, required the death penalty for “corruption of the earth.” This fatwa, designed to apply to terrorists, punishes

Anyone proved to have carried out acts of sabotage and corruption on earth which undermines security by aggression against persons and private or public property such as the destruction of homes, mosques, schools, hospitals, factories, bridges, ammunition dumps, water storage tanks, resources of the treasury such as oil pipelines, the highjacking and blowing up of air planes, and so on...

This fatwa placed actions within the ta‘zir category and established the mandatory penalty of death due to the harmful nature of the offense in “shaking security and demolishing the structure of the umma, uprooting its faith, and diverting it from the Divine Path.”

2. Procedure

There are a number of evidentiary safeguards intended to prevent the imposition of harsh hudud punishments. Some provisions are specific to the crime. For example, for the crime of

142. Id.
143. Id.
144. Id. at 257.
145. Id.
146. Id.
147. Id. at 267 (citing Fatwa Number 138 (1987)).
148. Defying World Trends, supra note 121 (citing Fatwa Number 148 (1988)).
149. Id.
150. VOGEL, supra note 133, at 271 (quoting Decision No. 148, 12 Muharram 1409 (Aug. 24, 1988)).
highway robbery, for which the punishment is death, a person can be spared if he repents and turns himself in, returns any stolen property, and pays *diya* to the family of his victim(s).

Under Saudi law, an accused is innocent until proven guilty, and conviction for an offense requires proof beyond a reasonable doubt.⁵¹ If there is any doubt about a defendant’s guilt, a *qadi* cannot impose a *hadd* punishment.⁵² There are two types of doubt that could prevent the imposition of a *hadd* punishment. First, unclear or ambiguous authority regarding how to apply the law creates sufficient doubt.⁵³ Additionally, questions over the act itself create enough doubt to overcome the appropriateness of *hadd* punishments in a given case.⁵⁴

A confession can constitute proof of a *hadd* crime, but the accused must repeat his confession the same number of times as the crime would require evidence to be presented by witnesses.⁵⁵ If a confession is withdrawn, then a *hadd* punishment cannot be applied.⁵⁶ This withdrawal can occur any time until the moment of execution.⁵⁷

There are also strict requirements for witnesses. A witness in Saudi Arabian court must be male, sane, a Muslim, and of “good character.”⁵⁸ A witness must be accurate, testifying, for example, in a trial for *zina* that he saw the act of adultery with his own eyes.⁵⁹ A witness who is found to be wrong is guilty himself and subject to a punishment as harsh as eighty lashes.⁶⁰ Other *hadd* crimes require at least two eyewitnesses.⁶¹

Judges are generally unwilling to accept circumstantial evidence of *hadd* crimes, and this type of evidence is easy to refute.⁶² For example, an unmarried woman who becomes pregnant

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⁵³ Id.
⁵⁴ Id.
⁵⁵ Id. at 876-77.
⁵⁷ Vogel, *supra* note 133, at 244.
⁵⁹ Id. at 879.
⁶⁰ Id. False testimony in a case of *zina* is a *hadd* crime, and punished by eighty lashes. *Id.* False testimony in another type of case is a *ta’zir* crime, and the punishment is not as harsh. *Id.*
⁶¹ Vogel, *supra* note 133, at 245.
⁶² Id. at 245.
can simply declare that she was raped or that the act occurred while she was sleeping.\footnote{163}

The judges of the general court have great discretion, although their decisions are subject to the review of the executive branch.\footnote{164} Hadd crimes are subject to the fixed punishments specified in the Qur\'an, but a judge can choose to impose a harsher punishment under ta'zir.\footnote{165} For example, theft has a hadd punishment of amputation; one judge, however, sentenced two people to death for a bank robbery in which no one was injured and most of the property was returned.\footnote{166} In regard to this decision, the Ministry of Interior said, “It is part of the completeness to pass a harsher sentence . . . for offences which generate harm.”\footnote{167} Qisas crimes are also subject to fixed punishments; for example, the punishment for murder is public beheading.\footnote{168} The murderer will only be executed, however, if all of the victim’s heirs demand it, and the family has the option to collect blood money from the defendant rather than demanding the death penalty.\footnote{169} It is preferable and in fact “the Government of Saudi Arabia, in pursuit of the Shari’a does its utmost . . . to convince the relatives of the victim to agree to commute the Kisas [sic] into blood-money.”\footnote{170}

For ta’zir punishments, judges enjoy much more flexibility in choosing the punishment but are also not subject to the strict rules of evidence regulating hudud crimes.\footnote{171} Generally, the same safeguards are expected to carry over to ta’zir crimes, but compliance with these evidentiary requirements is considered only one factor among many.\footnote{172} For example, if a confession is withdrawn for a hadd crime, the judge cannot apply the specified hadd punishment.\footnote{173} A withdrawn confession would not affect punishment for qisas or ta’zir crimes.\footnote{174}
The Republic of Nigeria differs greatly from Saudi Arabia in its system of Islamic law. Shari’a law is used in combination with existing penal codes, and is only implemented in the northern part of the country.

A. Political Background and Legal System

Nigeria gained independence from Great Britain in 1960. For the next sixteen years, Nigeria was governed by three separate military regimes. The country was next ruled by a civilian government, the Second Republic, but, after only four years, the military was able, once again, to seize control of the country as it was suffering under a ruined economy. Military rule lasted from 1983 until 1999, when a civilian government run by President Olusegun Obasanjo came into power. Currently, Nigeria is divided into North and South regions. The country has thirty-six states, each of which has its own governor and assembly.

As a colony of Great Britain, Nigeria was originally subject to English law. The government, however, allowed Islamic law to be applied in northern Nigeria. This permission was modified when the Native Court Ordinance of 1933 directed that “Native courts... may impose a fine or imprisonment... or may inflict any punishment authorised by native law or custom provided it does not involve mutilation or torture, and is not repugnant to natural justice and humanity.” This ban encompassed the penalty of

176. Id.
177. Id. at 1208-09.
178. Id. at 1209.
181. Barrow, supra note 175, at 1210.
182. Id.
183. Id. (internal citation omitted). There is only one documented case in which an Islamic procedural rule was found “repugnant to natural justice and humanity.” Peters, supra note 33, at 8. This finding involved the evidence rule that prohibited an accused from giving evidence on his own behalf in a trial for a hadd crime if the plaintiff produces “full evidence.” Id. (citing Guri v. Hadejia Native Authority, 4 FSC 44 (1959)).
stoning. In 1947, the law was amended to provide that if a person committed a crime under native law and written law, the punishment imposed could not exceed that provided for by the English written law. This meant that the Supreme Court could reverse capital sentences even if the original sentence complied with Maliki law. In addition, native punishments such as amputation and stoning were replaced with terms of imprisonment. These provisions remained in force until 1960.

Currently, Northern and Southern Nigeria continue to have separate legislation. The North is governed by the Penal Code Federal Provisions Act of 1959 (Penal Code of Northern Nigeria), while the South is governed by the Criminal Code Act of 1961.

The secular constitution passed in 1999 prohibits adoption of state religion but provides for a Shari'a court of appeal if any state requires one.

1. Islamic Law

Twelve northern states, of the thirty-six states and one territory in Nigeria, have enacted Shari'a penal codes, reintroducing criminal law into the Shari'a courts. In 1999, Zamfara State became the first northern state to introduce Shari'a for criminal law; the law took effect on January 27, 2000. Other northern states soon followed, and by 2002, eleven more northern states, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto, and Yobe, had adopted Shari'a criminal law. Rapid change has resulted in pervasive confusion over the laws. Some states amended existing laws rather than writing new codes, and there is still substantial similarity between the Penal Code for Northern

184. Id. at 6.
185. Barrow, supra note 175, at 1210.
186. Peters, supra note 33, at 10.
187. Barrow, supra note 175, at 1210.
188. Id. at 1211.
189. See Political Shari'a, supra note 180, at 9.
190. Barrow, supra note 175, at 1211.
191. Id. at 1211-12. In some states, criminal sentences were guided by Shari'a law even before the official adoption of a Shari'a penal code. Peters, supra note 33, at 13.
192. See Political Shari'a, supra note 180, at 13.
193. Id. at 14. There have been other instances in which Shari'a criminal law has been imposed in Nigeria. For example, in the southwestern state of Oyo, a man was flogged for having extra-marital sex after having been sentenced by an Independent Shari'a Panel established by Muslim groups rather than the government. Id. at 14 n.19.
194. Id. at 15.
Nigeria and Shari'a penal codes. It has been observed that the laws generally contain “incomprehensible wording,” mistakes in cross-referencing, and omissions. In addition, the rigidity to which the Shari'a criminal code is adhered varies greatly from state to state.

Most Nigerian Muslims are Sunni and follow the Maliki school of jurisprudence. The Maliki school is considered fairly flexible, because it allows for use of urf, or useful public practice, and maslaha, or public good, as sources of law. The laws in the code contain provisions on hudud offenses and also set forth the appropriate punishments for certain other offenses. The Shari'a courts decide cases on a case-by-case basis, without the use of precedent. The Maliki school of jurisprudence provides that a person is presumed guilty until innocence is proven.

Shari'a law applies only to Muslim citizens, and non-Muslims are tried by common law courts or customary courts. Cases against Muslims are usually brought in Shari'a courts, although the government has some authority to decide which cases should go to which courts. Zamfara State has specifically provided that all cases involving Muslims must be heard by Shari'a courts.

2. The Courts

First, a criminal case is heard in a state Shari'a court, where each case is heard by one judge. There are both lower and upper state Shari'a courts, and upper Shari'a courts can hear appeals

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195. Id.
196. Peters, supra note 33, at 14.
197. Political Shari'a, supra note 180, at 17. Generally, states with significant non-Muslim populations have enforced the new codes with less enthusiasm than states such as Zamfara. Id.
199. Political Shari'a, supra note 180, at 11.
201. Bose, supra note 198, at 787.
203. Political Shari'a, supra note 180, at 14.
204. Id. at 19.
205. Id. at 21. The law, passed in 2002, provides that “magistrates courts of whatever grade shall cease to have jurisdiction to try any criminal offence where the accused or all the accused persons profess the Islamic faith.” Id. at 21 (citing SECTION 3 OF MAGISTRATES COURTS LAW § 2 (2002) (Restriction of Powers)).
206. Id.
207. Id. at 18.
from lower Shari'a courts. A defendant has thirty days after sentencing to appeal her sentence. Appeals from the upper Shari'a courts are heard by a panel of three to five judges on the Shari'a Court of Appeal. The Federal Constitution provides for Islamic courts, or a Shari'a Court of Appeal, "for any state that requires it." The state Shari'a Courts of Appeal have jurisdiction "as may be conferred upon it by the law of the State," and "exercise such appellate and supervisory jurisdiction in civil proceedings involving questions of Islamic personal Law which the court is competent to decide." The Constitution defines Islamic personal law as:

(a) any question of Islamic personal Law regarding a marriage concluded in accordance with that Law, including a question relating to the validity or dissolution of such a marriage or a question that depends on such a marriage and relating to family relationship or the guardianship of an infant;
(b) where all the parties to the proceedings are muslims, any question of Islamic personal Law regarding a marriage, including the validity or dissolution of that marriage, or regarding family relationship, a founding or the guarding of an infant;
(c) any question of Islamic personal Law regarding a wakf, gift, will or succession where the endower, donor, testator or deceased person is a muslim;
(d) any question of Islamic personal Law regarding an infant, prodigal or person of unsound mind who is a muslim or the maintenance or the guardianship of a muslim who is physically or mentally infirm; or
(e) where all the parties to the proceedings, being muslims, have requested the court that hears the case in the first instance to determine that case in accordance with Islamic personal law, any other question.

With the introduction of Shari'a Penal Law, the courts hear criminal appeals as well. The decisions of the Shari'a Courts of Appeal are final, unless there is a constitutional question bringing the case under the jurisdiction of the Nigerian Supreme Court. As

208. Id.
209. Id.
210. Id.
212. NIG. CONST. ch. VII, art. 277(1).
213. NIG. CONST. ch. VII, art. 277(2).
of September 2004, no *Shari'a* criminal sentences had reached the federal level.\(^{215}\)

### B. The Death Penalty

As of January 2004, the Nigerian Prison Services reported that there were 448 people awaiting the execution of a death sentence.\(^{216}\) At least thirty-three death sentences have been passed since 1999.\(^{217}\)

#### 1. Offenses

Until recently, Muslim judges tried criminal cases under Islamic law according to statutes from the English common law and Nigerian statutes.\(^{218}\) The extension of *Shari'a* law to criminal cases in the northern states, however, has resulted in harsher punishments and less discretion for judges.\(^{219}\) For example, the new *Shari'a* law specifies that *zina*, which was previously punishable by flogging, now carries a mandatory death sentence, by stoning.\(^{220}\) Other capital offenses under the *Shari'a* penal codes include rape, sodomy, incest, robbery, and murder.\(^{221}\) Apostasy, a *hadd* offense for which the penalty is death, is not included in the *Shari'a* penal codes, probably due to the diversity of religion in Nigeria.\(^{222}\) Since 2000, at least ten people have been sentenced

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216. Amnesty International, *supra* note 179. Death sentences are given under the Criminal Code for crimes such as murder and armed robbery, but the last execution under the Criminal Code occurred in 1999. *Id.*
217. *Id.*
218. Bose, *supra* note 198, at 790 (internal citation omitted).
219. *Id.* at 791.
220. Amnesty International, *supra* note 179 (defining the person who commits *zina* as "whoever, being a man or a woman fully responsible, has sexual intercourse through the genital (sic) of a person over whom he has no sexual rights and in circumstances in which no doubt exists as to the illegality of the act"). The law distinguishes between married and unmarried defendants. *Political Shari'a*, *supra* note 180, at 22. Unmarried defendants are punished by one hundred lashes for the crime of fornication. *Id.*
221. See Amnesty International, *supra* note 179; *Political Shari'a*, *supra* note 180, at 22.
222. *Political Shari'a*, *supra* note 180, at 11.
to death, for murder, sodomy, and adultery. As of September 2004, only one sentence has been carried out, a hanging after the defendant was found guilty of murder and did not appeal his sentence.

i. Zina

Unlawful sexual intercourse is punishable by death by stoning if the offender is married or has ever been married. Rape is considered a type of zina. Zina can be proven in three ways in Nigeria. First, a woman can be found guilty solely on the basis of pregnancy outside of marriage. The convictions in two of the most widely-publicized cases under Shari'a law were based upon this evidence. Safiya Husseini was sentenced to death by stoning in 2001 based upon her pregnancy and her confession, although she later withdrew her confession. Amina Lawal was similarly convicted in 2002, based on the evidence of her pregnancy and a confession, which the judge would not permit her to withdraw. Although not a factor in either of these cases, Maliki law, which allows pregnancy to definitively prove adultery, provides that a baby conceived within five years of a woman's marriage can be considered a child of the husband, even if the couple has gotten a divorce. At least one woman has been acquitted on the basis of this "sleeping embryo" theory.

Zina can also be proven by a confession of the accused. Lastly, zina can be proven by the testimony of four male witnesses.

223. Id. at 22. These figures are based on independent research by Human Rights Watch, and some areas of Nigeria do not provide reliable information on this topic. The numbers are, therefore, approximate and expressed as "minimums." Id. at n.39.
224. Id. Sani Yakubu Rodi was executed after he was found guilty of the murder of a woman and her two young children in Katsina State. Id. at 32.
225. Peters, supra note 33, at 19.
226. Id.
227. Political Shari'a, supra note 180, at 22. The impact of this on proof requirements is apparent — in the two most widely publicized cases of women sentenced to death by stoning for zina, Safiya Husseini in Sokoto and Amina Lawal in Katsina, the men involved were both acquitted for lack of evidence. Id. at 23.
228. See id. at 34.
229. Id. Her conviction was overturned by the Shari'a State Court of Appeal in 2002 on procedural grounds. Id.
230. Id. at 35. Her conviction was overturned by the Shari'a State Court of Appeal in 2003 on procedural grounds. Id.
231. Id. at 36.
232. Id.
Some state statutes specifically provide that the witnesses must have seen the man accused of *zina* engaged in the sex act.\textsuperscript{234}

**ii. Hirabah**

The *had\textipa{d}d* punishment for *hirabah* is set forth as:

> Whoever acting alone or in conjunction with others in order to seize property or to commit an offence or for any other reason voluntarily causes or attempts to cause to any person death or hurt or wrongful restraint or fear of instant death or of instant hurt or of instant wrongful restraint in circumstances that renders such person helpless or incapable of defending himself, is said to commit the offence of *hirabah*.\textsuperscript{235}

The penalty for *hirabah* is death if a life is taken during the offense.\textsuperscript{236} Additionally, the Zamfara penal code provides that if life and property are taken during the commission of *hirabah*, the penalty is crucifixion.\textsuperscript{237}

The *Maliki* school provides that a person who has committed *hirabah* will not be punished in this way if he gives himself up to the authorities.\textsuperscript{238} This provision, however, is not contained in any of the Nigerian codes.\textsuperscript{239}

**iii. Qiyas**

Retaliation is applicable to intentional homicide under traditional *Maliki* law.\textsuperscript{240} Intentional homicide is defined as any homicide that is not caused by error or accident.\textsuperscript{241} Intent can be inferred if a lethal weapon is used or if a person attacks another

\textsuperscript{234} *Political Shari'\textipa{a},* supra note 180, at 22.

\textsuperscript{235} *PETERS,* supra note 33, at 23. This wording is taken from the Zamfara Penal Code, but the penal codes of six other states (Bauchi, Jigawa, Kano, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Yobe) have adopted the Zamfara Penal Code almost exactly. *See id.* at 13-14.

\textsuperscript{236} *Id.* at 24.

\textsuperscript{237} *Id.* The code does not define crucifixion, and the meaning is in dispute under *Maliki* doctrine — some authorities say that the convict must be crucified before death, others provide that the convict's body must be exposed after his death. *Id.*

\textsuperscript{238} *PETERS,* supra note 33, at 24.

\textsuperscript{239} *Id.*

\textsuperscript{240} *Id.* at 25.

\textsuperscript{241} *Id.* Homicide by error includes if the perpetrator is not legally capable, if he did not intend to attack the victim, or if the victim was killed by something that is usually not fatal. *See id.* (internal citations omitted).
person in anger.\textsuperscript{242} Some of the new penal codes do not define "intention" clearly,\textsuperscript{243} but the Zamfara Penal Code uses the traditional \textit{Maliki} definition:

... whoever being a \textit{mukallaf} in a state of anger causes the death of a human being (a) with the intention of causing death in ... in such bodily injury as is probable or likely to cause death with an object either sharp or heavy; or (b) with a light stick or whip of any other thing of that nature which is not intrinsically likely or probable to cause death, commits the offence of intentional homicide.\textsuperscript{244}

Although death is the penalty for intentional homicide, the penalty can be replaced by the payment of blood money, or \textit{diya}, if the next of kin request it. Traditional \textit{Maliki} law stated that the penalty of death could be imposed only if the victim was of a greater value than the killer, although this qualifier is not included in any of the new penal codes.\textsuperscript{245} Many of these penal codes do not clearly define what the \textit{diya} should be.\textsuperscript{246}

\section*{2. The Death Penalty and the Federal Constitution}

The Federal Constitution of Nigeria includes several provisions that relate to the issue of the death penalty in Nigeria.\textsuperscript{247} First, the Constitution provides that "[e]very person has a right to life, and no one shall be deprived intentionally of his life, save in execution of the sentence of a court in respect of a criminal offence of which he has been found guilty in Nigeria."\textsuperscript{248} This provision is followed, however, by the right that "[e]very individual is entitled to respect for the dignity of his person, and accordingly — (a) no

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item 242. Id.
\item 243. Id. The Niger and Kano Penal Codes do not clearly define intention according to traditional \textit{Maliki} doctrine:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Whoever being fully responsible ... causes death (a) by doing an act with the intention of causing death or such hurt as is likely to cause death; or (b) by doing an act with knowledge that he is likely by such act to cause death; or (c) by doing a rash and negligent act, commits the offense of culpable homicide ....
\end{itemize}

\textit{Id.} (citing KANO PENAL CODE § 142; NIGER PENAL CODE § 68A (2)(f)).
\item 244. PETERS, \textit{supra} note 33, at 26 (citing ZAMFARA PENAL CODE § 199).
\item 245. Id.
\item 246. Id. at 27.
\end{thebibliography}
person shall be subject to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment . . . ."249 Some have argued that this provision is in conflict with punishments such as stoning and crucifixion that are provided for under the Shari'a penal codes.250

There are also potential conflicts between the Shari'a penal codes and Section 38 of the Nigerian Federal Constitution, which provides that: "Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom (either alone or in community with others, and in public or in private) to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance."251 The Zamfara Penal Code, however, provides that "[w]hoever presides at or is present at or takes part in the worship or invocation of any juju which has been declared unlawful under the [previous provisions] will be punished with death."252

It appears as if views on the death penalty diverge widely between the state governments that have adopted Shari'a law and the federal government. In 2003, the federal government began a public debate on the death penalty in Nigeria and established the National Study Group on the Death Penalty.253 Federal officials have been outspoken in their opposition to some of the death sentences handed down under Shari'a law. During the trial of Amina Lawal for adultery, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Dubem Onyia, issued a press release stating:

The recent flurry of comments and interest within the International Community on the trial of Amina Lawal piques wholesomely the concern of the Nigerian government [....] The Nigerian government [....] shall not fold its arms awhile the rights of its citizens are abused [....] The Nigerian government shall exude its constitutional powers to thwart any negative ruling, which is deemed injurious to its people. We restate that no person shall be condemned to death by stoning in Nigeria. Safiyat and Amina Lawal will not be subjected to abuse of rights. The Nigerian government shall protect their rights.254

249. NIG. CONST. ch. IV, art. 34(1).
250. PETERS, supra note 33, at 38.
251. NIG. CONST. ch. IV, art. 38(1).
252. PETERS, supra note 33, at 41 (citing ZAMFARA PENAL CODE § 406(d)). The previous provision implies that juju includes the worship of any subject other than Allah; included in this prohibition is the practice of witchcraft. Id.
253. Political Shari'a, supra note 180, at 24.
254. Id. at 100 (citing press release signed by Hon. Dubem Onyia, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Nov. 8, 2002).
The President of Nigeria, Obasanjo, has also made comments specifically addressing capital sentences handed down by Shari’a courts. After Safiya Husseini won her appeal in the Shari’a state court of appeal, he said, “I thank God and all those God has used to save the life of Safiya. Her stoning would have been a setback for us.” These statements clearly indicate that the federal government has not accepted the new Shari’a penalties.

IV. COMPARISONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Traditional Islamic criminal law is based upon the fulfillment of four goals: (1) the ascertainment of the truth; (2) the determination of the responsibility of the accused; (3) the remedy to the victim; and (4) the social remedy. The implementation and execution of the death penalty as a punishment in traditional Islamic law is meant to carry out these goals.

Another important value of Islam, however, is the concept of justice. The word “justice” is used at least fourteen times in the Qur’ān, and the words “justice and equality” are used at least sixteen times. This concern for justice is manifested by two primary precepts in the criminal justice system, the presumption of innocence and due process. According to the words of the Prophet, the burden of proof is carried by the accuser. A’isha, the wife of the Prophet, said to “avoid condemning the Muslim to Hudud whenever you can, and when you can find a way out for the Muslim then release him for it. If the Imam errs it is better that he errs in favor of innocence . . . than in favor of guilt.” Addressing due process, the Prophet himself said, “Your lives, your property, and your honor are a burden upon you until you meet your Lord on the Day of Resurrection.  

255. Id. (internal citation omitted).
257. ISLAMIC CRIMINAL LAW AND PROCEDURE: INTRODUCTION, supra note 77, at 60.
258. Id. at 61 (internal citation omitted).
259. Id. (internal citation omitted).
260. Bassiouni, supra note 256, at 27 (internal citation omitted). According to Bassiouni, this Hadith “emphasized the need to uphold due process of law whenever the life, freedom, honor, and property of individuals are at stake. . . . The Sunna is replete with examples in which personal freedom is upheld against the abuse of those who retain power.” Id.
These themes of traditional Islamic jurisprudence are evident in the law of capital punishment. Although the death penalty is imposed for a number of crimes, and in ways which many Westerners find abhorrent, traditional Islamic law retains a number of safeguards intended to prevent imposition of the death penalty in many circumstances. These safeguards include evidentiary requirements and means of avoiding punishment for specific capital crimes. In general, crimes can be proved by the use of witnesses or confessions. The evidentiary requirements are stricter for *hudud* crimes, where death is the mandatory punishment, than for other types of crimes. For *hudud* crimes, there generally must be at least two witnesses, who are male, Muslim, sane, of legal age, and have not “engaged in sinful behavior.” In addition, witnesses must have observed the crime and agree in their descriptions of the crime. If it is found that a witness has testified falsely, the witness himself is subject to punishment. Confessions are governed by similarly strict rules; a confession must be voluntary, and if it is withdrawn at any time before a sentence is executed, a guilty verdict will be invalidated. Although these evidentiary requirements apply to *qisas* and *ta'zir* punishments, they do not have to be strictly complied with, and are only one of several factors considered in determining guilt.

There are also a number of situations specific to certain crimes that prevent the imposition of the death penalty. The crime of *zina* has specific proof requirements, requiring two additional witnesses to the act of adultery. For the crime of *riddah*, recantation is encouraged until the time of sentencing, and some schools impose a duty upon other Muslims to urge recantation. The death penalty is imposed for offense of *hirabah* only if a victim is killed, and a person who turns himself in can escape the death penalty. For the last *hadd* crime, *baghy*, there is a focus upon reconciliation; the Imam has a duty to take extreme measures before resorting to the use of force.

The death penalty for *qisas* is also circumvented in many cases. Although the basis of this punishment is retaliation, the availability of *diya* allows the victim’s family to request money rather than the murderer’s life. The choice of money is considered the more honorable choice, according to the Qur’an.

*Ta'zir* crimes do allow for the use of the death penalty, but this punishment is only to be used in the most extreme circumstances.
Saudi Arabia is unique in that it is a completely Islamic state, and Shari’a law governs all aspects of the criminal law. Despite the total reliance on Shari’a law, as espoused in Article 1 of the Constitution, the system of criminal law has evolved so that procedures of capital cases are not perfectly aligned with traditional Islamic law. First, Islamic law has a strong sense of legality — laws should not be applied retroactively. 261 Although Saudi law has a similar provision, 262 practice diverges from the law. For instance, judges in Saudi Arabia have repeatedly used ta’zir punishments to circumvent the strict evidentiary requirements of hudud punishments. In addition, the government has used fatwas to change the definition of the hadd crime of hirabah from its traditional interpretation, in order to give the crime a much wider scope.

It is claimed that harsh penalties are rarely imposed “due to a strict law of evidence that serves as a human rights delimitation in the rigors of seemingly unalterable law.” 263 Many of the safeguards which exist in name, however, are not always followed in practice. For example, although Saudi Arabian law has many of the same restrictions regarding confessions as traditional Islamic law, international organizations have reported that “voluntary confessions” to crimes are often obtained under coercive conditions. This violates traditional Islamic law and is dangerous when a conviction of a capital crime can be obtained from only one piece of evidence.

Although Saudi Arabian officials claim that their system of criminal justice, based upon Shari’a, has achieved its goals of deterrence, whether the capital punishment system has achieved the goals of a traditional Islamic law system of criminal justice is less certain. On paper, the similarities between the Saudi system and traditional Islamic law are clear. In practice, however, the systems diverge. The Saudi Arabian government has sacrificed the goals of justice and protections of due process in its system of capital punishment.

Nigeria, unlike Saudi Arabia, has a penal system which combines Shari’a law with European law influences. With the hurried, and often careless, creation of new Shari’a penal codes in

261. ISLAMIC CRIMINAL LAW AND PROCEDURE: INTRODUCTION, supra note 77, at 81.
263. Walker, supra note 116, at 879 (internal citation omitted).
response to political pressure, the northern states have created a system which departs from traditional ideas of Islamic justice. Most notably, perhaps, is the evidentiary rule that an accused is guilty until proven innocent. With this presumption, even the use of the traditional law about witnesses and confessions makes protection of due process rights difficult. In addition, the Nigerian states recognize the use of circumstantial evidence, which is not widely used for capital crimes under traditional Islamic law. In contrast, however, use of the theory that the "slightest doubt" should preclude the application of a hudud penalty have contributed towards the avoidance of most harsh hudud penalties.

In addition, many judges try to exercise "damage control" by making the imposition of controversial punishments under Shari'ah law extremely difficult and using the provisions primarily for symbolic and deterrent value. For example, there have been several widely publicized cases involving stoning for zina in the years since the Shari'ah penal codes were established. Although women were convicted in Shari'ah courts on a presumption of guilt, and the use of circumstantial evidence required no proof other than pregnancy, the appeals courts overturned both sentences. In addition, there have been indications that the federal government of Nigeria would intervene to prevent the use of the death penalty for a Shari'ah crime. It is possible that judges' cautious implementation of the death penalty and adherence to the evidentiary requirements during appeal are inspired by this knowledge.

Internationally, Islamic countries have been criticized for their treatment of human rights, particularly in cases involving the death penalty. Often, the international community blames Islamic influence for the harsh penalties and violations of human rights. Both Saudi Arabia and Nigeria have faced this type of criticism. Neither country, however, necessarily applies pure Islamic law as it is stated under Shari'ah. Traditional Islamic law, while providing for the death penalty, has a number of safeguards to lessen the frequency with which the penalty is used, and also stresses principles such as proportionality and forgiveness. Saudi Arabia, although a 'pure' Islamic state, has incorporated different provisions into its penal code, including adding additional capital crimes and allowing for the use of ta'zir when the strict

264. See id. at 39.
requirements of a *hadd* crime cannot be met. Nigeria, as a secular state with some state Islamic penal codes, abandons some of the principles found throughout traditional Islamic law and does not require the same evidentiary burdens relied upon in *Shari’a*. In Nigeria, it ultimately seems to be the reluctance of the federal government, rather than the protections of Islamic law, that prevent the use of the death penalty for *Shari’a* crimes. Although traditional Islamic law provides for the use of the death penalty, this use is tempered by provisions meant to constrain the use of death as a punishment. When countries adopt Islamic criminal law, however, it is often these constraining provisions that are left behind, while the harsh punishments become an accepted part of the criminal code and lead to misunderstandings about the use of the death penalty in Islamic law.