Neville Cox, (2020) explores the international human rights law framework, which recognizes both the right to freedom of expression and the right to freedom of religion or belief. He argues that blasphemy laws can be justified on the grounds of protecting public morals, which is a legitimate limitation on freedom of expression under international human rights law. He suggests that public morals should be determined through a process of dialogue and deliberation that respects the diversity of moral views in a society, and can serve a positive function by promoting social cohesion and preventing violence and discrimination based on religion.

He acknowledges that blasphemy laws can also be misused to suppress dissenting opinions and minority rights. To ensure blasphemy laws are compatible with human rights standards, the article proposes safeguards and criteria, including defining blasphemy narrowly and precisely, requiring a high threshold of harm or offense, applying blasphemy laws equally and impartially to all religions, providing adequate defenses and exceptions, imposing proportionate and reasonable sanctions, and ensuring judicial review and oversight. He concludes that blasphemy laws are not inherently incompatible with international human rights law, but rather depend on how they are formulated and implemented, and can be a legitimate way of balancing competing rights and interests of freedom of expression and freedom of religion or belief, while protecting public morals and social harmony.

According to Kuru,A.T. (2020), some Muslim countries have laws that allow for the death penalty for blasphemy. These laws are controversial and have been criticized by human rights groups. In some cases, these laws have been used to target religious minorities or political opponents. The article also discusses how these laws are not always enforced and how some countries have taken steps to reform them.

Blasphemy is defined as speech or actions considered to be contemptuous of God or of people or objects considered sacred. Of the 71 countries that criminalize blasphemy, 32 are majority Muslim. The offense is punishable by death in Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Brunei, Mauritania and Saudi Arabia . Among non-Muslim-majority countries, the harshest blasphemy laws are in Italy, where the maximum penalty is two years in prison.

Blasphemy laws historically emerged to serve the political and religious authorities, and they continue to have a role in silencing dissent in many Muslim countries. In 2019, Pakistan’s National Assembly unanimously voted to expand the country’s laws on blasphemy, which carries the death penalty for insulting the Prophet Muhammad. The new law now extends the punishment to those deemed to have insulted the prophet’s companions, which could include thousands of early Muslims, with 10 years in prison or life imprisonment. Human rights activists are concerned that the expanded laws could target minorities, particularly Shiite Muslims who are critical of many leading early Muslims.

However, not all Muslim countries have blasphemy laws or enforce them strictly. In 2019, New Zealand and Greece repealed their blasphemy laws following campaigns by human rights activists. In Pakistan, the Supreme Court upheld the acquittal of Asia Bibi, a Christian woman who had been sentenced to death for blasphemy, sparking violent protests and calls to execute her. And in Indonesia, the government had considered a bill to expand the criminalization of blasphemy but ultimately delayed it following protests by civil society groups.

Some scholars have argued that blasphemy laws are not compatible with Islamic principles of justice and tolerance. They point out that the Quran does not prescribe any worldly punishment for blasphemy, but rather advises Muslims to ignore or avoid those who mock their faith. They also cite examples from the life of Prophet Muhammad, who did not retaliate against those who insulted him or his religion. They suggest that blasphemy laws should be reformed or abolished in order to protect freedom of expression and religious diversity in Muslim countries.

https://theconversation.com/execution-for-a-facebook-post-why-blasphemy-is-a-capital-offense-in-some-muslim-countries-129685