

# Secular groups write to Nigerian President over blasphemy death sentences

Posted: Sun, 2nd Aug 2015

The National Secular Society has joined other secularist organisations in calling for a full pardon and civil protection for nine people recently sentenced to death by a Sharia court in Nigeria.

The letter, organised by the Secular Policy Institute, expresses deep concerns over the death sentences handed out for blasphemy and appeals to the Nigerian President, Governor, and Ambassador to ensure the preservation of the individuals' rights of free conscience and religious expression.

The so-called 'Kano Nine' were sentenced to death by a sharia court in the Nigerian state of Kano after what the BBC described as a "speedily done" and "secret" trial.

The charges centred around claims that the nine accused said that Niasse, the founder of the Tijaniya sect, was "bigger than [the] Prophet Muhammad".

The nine are alleged to have made the comment at a religious gathering held to honour Niasse, in a venue which was burnt down by a mob before the nine (eight men and one woman) were arrested by police over the accusations.

The head of the religious police in Kano told the BBC: "We quickly put them on trial to avoid bloodshed because people were very angry and trying to take law into their hands."

There were reports of celebrations across parts of the city when the death sentences were announced.

The Secular Policy Institute note that "comments by local-authorities expressing relief at stemming further vigilante acts" give the impression that the verdicts were the result of "political expedience rather than a fair administration of justice."

The 'Kano Nine' are "being sacrificed to pacify a mob", the signatories write.

There was extreme secrecy around the trial, and even the names of all of the accused are not known.

Nigeria operates two countervailing jurisprudences – Customary and Sharia. The Customary Criminal code would call for a maximum two-year sentence for purported violation, with the Sharia code specifying a death sentence.

The letter argues that at the very least the State should uphold civil over religious law.

- [Share on What's App](#)
- [Share on Facebook](#)
- [Share on Twitter](#)
- [Share on Email](#)
- [Subscribe to RSS Feed](#)

Tags: [Free speech](#)

## Related Campaigns

- 

### [Protect freedom of expression](#)

We promote free speech as a positive value.

[Read More](#)

## Related Articles

### [We must empower secular schools to assert their ethos](#)

When Islamists tried to bully Michaela Community School, the school refused to back down. Other schools have not been so successful in challenging religious intimidation. Megan Manson explores what made Michaela different. [Read More »](#)

### [NSS announces major conference on protecting liberal values](#)

Kenan Malik, Joan Smith and more speaking at NSS Secularism 2024 conference in London. [Read More »](#)

### [NSS hosts talk with author of Annie Besant book](#)

Renowned author Michael Meyer discusses 'A Dirty, Filthy Book' in online event. [Read More »](#)

### [Three years on, the lessons of Batley are yet to be learned](#)

The Batley affair exposed the Islamist threat to UK schools. We're still yet to come to terms with its implications, says Jack Rivington. [Read More »](#)

## **Response unit needed to tackle blasphemy flashpoints, report says**

Recommendations echo NSS calls for more support for schools facing religious intimidation and threats. [Read More »](#)