

*Guidance Note*

**Scholarly Clarity on the  
Prohibition of Taking the Law into One's Own Hands**

**“Executing Islamic punishments is the exclusive prerogative of the ruler”**

Islam is a religion of peace and security, tolerance and forbearance, forgiveness and compassion, respect and love, and of moderation. There is no scope for murder and decimation, anarchy and disorder, extremism and terrorism in it whatsoever. As Allah Almighty states in the Qur'an that whoever has killed one person unjustly, it is as if he has murdered the entire human race. [Qur'an 5:32] With reference to anarchy and disorder in the land as well as terrorism, Allah Almighty states that this is a more severe crime than even murder. [Qur'an 2:191] Furthermore, it is an unequivocal statement of the Prophet Muhammad (Allah bless him and grant him peace) that Allah Almighty will punish those people who cause pain and anguish to other people in the world. [Sabih Muslim, Book of Virtue]

It needs to be made clear that Islam has decreed specific punishments for certain crimes, which can only be implemented by the ruler. This is the collective and consensual verdict (*ijma'*) of the jurist scholars (*fuqaha'*) of the Muslim nation (*ummah*).

- The prominent scholar al-'Allamah Wahbah al-Zuhaili writes: “There is an agreement of the jurist scholars of the *ummah* that only the ruler or his deputy can implement the punishments (*hudud*), for during the time of the Prophet (Allah bless him and grant him peace) and the rightly-guided Caliphs (Allah be pleased with them), no punishments were carried out without their express permission. [Al-Fiqh al-Islami wa Adillatub]
- The distinguished jurist al-'Allamah al-Shami writes: “The Imam (ruler) is a necessary condition for the implementation of the punishments. [Radd al-Muhtar]
- The great jurist al-Imam Ahmad Rida Qadri writes: “In this (non-Muslim) country, the Islamic punishments cannot be implemented.” [Fatava Ridawiyah, Volume 13]
- In the marginalia of *Husam al-Haramayn*, this previous principle has been further clarified: “Know that capital punishment is not the prerogative of the civilians in the land, rather it

is the jurisdiction of those governing only, whether the country is Islamic or non-Islamic.”  
[*Husam al-Haramayn (the marginalia)*, Page 97]

It becomes clear from the above references that the implementation of prescribed Islamic punishments is specific only to the ruler at the time, no one else has the right to take the law into one's own hands. Therefore, Muslims must remain aware that wherever they may live, adhering to the guidelines of Islam, they must pay special attention to the laws of that country and they must never attempt to break the law. The great jurist of Islam, al-Imam Ahmad Rida Qadri, has further made clear: “To engage in actions that are permissible in their own right (*mubab*) but have been declared criminal by the law is tantamount to placing oneself in disrepute and suffering, and that is not permissible, hence it is necessary (*wajib*) to avoid such scenarios and situations. [*Fatawa Ridawiyah*, Volume 17, Page 370]

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The above guidance note issued by the British Muslim Forum is endorsed by the following signatories from the elder first generation of scholars and Imams as well as from the younger British born and trained second generation of scholars and Imams:

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