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Mauritania Passes Law Mandating Death Penalty for "Blasphemy"

Patheos (17.05.2018) - <https://bit.ly/2KLCfro> - Mauritania has long been one of the worst countries in the world for freethinkers. Those guilty of "blasphemy" have been threatened with the death penalty, which is disturbing on its own but even more so when you realize how blasphemy is always in the eye of the beholder.

But now that punishment will become mandatory.

The International Humanist and Ethical Union reports:

The National Assembly passed a law on April 27, 2018 that replaces article 306 of the Criminal Code and makes death penalty mandatory for anyone convicted of "blasphemous speech" and acts deemed "sacrilegious". The new law eliminates the possibility under article 306 of substituting prison terms for the death penalty for certain apostasy-related crimes if the offender promptly repents. The law also extends the scope of application of the death penalty to "renegade acts."

The law also provides for a sentence of up to two years in prison and a fine of up to 600,000 Ouguiyas (approximately EUR 13,804) for "offending public indecency and Islamic values" and for "breaching Allah's prohibitions" or assisting in their breach.

That law has prompted a coalition of groups to urge officials there to reverse the law immediately. They also referenced a blogger accused of blasphemy who has been sentenced to death, had his conviction overturned, but still remains in police custody.

Mauritanian authorities should reverse the recent adoption of a law on apostasy related crimes making the death penalty mandatory for "blasphemous speech" and "sacrilegious acts", 21 national and international non-governmental organizations said today. The authorities should also end the arbitrary detention and guarantee the safety of a blogger, Mohamed Cheikh Ould Mkhaitir, whose case appears to be related to the timing of the law. Mkhaitir was convicted of apostasy and sentenced to death in December 2014 before a court reduced his punishment to two years imprisonment. Although his sentence has expired, the authorities continue to detain him.

There's no reason to believe Mauritania will flip on this issue. But their passage of this bill sends an important message to tourists or non-Muslims who may want to visit the western African nation: Don't go. It's not safe.

Visiting Mauritania is now a death trap for anyone with a single critical thought about Islam.
