Relation between Political Manipulation of Religion and the enforcement of Anti Blasphemy Law

The relation between political manipulation of religion and the enforcement of anti-blasphemy law is a complex and controversial topic that has implications for human rights, especially freedom of religion or belief and freedom of expression. Blasphemy laws are legal provisions that prohibit insulting or defaming religion, usually the dominant or state religion, and punish offenders with penalties ranging from fines to imprisonment or even death. Blasphemy laws are often used to silence dissenting voices, stifle pluralism and diversity, and foster intolerance and extremism.

One of the arguments that is often used to justify blasphemy laws is that they are necessary to protect public morals and social harmony, and to prevent violence and disorder caused by religious offense. However, this argument is flawed for several reasons. First, it assumes that public morals and social harmony are defined by a single religious perspective, which ignores the diversity of beliefs and opinions that exist in any society. Second, it implies that religious offense is a sufficient justification for limiting freedom of expression, which contradicts international human rights law and standards. Third, it overlooks the fact that blasphemy laws themselves can be a source of violence and disorder, as they can incite hatred, discrimination and persecution against religious minorities, dissenters and critics.

In fact, there is a strong correlation between blasphemy laws and religious extremism, as evidenced by several studies and reports. For example, a 2017 report by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) ranked 71 countries by their blasphemy laws and found that countries with harsh blasphemy laws were more likely to have higher levels of social hostilities involving religion, government favoritism of religious groups, and violations of religious freedom. Similarly, a 2020 article by Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) examined the relationship between blasphemy laws and religious extremism in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and concluded that blasphemy laws are problematic not only for their negative impact on human rights, but also for their contribution to the rise of extremism and violence in the region.

Therefore, it can be argued that blasphemy laws are not only ineffective but also counterproductive in achieving public morals and social harmony. Rather than protecting religion from offense, they undermine the dignity and rights of individuals and groups who hold different or dissenting views on religion. Rather than preventing violence and disorder, they fuel intolerance and extremism that threaten peace and security. Blasphemy laws are incompatible with democratic values and principles, such as pluralism, diversity and respect for human rights. The international community should work together to repeal blasphemy laws and promote freedom of religion or belief and freedom of expression for all.

References:

- USCIRF (2017). Respecting rights? Measuring the world's blasphemy laws. Retrieved from https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Blasphemy%20Laws%20Report.pdf

- CSW (2020). The relationship between blasphemy laws and religious extremism in the Middle East and North Africa. Retrieved from https://forbinfull.org/2020/07/13/the-relationship-between-blasphemy-laws-and-religious-extremism-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa/