

Murdered for the 'crime' of blasphemy

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There has been an onslaught against secularists, atheists, ex-Muslims and countless religious minorities for 'blasphemy'. It's important to remember the individuals, and honour their lives and heroism.

In light of the recent press coverage around the trial of Ahok, a Christian Governor in Indonesia, for alleged blasphemy, and the investigation against Stephen Fry in Ireland, I thought it was important to remind people of the names and courage of those murdered for uttering, writing or drawing blasphemous content in the 21st century.

The list below contains the names and brief details of some of those people killed since 2000 on the basis that they had allegedly committed blasphemy.

It does not include the many thousands who have been attacked and survived. It does not include those who have been arrested by the state for blasphemy. It does not include all sectarian killings, unless they were related as well to a claim of blasphemy.

It is almost impossible to list every person around the world who has been killed for this 'crime', even limiting the list to the 21st century.

The vast majority of the people listed below were killed for perceived insults against Islam.

Every time an atrocity happens such as the recent murders in Pakistan, there is outrage and condemnation, but we soon forget until the next deaths. I hope this list can provide a reminder for just some of these victims in one place.

1. Fazal Abbas. Killed in Pakistan in April 2017 for allegedly making derogatory remarks against Mohammed.
2. Yameen Rashid. An activist and blogger from the Maldives known for satirising religion and politics was stabbed to death in April 2017.
3. Mashal Khan was a humanist who campaigned for women's rights in Pakistan. Hundreds of students chanted Islamic slogans as they searched their university campus, looking for Mashal. The mob beat and shot him. Witnesses said his body was still being beaten long after he had died.
4. Professor Tahira Malik, a scientist and Ahmadi, was found dead in April 2017 in her house. An investigation by Pakistani authorities is still ongoing.
5. Ashfaq Ahmed, 68, an Ahmadi, was gunned down in Punjab.
6. Malik Saleem Latif, an Ahmadi leader killed in March 2017.
7. H.Farook was killed in March "for being an atheist", according to his father, who has vowed to continue his work.
8. Xulhas Mannan and Tajoy Mjumdar were murdered in April 2016. Mannan was the editor of Bangladesh's only LGBT magazine.
9. Asad Shah, an Ahmadi shopkeeper, was killed in the UK in March 2016. His killer said Shah had posted 'blasphemous' material on Facebook.
10. Faisal Arefin Dipan was murdered in October 2015, in Bangladesh after he published works of works critical of Islam.

11. Malleshappa M Kalburgi was shot dead in September 2015 after disputed with Indian Hindu groups.
12. Niloy Chatterjee was murdered in August 2015, Bangladesh. He was the organiser of a rationalist society and a blogger.
13. Ananta Bijoy Das was an atheist blogger. Das was killed in May 2015.
14. Washiqur Rahman lost his life in March 2015 in Bangladesh. He was a writer and blogger.
15. Farkhunda was brutally killed in March 2015, in Afghanistan, after she was accused of desecrating the Koran.
16. Dr. Avjit Roy, a Bangladeshi blogger and atheist, was murdered in February 2015.
17. Govind Pansare died in February 2015, the victim of Hindu extremists campaigning against superstition and black magic Maharashtra.
18. January 2015: The offices of *Charlie Hebdo* are attacked. Stephane Charbonnier, Jean Cabut, Georges Wolinski, Bernard Verlhac, Philippe Honore, Bernard Maris, Elsa Cayat, Mustapha Ourrad, Michel Renaud, Frederic Boisseau, Ahmed Merabet, Brigadier Franck Brinsolaro and Clarissa Jean-Philippe all lost their lives.
19. Prof. Shafiul Islam asked that the face veil not be worn in his classes. He was then killed, in November 2014.
20. Tufayl Naqvi was mentally ill, and was accused of insulting the 'prophet'. He was murdered in November 2014, in Pakistan.
21. Shehzad Masih and his wife Shama, a Christian couple, were murdered in November 2014 after they were accused of desecrating a Koran.
22. Rashid Rehman was a lawyer who defended a client in Pakistan who was accused of blasphemy. He was killed in May 14.
23. Ahmed Rajib Haider was an atheist blogger in Bangladesh. He lost his life in February 2013.
24. Hindu extremists killed Narendra Dabholkar in February 2013.
25. Afrasheem Ali, a cleric and politician from the Maldives, was killed in October 2012.
26. Shabaz Bhatti urged the reform of Pakistan's blasphemy laws. He was a politician, and a Christian. He was killed in March 2011.
27. Salman Taseer was the Governor of Punjab. He assisted Asia Bibi and urged for change in Pakistan, and particularly for the reform of laws against blasphemy law. In January 2011 he was assassinated by his bodyguard, who inspired Asad Shah's killer.
28. On the 9 August 2009, in Nigeria's Kano state, a mob beat to death a fifty-year-old Muslim man who was said to have blasphemed Mohammed.
29. A Christian police officer and two civilians were killed by a mob on 9 February 2008, again in Kano state, Nigeria. This was after the alleged distribution of a leaflet that supposedly slandered Mohammed.
30. Nine Nigerian Christians were killed on 28 September 2007. Muslims have complained that Christian students had drawn a picture of Mohammed.
31. Christina Oluwatoyin Olywasesin died on 21 March 2007 in Nigeria. A student complained that Olywasesin, a Christian, had touched a bag which allegedly contained a Koran, and had thereby defiled the Koran.
32. There were up to 200 deaths around the world after the publication of Mohammed cartoons in the Danish magazine [Jyllands-Posten](#). It was (another) sign of things to come.
33. Numerous deaths occurred in February 2006 in Nigeria, after a Christian teacher confiscated a copy of a Koran from a pupil who was reading it during an English lesson. The incident provoked rioting by Muslims.
34. There were 250 deaths on 20 November 2002, again in Nigeria: Muslim and Christian mobs rampaged after an article in a daily newspaper suggested that Mohammed would have approved of a [Miss World](#) pageant that was taking place in Abuja. Muslim mobs accused the newspaper of blasphemy.

The length alone of this (incomplete) list stands as testimony to the battle that still needs to be fought to defend free speech.

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