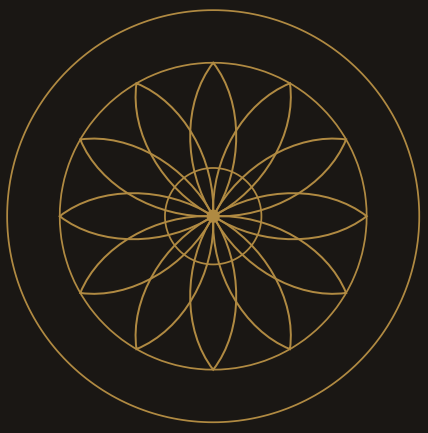


THE SACRED DIVIDE

THE FULL RECORD

Islam

Islam family

HONOR THE FAITH · NAME THE MACHINERY

TEXT CHECKED 2026-10-03

Before you begin

This is the record of Islam in *The Sacred Divide*. It has 27 sections, the same 27 used for every tradition, so that any section can be set beside the same section for another. Every fact is sourced.

Before each section, a short note says what the section is built to show, so you know what you are looking at before you read the detail.

After each section, a note headed *Why this matters to you* points at the part of the section most likely to touch an ordinary reader: a member, a donor, a parent, a voter, someone thinking about leaving, or someone outside forming an opinion. It usually ends with a question. The questions are not traps. They are the ones a careful reader would ask anyway.

The hard questions in section 23 are set out one at a time: the question, why it is asked, and an example already documented in this record.

Where a note states a fact, the fact comes from this record's own tables and cited sources or, in a few places, from a well-known research finding named in the text. Corrections are logged, with their dates, in the last section, *What changed on this page*.

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How to read this

Every religion in The Sacred Divide is laid out the same way, in the same 27 sections, so that any section can be compared across religions. This file examines institutions, offices, money and power. It does not judge anyone's faith or the truth of any belief.

EVIDENCE GRADES

Each of the 30 techniques carries a grade for how it is established in this tradition.

- **CODIFIED** Written policy, published rule, contractual requirement, or a procedure the institution has confirmed in its own documents. The strongest grade and the hardest to deny.
- **DOCUMENTED** Established by court judgment, government inquiry, regulatory action, or financial filing. Not the institution's own words, but a body with subpoena power.
- **TAUGHT** Repeated leadership instruction from platform, publication, or curriculum, without a formal rule. Deniable as emphasis rather than policy.
- **CULTURAL** Community enforcement the institution neither mandates nor prevents. Real in effect, unattributable by design — the highest-deniability grade. A volume graded mostly Cultural has not been cleared of anything: it means the page names no document that makes the institution responsible. Cultural does not mean minor, and it is not a finding of absence.

- **CONTESTED** Occurs in some parts of the tradition and is actively opposed in others. Generalizing this grade across a whole tradition is a misuse of it.
- **REFORMED** Documented historically and materially changed since — policy withdrawn, practice ended, or independent oversight accepted. Recorded because omitting it would be dishonest.
- **UNGRADED** Present in the source material without a grade assigned yet. Read as an unverified pattern claim, not as a finding.

RECEIPTS

Bracketed labels such as [OFFICIAL POLICY] name the kind of source a claim rests on.

- **Official policy.** The institution's own written rule: handbook, canon, policy letter, catechism, trust deed, temple recommend question. The strongest evidence available, because it cannot be attributed to a rogue individual.
- **Court record.** Judgments, convictions, filings, and testimony given under oath. Adversarially tested, which is more than most religious claims about themselves have been.
- **Government inquiry.** Royal commissions, grand juries, parliamentary and state investigations with subpoena power. Where these exist they are usually the best record of what an institution did rather than said.
- **Regulatory action.** Findings and penalties from bodies like the SEC or consumer-protection regulators. Narrow in scope, unusually precise in what they establish.
- **Financial record.** Filings, audited statements, tax returns, disclosed compensation, property transactions. Frequently the only place an institution tells the truth about its priorities.

- **Leadership statement.** Recorded sermons, conference addresses, published letters. The institution in its own voice, to its own people, on the record.
- **Independent investigation.** Reports commissioned by the institution but conducted externally. Weaker than a court and far stronger than a press release — and notable when the institution publishes them in full.
- **Academic source.** Peer-reviewed history, sociology, and demography. Best for context, structure, and scale; weaker for specific institutional conduct.
- **Former member testimony.** Firsthand accounts from people who were inside. Indispensable and interested at once — graded as testimony, never presented as documentary proof.
- **Pattern observed.** A recurring configuration with no single document behind it. Labeled as an observation rather than a finding, and the weakest claim type in this codex.

METHOD

- Separation of targets. This codex analyzes institutional control patterns, never the worth of believers or the truth of beliefs. Theology is out of scope; behavior, money, and power are in scope.
- Pattern over anecdote. A tactic is attributed to a tradition's high-control expressions only where the mechanism recurs — one bad congregation proves nothing; the same architecture in a hundred proves the architecture.
- Evidence weighting. Every factual claim carries a bracketed source-type label and should carry a grade (A–D). Claims marked SOURCE NEEDED or PATTERN OBSERVED are analysis, not established fact, and must not be published as fact.
- Steelman rule. Every tactic section presents the institution's strongest defense before countering it. If the defense cannot be stated in a form its adherents would recognize, the counter is not yet earned.

- Asymmetry honesty. Similar tactic does not mean identical severity. A shunning policy that costs your entire family is not the same as a community that cools toward doubters, and the codex must never flatten that difference.
- The mirror rule. Any framework this powerful can itself be misused — to smear traditions, flatter one's own, or manufacture grievance. The self-audit and language guardrails apply to this project as much as to any institution it examines.

CITATIONS

A small raised number in the text links to the matching item in this religion's Sources, near the end. Every source was checked, and the date of the last check is shown at the top.

01 At a glance

BEFORE YOU READ

The whole page on one screen: how big Islam is, who sits at the top, how that person is chosen and whether anyone can remove them, where the money comes from, and what leaving costs. The disclosure scorecard underneath asks six yes-or-no questions any charity or public company would be expected to answer. Every later section expands one of these rows.

SIZE	Islam has about 2 billion adherents (Pew, 2020 data) [22] and, on Pew's earlier projections, is expected to be nearly as large as Christianity by 2050 and larger after about 2070 [42]. **ACADEMIC SOURCE** · Pew
WHO'S IN CHARGE	The Grand Imam of al-Azhar (the mosque and university in Cairo that is Sunni Islam's most-cited seat of learning) is Sheikh Ahmed el-Tayeb, in office since 2010.
CHOSEN BY	Appointed by presidential decree in 2010; since 2012 the post has been filled by election by al-Azhar's Council of Senior Scholars, confirmed by presidential decree.
REMOVABLE BY	Nobody — Egypt's 2014 Constitution makes the Grand Imam irremovable.

MONEY IN ONE LINE	The money comes from zakat (2.5% obligatory alms), sadaqa (voluntary charity), waqf endowments (historically enormous property trusts), the hajj economy (the pilgrimage to Mecca), halal certification fees (for certifying goods as religiously permitted) and mosque fundraising.
LEAVING IN ONE LINE	Apostasy (leaving Islam) carries criminal penalties in a number of states, up to death in several, and severe social and family consequences far more widely. **OFFICIAL POLICY** · national penal codes — nine states, per Humanists International
THE UNANSWERED QUESTION	If there is no compulsion in religion, why do apostasy statutes still stand — and who benefits from keeping them on the books?
EVIDENCE	None of the 30 techniques is sourced to a named document. The grades are Contested 17, Cultural 8, Codified 2 and Taught 3.
FAMILY	Islam — islam, sunni-islam, shia-islam, ahmadiyya, dawoodi-bohra
LAST CHECKED	2026-10-03

Disclosure scorecard

ACCOUNTS	PAY	SAFEGUARDING	EXTERNAL FIRST	REMOVAL	REPLY
PARTIAL	NO	PARTIAL	PARTIAL	PARTIAL	PARTIAL

Y Yes — established from a public source · **P** Partial — true of some parts of the tradition, or true in some jurisdictions · **N** No — not established from any public source · **?** Not assessable — no institutional apex exists to assess

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

The glance table's answer to who chooses the top office is "Appointed by presidential decree in 2010; since 2012 the post has been filled by election by al-Azhar's Council of Senior Scholars, confirmed by presidential decree", and to who can remove its holder, "Nobody — Egypt's 2014 Constitution makes the Grand Imam irremovable". Read that as though it described the board of a pension fund holding your savings. Would you accept the arrangement there? The scorecard finds no public evidence of leaders' pay. Each "No" is something the institution could publish tomorrow. Ask yourself why it hasn't.

02 A day inside

BEFORE YOU READ

One ordinary day, told from inside. The person is a composite built from documented patterns, not a real individual. The point is to make the structure visible at human scale: phrases like "removal mechanism" or "giving record" are easy to read past, but a Tuesday organized around them is not.

Aliyah · A Tuesday in Ramadan · A European city, a diaspora community

Suhoor (the meal before the day's fast) at 4:10, eating standing up at the counter so as not to wake her sister. Then Fajr (the dawn prayer), and the particular clarity of the early prayer in a quiet flat, which is the best thing in her week and which she would defend against anyone.

On the tram at eight a man looks at her scarf for slightly too long. This is Tuesday. This is also Monday and Thursday. At work nobody says anything and everybody is careful, and the carefulness is its own kind of weather.

Her uncle calls at eleven, which is unusual. He has heard from someone that she was seen at a café with a colleague. He does not accuse her of anything; he says only that people talk and that her mother has enough to worry about. Aliyah says she understands. She says it twice. After she hangs up she sits in the stairwell for four minutes.

At lunch her cousin sends a voice note about the community centre — something about the new imam, and a family that has stopped attending, and a boy, and then the note ends with *anyway don't say anything, they'll make it about the mosque and you know how people are right now.* Aliyah listens to it twice and does not reply.

Iftar (the meal that breaks the fast) at her parents' flat, twenty-one people, three generations, food that no restaurant has ever matched. Her nephew falls asleep against her arm. She thinks, as she does every year, that whatever else is true, this is what she would fight for.

Later her mother asks, gently, in the kitchen, whether she has thought about Tariq's proposal. Aliyah says she is thinking. Her mother says that a woman's situation changes after thirty, and that she says this only because she loves her. Aliyah dries a plate. She is thinking that she does not know how to explain that she wants the iftar and not the arrangement, and that there may be nobody in the flat she can say that to.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Did any moment in that day feel familiar: a cost nobody questions, a door nobody can see how to open? The section of this page that explains that moment is the one to read first. If nothing felt familiar, ask whether that's because it isn't your life, or because the patterns have become normal to you.

03 The forefront

BEFORE YOU READ

The page's thesis in one place. First, the single question the documented record could not answer. Then the widest gap between what the institution says and what the record shows, one cost of leaving set beside how it is officially denied, and the strongest objection to this whole page, answered rather than dismissed.

> You may pray five times a day and mean every word. You may also be exhausted by being asked to answer for two billion people while quietly noticing things inside your own community that nobody will name. This section holds both, and it will not pretend the hostility aimed at you from outside makes the problems inside disappear.

THE UNANSWERED QUESTION

If there is no compulsion in religion, why do apostasy statutes still stand — and who benefits from keeping them on the books?

The widest gap between word and record

THEY SAY	THE RECORD SHOWS	RECEIPT
There is no compulsion in religion.	Several states maintain criminal penalties for leaving it, and this page records no case of the scholars on those states' payrolls calling for their repeal.	OFFICIAL POLICY · national penal codes

One cost of leaving, beside its denial

COST	DOCUMENTED?	DETAIL	THE OFFICIAL DENIAL
Legal jeopardy	It is documented in specific jurisdictions.	Apostasy and blasphemy statutes carry penalties up to death in a few states.	Typically put as: no one is executed for belief, only for sedition.

The strongest objection, answered

The objection. You are feeding people who already want Muslims surveilled and excluded.

What is true in it. That hostility is real, documented, and dangerous, and Muslims in the West bear it daily while being asked to answer for a quarter of humanity. This codex says so plainly in the profile itself.

The answer. And a rule making internal harm unspeakable protects the person who caused it, not the community. The claims here rest on penal codes, ministry regulations, and inquiry findings — and the reformers cited are Muslims.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Try answering the unanswered question yourself: *If there is no compulsion in religion, why do apostasy statutes still stand — and who benefits from keeping them on the books?* If you can't, who could, and would asking them be welcome? How an institution reacts to a fair question often tells you more than the answer does.

04 What healthy looks like here

BEFORE YOU READ

What genuinely works in Islam, stated first and separately from any critique. That is a standing rule of this book: no tradition is reduced to its worst documented moments. Anything criticized later is measured against the best of what is described here.

> There are about 2 billion Muslims worldwide (Pew, 2020 data). Islam is a tradition of submission to God, centered on the Qur'an and the example of the Prophet Muhammad, with rich legal, mystical and intellectual schools.

The tradition has its own anti-clericalism. No intermediary stands between the believer and God, and for centuries scholars refused state payroll to preserve their independence.

Healthy practice here looks like reformist and feminist scholarship from within, in the revival of ijtihad (independent legal reasoning from the sources), and like mosques with elected boards and financial transparency.

Qur'an 2:256, "there is no compulsion in religion", is the tradition's own standard, and it is the one this page measures the institutions against.

Some of that standard is already on the record. Musawah, the global movement for equality in Muslim family law, was launched in Kuala Lumpur in 2009 by the Malaysian group Sisters in Islam [34] [35]. Nahdlatul Ulama, the world's largest Muslim organization, chose its chair in a contested vote in 2021 [25]. Morocco's 2004 family code set the marriage age at 18 and opened divorce to wives [6]. Indonesia raised the marriage age to 19 for both sexes in 2019 [3], and Tunisia repealed its ban on Muslim women marrying non-Muslim men in 2017 [7]. In India a Muslim woman, Shayara Bano, won the case that struck down instant triple talaq (divorce by a husband pronouncing it three times at once) [2]. Each is a place where members or institutions met the standard this page applies, and each is recorded here as credit.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

A bias check before the critique. People tend to read criticism of their own group as an attack and criticism of other groups as simply true. Social psychologists call this in-group bias; it shows up even when the groups are assigned at random (Tajfel's "minimal group" experiments, 1971). If you belong here, did this section feel fair? If you don't, did anything in it surprise you? The surprise is a rough measure of what you had assumed.

05 History

BEFORE YOU READ

A dated timeline and a few moments where the direction changed. Dates matter because they show that most rules had a beginning. A rule that began in a particular year, for a particular reason, is a rule that can be examined, and sometimes retired.

Islam began in 7th-century Arabia, with Muhammad's prophetic movement in Mecca and Medina (610–632 CE). Rapid expansion under the caliphates (the states ruled by the Prophet's successors) fused religious and political authority. The classical legal schools (madhhabs) crystallized interpretation. There is no central 'church', and authority is distributed among scholars, states and communities.

Timeline

HISTORY AT A GLANCE



Numbered markers match the timeline below; spacing is proportional to the years.

1

610–622 CE

Muhammad's prophetic mission in Mecca; persecution of early followers

A movement without a state, defined against elite power.

2

622–632

Hijra (the emigration of the Prophet and his followers) to Medina; community becomes a polity

Religion and governance fuse in the founding generation itself — a durable template.

3

632–661

Rashidun caliphate; succession disputes; Qur'an compiled

Political succession and religious authority become inseparable questions.

4 661–1258

Umayyad and Abbasid empires; legal schools (madhhabs) form; the sciences of hadith (reports of the Prophet's words and deeds) develop

Scholars build interpretive authority independent of rulers — a genuine check on power.

5 900–1500

Sufi (mystical) orders, madrasas (religious schools), vast waqf endowments

Enormous religious wealth accumulates in trusts with named administrators.

6 1500–1900

Ottoman, Safavid, Mughal empires; state-appointed clerical hierarchies

Religious offices become civil service posts.

7 1800S–1924

Colonial rule; waqf and sharia (Islamic law) courts absorbed by colonial states; caliphate abolished

Classical scholarly independence is dismantled and never rebuilt.

8 1920S–1970S

Islamic revival movements; state religious ministries established

Governments become the largest employers of clergy — endorsement for salary.

9 1970S–2000S

Oil wealth funds global religious infrastructure; satellite preachers

Interpretation becomes an export market. ACADEMIC SOURCE

10 2001–PRESENT

Securitization of Muslims globally; online authority fragmentation; reform and feminist scholarship

External persecution and internal control operate simultaneously — both must be named honestly. GOVERNMENT REPORT

Moments in the room

661 — THE CALIPHATE BECOMES A DYNASTY

With the Umayyad accession, the succession of leadership passed from a contested consultative process to hereditary rule from Damascus. The community's most consequential political question was settled by a family.

Why it matters. It was the moment religious authority and dynastic power fused in this tradition. Both the Sunni and Shia pages descend from this, and so does every modern arrangement where a ministry appoints the scholars.

1744 — A PACT AT DIRIYAH

Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Muhammad ibn Saud agreed terms: religious legitimacy for the house, political protection for the doctrine. It was a specific bargain between two named men in one place [43].

Why it matters. Saudi Arabia's state-appointed scholarship runs back to this deal, which means it was a choice, which means it could have been otherwise.

2019 — THE DOCUMENT ON HUMAN FRATERNITY

Sheikh Ahmed el-Tayeb of al-Azhar and Pope Francis signed a joint declaration in Abu Dhabi affirming freedom of belief and rejecting religious coercion. It was a real, high-level, published commitment.

Why it matters. It is worth recording precisely because it makes the unanswered question sharper rather than softer: the same signature, and the apostasy statutes still stand. A document is not a repeal, and the distance between them is the finding.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Pick one rule that shapes your week and look for it on the timeline. If it has a start date, it was decided by people at a particular moment, for reasons of that moment. Were you taught it as timeless? What would it mean for you if it turned out to be younger than your grandparents' grandparents?

06 Branches & variants

BEFORE YOU READ

Islam is not one bloc. This section maps the main branches and variants, so that nothing documented about one community is read as true of all of them.

The main branches are Sunni (~87–90%) and Shia (~10–13%). Most Shia are Twelvers, who recognize a line of twelve imams after the Prophet; the Ismaili and Zaydi branches follow other lines of succession. There are also the Ibadi (Oman), the Ahmadi (persecuted, declared non-Muslim by Pakistan's law and restricted in Indonesia [4] [48]) and Turkey's Alevis (a distinct tradition centered on devotion to Ali), and Sufi orders cross all of these lines.

Sources for this section: [4] [23] [48]

BRANCH	SHARE AND PLACE	WHAT DIFFERS ON THIS PAGE'S QUESTIONS
Sunni	Sunnis are about 87–90% of Muslims [23].	Authority sits in four legal schools and in state-appointed or state-funded scholarly bodies (see Sunni Islam).
Shia	Shia are about 10–13% of Muslims [23].	Authority sits with a scholarly hierarchy (the marjaʿiyya, the senior jurists whom believers follow) and, in Iran, with a cleric as head of state (see Shia Islam).

Ibadi	Ibadis are the majority in Oman and are also found in Zanzibar and North Africa; they number over 2.5 million [32].	Their practice is close to Sunni practice, and historically their imam was elected, not hereditary [32].
Ahmadiyya	It is a global community whose Khalifa (its spiritual head) is based in the UK.	Pakistan's law declares its members non-Muslim (see Ahmadiyya).
Dawoodi Bohra	The community lives in South Asia and the diaspora.	A hereditary *dai* (the community's supreme religious leader) holds wide authority over members (see Dawoodi Bohra).
Sufi orders	Sufi orders are found across every branch.	Authority runs through a living shaykh (the order's spiritual master), in all of the above.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

If you know one community of Islam, you know one community. Most bad generalizations about a religion, and most unfair defenses of it, come from treating one branch as the whole. Which branch is the one you picture when you hear the name? Is that picture yours, or one you were given by news coverage or by the community itself?

07 Structure

BEFORE YOU READ

The organizational chart: how many people and institutions there are, where authority sits, who holds the top office, and who holds what beneath it. The question to keep in mind is simple: if the person at the top got something badly wrong, what written procedure exists to correct or remove them?

Size and shape

Adherents	Islam has about 2 billion adherents (Pew, 2020 data) [22] and, on Pew's earlier projections, is expected to be nearly as large as Christianity by 2050 and larger after about 2070 [42]. **ACADEMIC SOURCE** · Pew
Regions	Indonesia has the largest Muslim population. Other large populations are in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Egypt, Iran and Turkey, and there are substantial European and North American communities.
Trend	Islam is the fastest-growing major religion, primarily through fertility and a young population rather than conversion.
Participation	Participation varies very widely, from state-enforced observance (Iran, Saudi Arabia) to fully secular self-identification (Turkey, Central Asia, diaspora). Adherent counts say nothing about who is subject to religious authority.

Authority

- Islam has no clergy in the sacramental sense, but effective authority rests with scholars (ulama), mosque institutions, state religious ministries, and enforcement by family and community.
- In Muslim-majority states, governments license imams, control sermon content, and administer religious law — state capture of religion is the norm, not the exception. **OFFICIAL POLICY** · e.g., ministries of religious affairs across the region

The top of the chain

> 'There is no pope in Islam' is true and incomplete. The highest chairs that do exist are filled by governments — which is not a detour from the finding; it is the finding.

OFFICE	WHO SITS IN IT NOW	CHOSEN BY	REMOVABLE BY
Grand Imam of al-Azhar	Sheikh Ahmed el-Tayeb has held the office since 2010.	Sheikh Ahmed el-Tayeb was appointed by presidential decree in 2010 [55]. Since 2012 the Grand Imam has been elected by al-Azhar's Council of Senior Scholars and confirmed by presidential decree [13].	Nobody can remove him; Egypt's 2014 Constitution makes the Grand Imam irremovable.
Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia	Sheikh Saleh al-Fawzan holds the office, the kingdom's highest official authority on religious rulings. He was appointed by royal order on 22 October 2025, a month after Abdulaziz Al ash-Sheikh died.	The King chooses him.	The King can remove him.
Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques	King Salman bin Abdulaziz holds the title, and hajj licensing, quotas, and both sanctuaries (in Mecca and Medina) run through this crown.	The office passes by succession within the House of Saud.	Nobody outside the palace can remove him.

THE TELL

Follow any of these chairs upward and you arrive at a state. So 'that's politics, not the religion' is not an exit from this page — it is the page. al-Azhar is the partial exception: its independence was written into the constitution after 2011, and its budget is still a line in the state's.

Who holds what

ENTITY	TYPE	HOLDER	HOLDS	WHY IT MATTERS TO YOU	RECEIPT
National religious affairs ministries	State organ	Government ministers and appointed grand muftis	They license imams, approve sermon content and administer religious property.	They decide what is said from your minbar (the mosque's pulpit) on Friday.	OFFICIAL POLICY · published ministry regulations
Turkey's Diyanet	State directorate	Presidency of Religious Affairs	It is one of the largest religious bureaucracies on earth, with a published national budget.	It sets your mosque's staffing, at home and in the diaspora.	OFFICIAL POLICY · published state budget
Waqf boards	Endowment administration	Government-appointed trustees	They hold centuries of accumulated property under weak audit.	They administer land your ancestors endowed, and you did not choose them.	GOVERNMENT REPORT / ACADEMIC SOURCE
State zakat boards	Revenue and patronage	Appointed distributors	They distribute obligatory alms at official discretion.	Their discretion can make a poor family's aid depend on political standing.	GOVERNMENT REPORT

Hajj licensing and concessions	Commercial monopoly	Host state ministries and licensed operators	They set the price of a once-in-a-lifetime religious obligation.	They decide what a duty from God costs after intermediaries.	FINANCIAL RECORD
Halal and Islamic-finance certification bodies	Commercial gatekeeping	Agency directors and supervising scholars	They collect fees across ordinary commerce, with scholars advising the firms they certify.	Their fees reach the price of your groceries and your mortgage.	FINANCIAL RECORD
Transnational religious infrastructure funders	Soft power	State and royal foundations	They have funded mosques, schools, and translated literature for decades.	They shaped which interpretation of Islam reached your city.	ACADEMIC SOURCE

Sources for this section: 12 13 22 24

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Islam is often described as having no clergy and no church between a believer and God. The say-do table records the gap: in many states, government ministries license the preacher, approve the sermon and pay the salary. The most-cited seat of Sunni learning is headed by a Grand Imam whom Egypt's 2014 constitution makes irremovable. If your imam's Friday sermon was written or approved by a ministry, would you know? Would it change how you heard it?

08 Law & state here

BEFORE YOU READ

What states actually do. That includes how they fund, protect, regulate or enforce the tradition, and which outside body, if any, can compel an answer from it. For most readers, this is where the institution meets their own passport.

What Muslims everywhere share is a set of legal questions each state answers differently.

QUESTION	WHERE IT IS HARDEST	WHERE IT HAS MOVED
Leaving Islam	It can carry the death penalty in nine states [19]: Afghanistan, Brunei, Iran, Malaysia, the Maldives, Mauritania, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, in whole or in part of the country.	The country tables on Sunni Islam and Shia Islam show where it has moved.
Same-sex relations	The death penalty is prescribed in 7 UN member states, most of them Muslim-majority, and possible in 5 more [20].	—

Marriage age and guardianship	Morocco's judges approved 81% of 32,000 underage-marriage requests in 2019 [27].	Indonesia raised the age to 19 in 2019 [3], and Morocco's 2004 code set it at 18 [6]. A reform approved in December 2024 would keep 18 and set the floor for exceptions at 17; as of 28 September 2026 its text had not been published, and the 2004 code remains in force [52].
Divorce	—	India's Supreme Court struck down instant triple talaq in 2017 [2].
Interfaith marriage for women	—	Tunisia repealed its ban on Muslim women marrying non-Muslim men in 2017 [7].
Religious-only marriage in a secular state	Women are left without legal status [8].	The UK review recommended civil registration in 2018 [8 9].

Who can compel an answer

National charity regulators can compel an answer from mosque and foundation trusts, and the Charity Commission (the regulator of charities in England and Wales) has acted repeatedly. Civil courts can too. For the state-appointed offices, the appointing ministries themselves can, and they answer to whatever their governments answer to.

What Muslims everywhere share is a set of legal questions each state answers differently.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Everything on this page depends on your passport. The same act, leaving Islam, can carry the death penalty in nine states and nothing at all in others. India's Supreme Court struck down instant triple talaq in 2017. Moroccan judges approved 81% of 32,000 requests for underage marriage in 2019. If you are a Muslim woman, which of these legal systems decides your marriage, your divorce and your children? Did you choose it?

09 Money

BEFORE YOU READ

Where the money comes from, how each flow is justified, how it can be used to control, and who benefits. Read it the way you would read any organization you give to: what is disclosed, what is not, and who decides.

Where it comes from

- The money comes from zakat (2.5% obligatory alms), sadaqa, waqf endowments (historically enormous property trusts), the hajj economy, halal certification fees and mosque fundraising.
- State-administered zakat and waqf boards concentrate assets under government-appointed managers with recurring corruption findings. **GOVERNMENT REPORT** · e.g., Karnataka State Minorities Commission, 2012, on waqf land
- The hajj is a major revenue channel for Saudi Arabia and a licensing economy for agents worldwide. **FINANCIAL RECORD**

Follow the money

FLOW	STATED PURPOSE	HOW IT CONTROLS	WHO BENEFITS
Zakat (2.5%) and sadaqa	The stated purpose is obligatory alms for the poor.	State-administered zakat boards create political patronage, and distribution becomes leverage over recipients.	Government boards and mosque committees benefit, and so, genuinely, do the poor GOVERNMENT REPORT.
Waqf endowments	They are perpetual charitable trusts.	Centuries of property sit under appointed administrators with weak audit, after colonial and modern state capture.	Waqf boards, ministries and well-connected trustees benefit.
Hajj and umrah (the lesser pilgrimage, made at any time of year) economy	It fulfills a religious obligation.	Licensed agents hold monopolies, and prices are gouged on a once-in-a-lifetime obligation.	Host state revenue and licensed operators benefit FINANCIAL RECORD.
Halal and Islamic-finance certification	It gives assurance of compliance.	It is fee-generating gatekeeping over ordinary commerce.	Certification bodies and scholars on advisory boards benefit.
Mosque and school fundraising	It builds community infrastructure.	Donors gain influence over imams, and foreign funding comes with doctrinal strings.	Boards and funders benefit, and so does their preferred interpretation ACADEMIC SOURCE.

WHERE THE MONEY GOES, AND WHAT IT HOLDS

Zakat (2.5%) and sadaqa

STATED PURPOSE
The stated purpose is obligatory alms for the poor.

HOW IT CONTROLS
State-administered zakat boards create political patronage, and distribution becomes leverage over recipients.

→ Government boards and mosque committees benefit, and so, genuinely, do the poor .

Waqf endowments

STATED PURPOSE
They are perpetual charitable trusts.

HOW IT CONTROLS
Centuries of property sit under appointed administrators with weak audit, after colonial and modern state capture.

→ Waqf boards, ministries and well-connected trustees benefit.

Hajj and umrah (the lesser pilgrimage, made at any time of year) economy

STATED PURPOSE
It fulfills a religious obligation.

HOW IT CONTROLS
Licensed agents hold monopolies, and prices are gouged on a once-in-a-lifetime obligation.

→ Host state revenue and licensed operators benefit .

Halal and Islamic-finance certification

STATED PURPOSE
It gives assurance of compliance.

HOW IT CONTROLS
It is fee-generating gatekeeping over ordinary commerce.

→ Certification bodies and scholars on advisory boards benefit.

Mosque and school fundraising

STATED PURPOSE
It builds community infrastructure.

HOW IT CONTROLS
Donors gain influence over imams, and foreign funding comes with doctrinal strings.

→ Boards and funders benefit, and so does their preferred interpretation ACADEMIC SOURCE .

Not to scale. The table gives one figure, the German church tax of €6.75bn in 2025; the other flows are shown without amounts.

State-administered zakat and waqf boards concentrate assets under government-appointed managers with recurring corruption findings.

Pipelines this tradition shares

ZAKAT TO PATRONAGE

Source. Obligatory alms at a fixed rate

Path. State zakat board → Appointed distributors → Recipients and political constituencies

Disclosed. Collection totals

Hidden. Distribution criteria and discretionary awards

CERTIFICATION FEE

Source. Ordinary commerce seeking religious compliance

Path. Certifying agency → Scholarly supervisors → Advisory positions at certified firms

Disclosed. Certification status

Hidden. Fee schedules and advisory compensation

PILGRIMAGE ECONOMY

Source. A religious obligation with a fixed destination

Path. Licensed operators → Host state revenue → Concession holders

Disclosed. Visa quotas and pricing

Hidden. Margins and concession awards

STATE CLERICAL PAYROLL

Source. Public revenue

Path. Religious affairs ministry → Licensed clergy → Sermon content approval

Disclosed. Headcount and budget

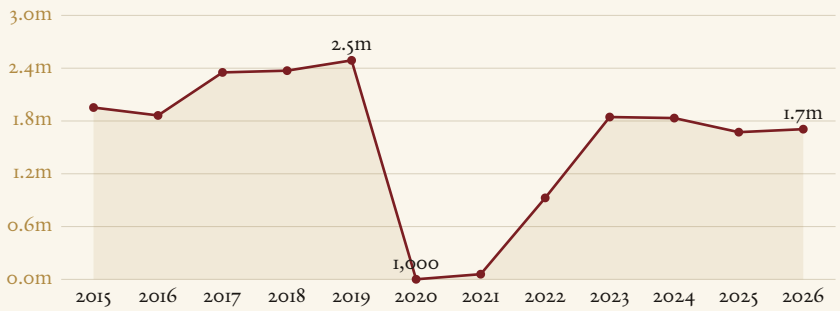
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Sources for this section: 21 24 33

Money in numbers

Zakat, sadaqa and waqf — the obligatory and voluntary giving every branch shares — mostly move without a public ledger. Where a state runs the flow, there are numbers.

HAJJ PILGRIMS, 2015–2026



pilgrims — One state sets the quotas, fees and visas for the pilgrimage every able Muslim owes once. [33]

- **Turkey's Diyanet:** It received ₺91.8bn in the 2024 state budget, against ₺35.9bn in the 2023 budget law, about 2.6 times as much [24] [50]; the full series is on the Sunni Islam page.
- **Waqf land:** a 2012 Karnataka commission report on waqf-board land is one of the few official audits of Islamic endowments anywhere [21].

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Zakat, sadaqa and waqf are among the most generous giving systems in any religion. The money section also records that most of it moves "without a public ledger," and that state-run waqf boards have recurring corruption findings. The land your great-grandparents endowed may today be administered by trustees you didn't choose. When you pay zakat through an institution this year, ask one question: can I see where last year's went?

10 Genealogy

BEFORE YOU READ

Rules with a history. Each card asks the same three questions: what was this rule originally for, has that reason expired, and who benefits from the rule continuing anyway?

APOSTASY AND BLASPHEMY PENALTIES

Origin. Classical jurisprudence developed in a context where leaving the community meant defecting to an enemy polity at war — apostasy was legally treated closer to treason than to belief.

ACADEMIC SOURCE [44]

What it was for. It served political cohesion in a period when religious identity and citizenship were the same category and defection carried military consequences.

Why that reason expired. There is no unified polity, no war of defection, and religion is not citizenship. The Qur'an itself states there is no compulsion in religion. What remains in the penal codes of a handful of states is a treason law with the word treason removed. OFFICIAL POLICY

Who benefits now. Governments benefit. They acquire a tool for imprisoning critics under religious cover. Blasphemy charges have also been brought against minorities and in personal quarrels, as in the case of Asia Bibi, acquitted by Pakistan's Supreme Court in 2018 [1]. COURT RECORD

MALE GUARDIANSHIP (WILAYAH) OVER ADULT WOMEN

Origin. It was codified in classical fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), reflecting societies where women had no independent legal or economic standing. ACADEMIC SOURCE [45]

What it was for. It was framed as protection: someone was legally responsible for a woman who could not contract, inherit independently, or seek redress alone.

Why that reason expired. Women now hold degrees, salaries, bank accounts, and passports. Keeping guardianship after removing the disability it addressed converts protection into ownership. Saudi Arabia's own recent reforms concede the point.

Who benefits now. Individual men benefit, directly and daily. So do states that use family law to keep half the population's mobility and marriage conditional on someone else's signature.

STATE CONTROL OF THE PULPIT

Origin. Ottoman and colonial-era states absorbed religious offices into state administration, and 20th-century religious affairs ministries completed the process. ACADEMIC SOURCE [46]

What it was for. Classical Islam's genuine achievement was scholarly independence — ulama who could rebuke rulers precisely because rulers did not pay them. Colonial and post-colonial states dismantled that on purpose.

Why that reason expired. The situation is not expired; it is the live problem. A salaried cleric cannot correct the government that signs his cheque, which means the tradition's own check on tyranny has been disabled.

Who benefits now. Governments benefit, purchasing legitimacy at civil-service rates. What is lost is the thing that made Islamic scholarship a limit on power rather than an instrument of it.

COMPULSORY HIJAB ENFORCEMENT

Origin. Modesty norms are ancient and textually grounded; state enforcement by morality police is a 20th-century invention, principally post-1979. ACADEMIC SOURCE [47]

What it was for. The textual injunction addresses the believer's own conduct. There is no classical apparatus of state police checking women's hair.

Why that reason expired. A rule enforced by arrest is no longer a religious practice; it is a criminal statute wearing religious clothes. The death of a young woman in morality-police custody in 2022 and the protest wave that followed made that visible to the world, including to devout Iranians. GOVERNMENT REPORT [15]

Who benefits now. The state benefits, gaining a permanent pretext for policing public space and a highly visible loyalty test. Neither God nor the women benefit.

Sources for this section: [1] [15] [44] [45] [46] [47]

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

The expired-reason test works on any rule. Take one you follow or enforce, name what it was originally for, and ask whether that reason still exists. If it doesn't, and the rule survives anyway, the section's last question is the one that matters to you: who benefits from it continuing?

11 Reach

BEFORE YOU READ

How far the institution's authority extends into three private areas: what members may read and hear, how children are raised and schooled, and decisions about their own bodies.

Information

- In many Muslim-majority states, sermon content is written or approved by a government ministry — information control by the state, wearing clerical dress. **OFFICIAL POLICY**
- Blasphemy and apostasy laws criminalize religious speech in a number of jurisdictions, with documented use against minorities, reformers, and personal enemies. **OFFICIAL POLICY / COURT JUDGMENT** · e.g., Pakistan Penal Code §295-C; the Supreme Court of Pakistan's 2018 acquittal of a Christian woman after eight years on death row
- Community-level pressure discourages engagement with critical scholarship of the Qur'an and hadith; 'orientalist' functions in some settings as a thought-terminating label. **PATTERN OBSERVED**

Children

- Children are Muslim by birth in the standard legal framing; Qur'an memorization (hifz) schooling begins very young and can substitute for general education in some madrasa systems. **ACADEMIC SOURCE**
- Abuse in religious settings, including mosques and madrasahs, is documented. England and Wales's national inquiry into child sexual abuse found significant under-reporting and no compulsory minimum standards for supplementary schools [49]. **INVESTIGATIVE REPORT**

- Modesty rules and gender segregation begin at puberty or earlier, initiating sexual surveillance of girls specifically. PATTERN OBSERVED

Bodies

- Guardianship (wilayah) systems and, in Saudi law until recent reforms, male-guardian requirements for major life decisions gave men legal authority over adult women. OFFICIAL POLICY
- Divorce is asymmetric: talaq is easier for husbands than khula (divorce initiated by the wife, usually by returning her dower) is for wives in most classical and codified frameworks; custody and inheritance rules are also asymmetric. OFFICIAL POLICY
- Compulsory hijab enforced by state police (Iran; Afghanistan under the Taliban) is the extreme end — enforcement by morality police is coercion by definition, not modesty. GOVERNMENT REPORT
- Same-sex relations are criminalized in numerous Muslim-majority states, with capital penalties in a few. OFFICIAL POLICY / GOVERNMENT REPORT
- 'Honor'-based violence against women is culturally rather than doctrinally grounded, and is frequently defended in religious language — the outsourcing is itself the tactic. GOVERNMENT REPORT

Sources for this section: 1 5 15 20 49

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

If you are a parent, this is the section about your children: what they may read, what they are taught about their bodies, and who else has a say in their schooling. Ask what your child would need to do at sixteen to hear the strongest case against what they were taught. Would they be allowed? Would they know it existed?

Abuse in religious settings, including mosques and madrasahs, is documented.



12

The 30 techniques

How the thirty techniques are established here

2	3	8	17
CODIFIED	TAUGHT	CULTURAL	CONTESTED

STAGE 1 Idealize	1 Love Bombing CULTURAL	2 Weaponized Generosity CULTURAL		
STAGE 2 Hook	3 Future Faking CONTESTED	4 Hoovering CONTESTED		
STAGE 3 Devalue	5 Devaluation TAUGHT	6 Gaslighting TAUGHT	7 Double Bind TAUGHT	
STAGE 4 Confuse	8 Intermittent Reinforcement CULTURAL	9 Moving the Goalposts CONTESTED	10 Strategic Ambiguity CONTESTED	11 Projection CONTESTED
	12 DARVO CONTESTED	13 Normalization / Desensitization CONTESTED		
STAGE 5 Isolate	14 Isolation CONTESTED	15 Triangulation CONTESTED		

STAGE 6 Extract	16 Flying Monkeys CULTURAL	17 Smear Campaign CONTESTED	18 Silent Treatment / Stonewalling CONTESTED	19 Manufactured Consent CULTURAL
	20 Trauma Bonding CONTESTED	21 Learned Helplessness CONTESTED	22 Benevolent Control CULTURAL	23 Infantilization CONTESTED
	24 Identity Erosion CONTESTED	25 Spiritual Bypassing CONTESTED	26 Financial Control CODIFIED	
STAGE 7 Discard	27 Manufactured Crisis CONTESTED	28 Discard CULTURAL		
STAGE 8 Replace	29 Replacement CULTURAL	30 Plausible Deniability CODIFIED		

Thirty named techniques from domestic-abuse and social-psychology research, applied to institutions, in the eight stages of the cycle.

BEFORE YOU READ

A fixed checklist of thirty influence and control patterns from research on coercive control and social psychology, applied here to institutions rather than to individual people. Every entry carries an evidence grade. The grade matters more than the name of the technique: Codified or Documented means there is a paper trail; Contested means the claim is disputed.

Thirty named techniques from domestic-abuse and social-psychology research, applied to institutions, in the eight stages of the cycle. Each carries an evidence grade for this tradition.

Stage 1 · Idealize

You arrive with a need and are met with more warmth than you have had in years.

A convert is embraced fast — meals, gifts, Arabic phrases, iftar invitations, the declaration that Allah guided them specially and their past is wiped clean. The warmth is genuine and it arrives before the dress codes, the marriage pressure, and the correct-scholar lists.

What it asks of you: Were you loved as a person, or celebrated as evidence that the dawah (the invitation to Islam) is working?

1 · Love Bombing

Overwhelming affection on arrival to create emotional dependency before terms are revealed.

How it shows here

- A new convert may be celebrated by the local Muslim community with hugs, meals, gifts, Arabic phrases, invitations to iftar, and declarations that they are now part of the ummah (the worldwide community of Muslims).
- The convert is often told their past sins are wiped clean, that they are purer than lifelong Muslims, and that Allah guided them specially.
- The warmth comes fast. The social expectations often come later: prayer schedule, dress codes, dietary rules, gender norms, Arabic recitation, mosque loyalty, marriage pressure, and suspicion of old friends.

The strongest defense. The ummah is supposed to support new Muslims. Converts need community.

The counter. Support becomes control when belonging is conditional on rapid conformity. If the convert is loved as long as they become visibly Muslim in the approved way, but questioned, corrected, pitied, or shamed when they slow down, the love was not free. It was probation.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Convert welcome is community practice and varies entirely by mosque and country.

2 · Weaponized Generosity

Giving help that installs unspoken obligation.

How it shows here

- A new Muslim may receive meals, gifts, Qurans, clothing, Arabic lessons, help with prayer, invitations to iftar, marriage introductions, and social protection from the ummah.
- Zakat and sadaqah can provide real aid to the poor, widows, converts, travelers, and struggling families. In institutional settings, that aid can also attach the vulnerable person to the mosque's authority.
- Converts may be praised and supported at first, then pressured to change dress, diet, friendships, dating, family relationships, political views, and marriage choices.
- A financially struggling person may receive help through the mosque, then be expected to show loyalty to the imam, avoid criticism, attend regularly, or conform publicly.

The strongest defense. Zakat is a pillar of Islam. Muslims are obligated to care for the needy.

The counter. Obligation to give does not erase coercion in how giving is used. If aid is distributed in a way that makes the recipient socially indebted to religious authorities, or if support vanishes when the person questions doctrine, removes hijab, dates outside expectation, or leaves Islam, the generosity has become a leash.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Zakat and sadaqah are real obligations; whether aid given through a mosque is later made conditional on loyalty depends on the community, not on any written rule.

Stage 2 · Hook

You are given a future that cannot be verified, and a rope for whenever you drift toward the door.

The promise is paradise, rivers, gardens and reunion, verified only after death. The retrieval arrives through your family rather than an institution: Ramadan, your mother's voice, come back for her sake.

What it asks of you: The promise is deferred past the only point of verification, and the retrieval is delegated to people who genuinely love you. Both features make it very hard to examine.

3 · Future Faking

Promising a future that keeps you invested but never has to arrive.

How it shows here

- Islam offers paradise as the ultimate deferred reward: gardens, rivers, peace, purified companionship, divine pleasure, safety from hell, reunion, and eternal success.

- Earthly obedience is tied to future outcome: pray, fast, cover, give, submit, endure, avoid forbidden pleasures, accept divine decree, and the real reward comes later.
- The believer is told this life is a test. That makes every hardship potentially meaningful — but it also makes every injustice easier to tolerate.
- Institutional Islam can use the afterlife to silence present questions: do not challenge gender rules, family authority, clerics, political power, or suffering too aggressively, because Allah will judge perfectly later.
- Fear of hell intensifies the hook. The future is not only reward; it is threat. Paradise is offered by the same system that warns of eternal punishment for disbelief or rebellion.

The strongest defense. Akhirah, the afterlife, is central to Islam. It teaches accountability, justice, and patience.

The counter. Accountability after death does not excuse unaccountability before death. If paradise and hell are used to keep people obedient to institutions, families, clerics, or states that cannot be questioned safely, then the afterlife becomes political technology. A perfect future judgment is a convenient way to delay imperfect present justice.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CONTESTED Paradise and hell as deferred reward and threat are universal doctrine; whether the afterlife is used to silence present questions varies by community and is disputed within the tradition.

4 · Hoovering

Pulling someone back after they've started to leave, through guilt, love, or fear.

How it shows here

- A Muslim who distances from the mosque or from Islam may be contacted by family, friends, elders, or community members: "Come back to salah," "Don't forget Allah," "The dunya is distracting you." (Salah is the ritual prayer; the dunya is worldly life.)
- The emotional pressure often comes through family honor: "You are embarrassing us," "What will people say?" "Think of your parents."
- Fear-based hoovering may invoke death, hell, the grave, Judgment Day, or dying outside Islam.
- Converts who pull away may be told they were specially guided and are now at risk of throwing away Allah's mercy.
- In some contexts, apostasy is not only social but legally dangerous, which makes the "return" pressure far more than emotional.

The strongest defense. Muslims believe reminding someone of Allah and the Hereafter is sincere concern.

The counter. A reminder becomes coercion when it is backed by shame, family pressure, social exile, or legal fear. If the person cannot say "I no longer believe" without risking their relationships, reputation, safety, or freedom, then the invitation back is not spiritual advice. It is containment.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CONTESTED Retrieval pressure comes through family and community and varies enormously by community and jurisdiction; where apostasy is a crime, the pressure is backed by law.

Stage 3 · Devalue

You are taught that you are broken, that your perception is unreliable, and that both exits from the trap lead back inside.

Your prayer is not focused enough, your hijab not correct enough, your creed not pure enough, your iman (faith) weak. Someone stricter is always available as the standard. Diaspora Muslims get it from both directions at once.

What it asks of you: Notice who benefits from you feeling permanently insufficient — and notice it is never you.

5 · Devaluation

Reducing your sense of worth so you become dependent on the institution for identity.

How it shows here

- Institutional Islam can devalue by emphasizing human weakness, forgetfulness, ingratitude, and need for divine guidance. Verses such as "man was created weak" (Qur'an 4:28) and "man is ungrateful to his Lord" (100:6) are scripture; the institutional move is to use them as a standing verdict on the believer rather than a call to humility.
- The believer is reminded that Allah knows what they hide, that the nafs (the ego, or lower self) is dangerous, that desires mislead, that Shaytan (Satan) whispers, and that safety lies in submission.
- The word "submission" itself can become psychologically loaded: the ideal person is not self-directed but surrendered.
- Women may be told their bodies require covering to prevent fitna (discord or temptation). Men may be told their desires are so volatile that strict gender boundaries are necessary. Everyone is diminished into a risk category.
- Doubt can be interpreted as arrogance against God, corruption by the dunya, weak iman, or influence from Shaytan.

The strongest defense. Islam honors human beings while reminding them they are dependent on God.

The counter. Dependence on God becomes dependence on interpreters. If human weakness is used to route people toward clerics, family authorities, gender codes, surveillance, and fear of hell, then humility has become a control architecture.

EVIDENCE GRADE

TAUGHT Human weakness and forgetfulness are Qur'anic themes taught homiletically rather than administered.

6 · Gaslighting

Making you doubt your own experience so you trust the institution's interpretation instead.

How it shows here

- A Muslim questions a rule and is told, "You are following your desires," "Your iman is weak," or "Shaytan is whispering to you."
- A woman says hijab, gender separation, or family control feels oppressive, and the answer becomes, "You have internalized Western feminism."
- Someone fears hell or Judgment Day because of religious teaching, and the fear is reframed as healthy taqwa (God-consciousness) rather than spiritual trauma.
- A person says they no longer believe, and the community treats it as corruption, arrogance, ignorance, or love of dunya rather than a conclusion they reached honestly.

The strongest defense. Islam warns against ego, desire, and satanic influence because they can mislead people.

The counter. Warnings become gaslighting when they are used to discredit every inconvenient perception. If the only sincere mind is the submissive mind, then questioning is not being answered. It is being pathologized.

EVIDENCE GRADE

TAUGHT The phrases used to recast doubt (weak iman, following desires, the whispering of Shaytan) come from sermons and instruction; no institution administers them.

7 · Double Bind

A trap where both options lead to compliance. No exit serves you.

How it shows here

- A questioning Muslim is told Islam commands the pursuit of knowledge — but the conclusions are pre-approved. Seek and stop short: lazy. Seek and arrive elsewhere: misguided, whispered-to by Shaytan.
- Converts are told there is no compulsion in religion, while leaving is framed as apostasy with social, familial, and in some states legal consequences. You are free to enter; the door only swings one way.
- Women are told hijab is their free, empowered choice — in communities where declining it costs reputation, marriage prospects, and family peace. Choose freely, as long as you choose correctly.

The strongest defense. Islam invites reason and reflection; the Qur'an repeatedly says 'do they not think?'

The counter. An invitation to think that punishes unapproved conclusions is an invitation to arrive, not to travel. Where exit carries penalties, 'no compulsion' describes the brochure, not the building.

EVIDENCE GRADE

TAUGHT Both halves of the bind are taught: that the faith commands the pursuit of knowledge and admits no compulsion, and that leaving is apostasy. The cost of choosing wrongly is imposed by family and community and, in some states, by law.

Stage 4 · Confuse

The rewards become unpredictable, the standard keeps moving, the answers stop meaning anything, and the accusation gets turned around.

Raise abuse in a madrasa or a marriage and you are told you are shaming the community, serving Islamophobes, airing what should stay inside. The subject changes from what happened to whose side you are on.

What it asks of you: Being told your honesty helps the enemy is the oldest way to buy silence. It is used on every community. It works.

8 · Intermittent Reinforcement

Unpredictable reward that creates addictive emotional dependency.

How it shows here

- The sweetness of iman is taught as attainable and elusive — felt in Ramadan, gone by Muharram (the first month of the Islamic year) — and its absence is read as your sins hardening the heart, driving intensified practice to recover a feeling the community defines.
- Communal standing warms and cools with visible piety: beard, hijab, mosque attendance, Arabic fluency. The thermostat is never posted; everyone learns it by chill.
- Du'a (a personal prayer of request) answered is Allah's mercy; du'a unanswered is stored reward, divine wisdom, or your doubtful heart — an interpretive frame in which continued practice is the only move that never loses.

The strongest defense. Iman genuinely fluctuates — 'faith increases and decreases' is orthodox teaching, not manipulation.

The counter. Fluctuation is human. Manipulation enters when the community meters its warmth to your visible peaks and assigns your valleys to sin — turning an inner season into a public performance review with unpredictable pay.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Communal warmth that rises and falls with visible piety is community practice with no written rule behind it. That faith increases and decreases is orthodox teaching, and whether communities use that to control is disputed.

9 · Moving the Goalposts

The standard of success keeps shifting so you can never arrive.

How it shows here

- A convert is first celebrated for saying the shahada (the declaration of faith). Then the expectations escalate: pray correctly, learn Arabic sounds, dress properly, fast, avoid old holidays, change friendships, marry appropriately, and stop questioning.
- A woman is told hijab is her choice. If she wears it, the goalpost may move to looser clothing, less makeup, less public visibility, less mixed interaction, and more modest behavior.
- A doubter is told, "Ask questions." When they do, they are told their questions show weak iman, arrogance, love of dunya, or influence from Shaytan.

The strongest defense. Islam is a complete way of life; practice naturally grows.

The counter. A way of life becomes moving the goalposts when entry is simple but belonging becomes endlessly conditional. If every step of conformity exposes a new defect, the path is less guidance than capture.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CONTESTED The escalating expectations placed on converts and women are community practice, and how much of them is required is disputed between schools and communities.

10 · Strategic Ambiguity

Language that sounds profound but means nothing specific — functioning as a shutdown to real questions.

How it shows here

- "There is no compulsion in religion" may be quoted publicly, while family, community, gender, and apostasy pressures make exit socially dangerous.
- Hijab may be described as choice, modesty, obligation, identity, protection, or obedience depending on the audience.
- Cultural practices are dismissed as "not Islam" when criticized, but defended as Islamic duty when enforced inside families.

The strongest defense. Islam distinguishes divine teaching from cultural misuse.

The counter. That distinction becomes strategic ambiguity when leaders claim credit for culture's obedience but deny responsibility for culture's coercion. If pressure works for the religion, the religion cannot disown it only when criticized.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CONTESTED Whether a given practice is Islam or culture is the disputed question itself; different authorities describe the same practice both ways.

11 · Projection

Accusing the outside world of the exact thing the institution practices.

How it shows here

- Islamic authorities may accuse critics of arrogance before Allah while demanding obedience to human clerics, family systems, gender rules, and communal norms.
- Women who object to modesty or control may be accused of immodesty or Western corruption, while male anxiety is projected onto female clothing.
- Apostates may be accused of betrayal while the community betrays them through shame, surveillance, rejection, or threat.
- Internal critics may be accused of Islamophobia even when they are describing real abuse inside Muslim spaces.

The strongest defense. Islam teaches submission to God, not submission to ego.

The counter. Submission to God becomes projection when human authorities use God-language to protect their control. If the person asking for freedom is called arrogant while the system claims power over belief, body, marriage, and speech, arrogance has been placed on the wrong side.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CONTESTED Casting critics as arrogant, Westernized or Islamophobic is observed community practice with no written rule behind it, and reformers within the tradition dispute it.

12 · DARVO

Deny the wrongdoing. Attack the person who raised it. Reverse victim and offender.

How it shows here

- A person reports abuse by an imam, teacher, spouse, family elder, or community leader. The response may be denial, then accusations of slander, fitna, dishonoring the ummah, or helping enemies of Islam.
- Women who report abuse may be asked whether they were immodest, disobedient, emotional, Westernized, or trying to destroy a man's reputation.
- The community may frame itself as under attack by Islamophobia, making internal criticism feel like betrayal.
- Apostates or doubters who describe coercion may be accused of lying, arrogance, trauma projection, or hatred of Islam.
- The institution becomes the victim of "defamation," while the harmed person becomes the offender for speaking.

The strongest defense. Muslim communities face real prejudice, and false accusations can damage reputations.

The counter. Prejudice against Muslims is real. That does not give internal leaders immunity. If every accusation is treated as Islamophobia before it is investigated, then the language of protection has become a method of silencing victims.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CONTESTED Shaming internal criticism as service to Islamophobes is widespread practice, and is actively opposed by reformers within the tradition.

13 · Normalization / Desensitization

Practices that would seem extreme to an outsider feel normal to insiders because they were installed before critical evaluation developed.

How it shows here

- A convert gradually accepts increasing regulation: prayer times, Arabic recitation, halal food, Ramadan fasting, gender norms, dress codes, mosque expectations, and family/community scrutiny.
- Fear of hell, the grave, Judgment Day, and dying in a state of disbelief can become so normal that anxiety is renamed taqwa.
- Women may be slowly desensitized to modesty surveillance: hijab, loose clothing, lowered gaze, avoiding mixed spaces, marriage pressure, and being told their body affects male behavior.
- Believers become accustomed to viewing ordinary choices — food, clothing, friendships, sexuality, speech, music, holidays — through halal/haram (permitted/forbidden) filters.

The strongest defense. Islam is a complete way of life; daily practice creates discipline and God-consciousness.

The counter. A complete way of life becomes desensitization when there is no area of life where the person is allowed to simply exist. If every ordinary human action becomes a compliance test, the believer has been trained to confuse total regulation with devotion.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CONTESTED The daily rules themselves are taught practice; whether their accumulation amounts to desensitization is an interpretation the tradition disputes.

Stage 5 · Isolate

Your world narrows until every voice you hear is inside the system, and everything you came for now runs through a middleman.

In diaspora communities the mosque is the entire social base: marriage prospects, business networks, childcare, belonging in a hostile country. Critical scholarship is 'orientalist.' The only place to take a doubt is the place with an interest in the answer.

What it asks of you: If you voiced a real doubt out loud on Friday, what would change by Sunday?

14 · Isolation

Shrinking your world until the only voices you hear are inside the system.

How it shows here

- Islam can isolate through the concept of the ummah as primary belonging and through warnings against dunya, haram environments, non-Muslim influence, immodest spaces, alcohol culture, dating culture, and secular morality.
- Converts may be encouraged to distance from old friends, stop attending family holidays, change clothing, change diet, change social circles, and spend more time at the mosque.
- Women may be isolated through gender segregation, modesty rules, marriage control, family honor, and restrictions on travel or mixed social life.
- Doubters may be told not to read ex-Muslims, Orientalists, secular critics, feminist interpretations, or "deviant" sectarian material.
- In high-control contexts, apostasy fear can create extreme isolation: the person cannot speak honestly without risking family rupture, community rejection, or worse.

The strongest defense. Islam gives believers a moral community and protects them from environments that normalize sin.

The counter. Moral community becomes isolation when leaving or questioning threatens someone's entire social world. If a person must hide their thoughts to keep family, safety, marriage, reputation, or community, then the ummah has become a surveillance field.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CONTESTED Dietary, dress, and social boundaries are religious requirements in some readings and cultural expectation in others; the disagreement is genuine.

15 · Triangulation

Inserting intermediaries between you and the thing you came for, so the institution is always in the middle.

How it shows here

- Islam can triangulate through family, imam, mosque, Qur'an teacher, spouse, children, ummah, ancestors, and fear of outsiders.
- A doubting Muslim may be told, "Talk to the imam," while family members monitor whether they pray, fast, dress properly, eat halal, or attend mosque.
- Parents may triangulate with God: "Allah will ask you about how you treated us," turning family obedience into spiritual duty.
- Communities triangulate with the ummah: your private doubts are framed as a betrayal of Muslims worldwide, especially in the face of Islamophobia.
- Women may be triangulated through male desire and family honor: hijab, modesty, marriage, and public behavior are treated as matters affecting fathers, husbands, brothers, children, and community reputation.
- Converts may be triangulated through gratitude: "The community welcomed you; why are you listening to non-Muslims now?"

The strongest defense. Islam is communal and family-centered. Advice from parents, imams, and the ummah can protect someone spiritually.

The counter. Protection becomes triangulation when everyone around the person becomes an enforcement point. If the imam, family, spouse, community, and afterlife are all used to make dissent socially impossible, then guidance has become a net.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CONTESTED The intermediaries named here (family, imam, spouse, community) act by custom rather than written rule, and how far their religious authority reaches is genuinely disputed.

Stage 6 · Extract

Now the harvest: your labor, your money, your identity, your silence, your children's schooling, your capacity to trust yourself.

Zakat is administered by state boards and waqf by appointed trustees, the hajj is priced by monopoly, and halal certification fees reach every step of ordinary commerce. Your uncle phones about family shame. Hijab, diet and gender separation are presented as God's mercy for you. Raise anything and you are told you are shaming the community.

What it asks of you: Notice that the obligation is precise to the percentage point, and the accounting is unavailable at any percentage.

16 · Flying Monkeys

The community enforces the institution's norms without being asked — mobilized by culture, not memos.

How it shows here

- A Muslim who questions Islam or mosque authority may be approached by parents, siblings, aunties, uncles, imams, spouses, and community members: "Come back to salah," "Don't embarrass the family," "You're being influenced."
- Converts who pull away may be surrounded by community members reminding them of the ummah, paradise, hell, death, and gratitude for guidance.
- A woman resisting hijab, marriage pressure, or gender restrictions may face coordinated family pressure: father, mother, brothers, cousins, imam, and community women all reinforcing the same demand.
- Apostasy or doubt may trigger surveillance: what the person reads, who they talk to, whether they still pray, whether they fast, whether they are dating.

The strongest defense. Muslims remind one another of Allah because community accountability is part of faith.

The counter. Reminder becomes FLYING MONKEY behavior when it is backed by family shame, social monitoring, fear of hell, or threats to belonging. If a person cannot doubt without everyone around them becoming a religious enforcement channel, the community has become a net.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CULTURAL Honor enforcement is carried out by relatives with no institutional instruction, which is why no institution can be held to it.

17 · Smear Campaign

Rewriting your character after departure to protect the institution from the implications of your leaving.

How it shows here

- Apostates or critics may be labeled arrogant, corrupted by the West, Islamophobic, traumatized, attention-seeking, immoral, or following desires.
- Women who report abuse may be accused of immodesty, disobedience, feminism, dishonoring the family, or trying to ruin a man's reputation.
- Community leaders may frame internal criticism as helping enemies of Islam.
- Converts who leave may be described as never having understood Islam properly.

The strongest defense. Muslim communities face real Islamophobia and must guard against slander.

The counter. Islamophobia is real. But if the word is used to silence internal victims, it becomes a shield for abusers. Criticizing harm inside a community is not the same as hating the community.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CONTESTED Labeling apostates and critics as corrupted, Westernized or Islamophobic is community practice with no written rule behind it, and reformers within the tradition dispute it.

18 · Silent Treatment / Stonewalling

Refusing to engage with legitimate questions in order to maintain control.

How it shows here

- A person reports abuse by an imam, teacher, husband, elder, or family member and is told to be patient, avoid fitna, preserve family honor, or not damage the ummah.
- Women may be pressured to resolve abuse privately through family or religious mediation rather than public accountability.
- Doubters may ask serious questions and receive vague replies: "Allah knows best," "increase your iman," "do not let Shaytan confuse you."
- The community may go silent around apostasy, abuse, or gender harm, while continuing normal religious life as if nothing happened.

The strongest defense. Communities must avoid slander, fitna, and reckless accusations.

The counter. Avoiding fitna becomes stonewalling when the victim's speech is treated as the disorder rather than the harm itself. If peace requires the harmed person to disappear, it is not peace. It is containment.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CONTESTED Handling abuse privately to avoid fitna is community practice with no written rule behind it, and whether the tradition requires it is disputed.

19 · Manufactured Consent

Creating the appearance of choice when the conditions of choice were shaped before you could evaluate them.

How it shows here

- A convert says the shahada in a warm community setting, then later discovers the social expectations around prayer, fasting, dress, marriage, family, gender, and apostasy.
- Women may be told hijab is a choice while family, community, marriage prospects, modesty shame, and fear of sin make refusal costly.
- A person "chooses" to remain Muslim because leaving could mean family rupture, social exile, reputational damage, or worse in some contexts.
- Marriage consent can be compromised when family honor, religious duty, gender rules, and community pressure narrow the person's options.

The strongest defense. Islam teaches no compulsion in religion and requires sincere intention.

The counter. A doctrine against compulsion does not erase social coercion. If the community makes exit dangerous, refusal shameful, and conformity the price of belonging, then consent exists on paper while pressure governs the body.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Religious status attaches at birth in customary and legal framing; adult reconsideration carries family rather than institutional cost.

20 · Trauma Bonding

The wound and the bandage come from the same hand.

How it shows here

- The believer is taught fear of hell, the grave, Judgment Day, divine displeasure, and dying outside submission — then receives relief through prayer, fasting, repentance, Qur'an, mosque community, Ramadan, and the ummah.
- A convert is celebrated as pure and guided, then corrected, monitored, and pressured; warmth returns when they conform.
- Women may experience shame around modesty, body, sexuality, and family honor, then receive praise and safety when they comply.
- Leaving can feel like losing family, community, paradise, and protection all at once.

The strongest defense. Islam balances fear and hope; repentance and community are mercies.

The counter. Fear and hope become TRAUMA BONDING when fear is socially enforced and hope is institutionally mediated. If relief only comes after submission to the same community that created the terror, the bond is being reinforced.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CONTESTED Fear of hell and relief through repentance are taught doctrine; whether that relief is tied to submission to a community varies by community and is disputed.

21 · Learned Helplessness

Teaching you that your own judgment is unreliable until you stop trusting it entirely.

How it shows here

- A person asks about fear, gender pressure, family control, or doubt and is told to increase iman, make du'a, be patient, and avoid Shaytan.
- Women resisting control may find every route blocked by family, imam, marriage expectations, honor, and community reputation.
- A doubter learns that honest speech risks shame, rejection, or danger, so they stop speaking.
- The phrase "Allah knows best" may become a wall instead of comfort.

The strongest defense. Islam teaches patience, trust in Allah, and humility before divine wisdom.

The counter. Trust becomes LEARNED HELPLESSNESS when it teaches people not to act against human control. If every blocked exit is explained as a test from Allah, the institution has made passivity sound pious.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CONTESTED Patience and trust in Allah are taught virtues; their use to discourage action against human control is practice that varies by community, and it is disputed.

22 · Benevolent Control

Control wrapped in the language of care, so that resisting the control feels like rejecting the love.

How it shows here

- Families and communities may control clothing, marriage, friendships, prayer, fasting, and public behavior while saying they are protecting faith, honor, modesty, and akhirah.
- Women may be told restrictions are for their dignity and safety.
- Converts may be guided intensely because the community says they need protection from confusion, old habits, or non-Muslim influence.
- Doubters may be discouraged from reading critics because it could damage iman.

The strongest defense. Islamic guidance protects people from harm and helps them obey Allah.

The counter. Protection becomes BENEVOLENT CONTROL when the protected person cannot refuse it. If "for your dignity" means your clothing, marriage, speech, and social life are controlled by others, dignity has been redefined as compliance.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Family and community control of clothing, marriage and friendships, presented as care, is practice that no body sets. State enforcement of dress, where it exists, is recorded in sections 11 and 14 and bears on only part of the picture.

23 · Infantilization

Positioning the adult believer as permanently childlike and dependent on institutional authority.

How it shows here

- Adults may be treated as morally unsafe without family, imam, scholar, or community oversight.
- Women may be positioned as needing guardianship, protection, modesty enforcement, or male approval.
- Converts may be corrected like children: how to dress, pray, speak, marry, eat, and behave.
- Doubters may be told they lack knowledge or are being misled by desires.

The strongest defense. Islamic guidance protects people from ignorance and moral harm.

The counter. Guidance becomes INFANTILIZATION when adults are not allowed moral adulthood. If a woman, convert, or doubter cannot make choices without being supervised for their own good, protection has become permanent childhood.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CONTESTED Male guardianship over adult women is written into some states' law (sections 10 and 11); the supervision of converts and doubters is community practice, and its religious basis is disputed.

24 · Identity Erosion

Gradually replacing your identity with a role the institution provides, until you can't separate who you are from where you belong.

How it shows here

- Muslim identity can reorganize the entire self: name, dress, diet, daily schedule, prayer, gender interaction, family life, speech, sexuality, marriage, politics, and social belonging.
- Converts may be praised for leaving their old life, then pressured to become visibly Muslim in the community's approved form.
- Women may experience identity erosion when modesty, family honor, marriageability, and religious worth are tied to clothing and public behavior.
- Doubt becomes not simply thought but weak iman, love of dunya, arrogance, or Shaytan's whisper.
- The person's inner voice is replaced by a constant halal/haram monitor.

The strongest defense. Islam is a complete way of life and gives believers dignity through submission to Allah.

The counter. A complete way of life becomes IDENTITY EROSION when no part of the person remains unregulated. If the self is acceptable only after being filtered through dress, prayer, gender, family, scholars, and community surveillance, dignity has become managed identity.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CONTESTED The rules that reach into dress, diet and the daily schedule are taught practice; whether they erode identity or form it is the disputed question.

25 · Spiritual Bypassing

Using spiritual language to avoid engaging with real pain, real questions, and real accountability.

How it shows here

- Abuse or family control may be bypassed with sabr (patience), duʿa, qadar (divine decree), "Allah tests those He loves," or "Allah knows best."
- Women's suffering may be spiritualized as patience, modesty, obedience, or reward in the akhirah.
- Doubt may be bypassed as Shaytan, weak iman, or love of dunya.
- Trauma may be answered with Qur'an recitation or prayer while practical safety is ignored.
- Community harm may be hidden to avoid fitna.

The strongest defense. Islamic patience and trust in Allah help believers endure hardship.

The counter. Patience becomes SPIRITUAL BYPASSING when it delays protection. If sabr is demanded from the harmed while abusers remain comfortable, religion has turned endurance into a substitute for justice.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CONTESTED Sabr, duʿa and qadar are taught virtues; answering abuse with them in place of protection is community practice, and it is disputed within the tradition.

26 · Financial Control

Extracting money through spiritual obligation while offering no transparency about where it goes.

How it shows here

- Islamic communities may use zakat, sadaqah, mosque donations, madrasa fees, Islamic school tuition, charity drives, and fundraising dinners.
- Religious giving can become social pressure: public donors are honored, non-givers are invisible, wealthy patrons gain influence.
- Converts or poor families receiving aid may feel dependent on mosque leaders or community approval.
- Women or young adults may be financially controlled through family structures tied to marriage, guardianship, inheritance, or reputation.

The strongest defense. Zakat and charity are central Islamic duties that support the poor and the community.

The counter. Charity becomes FINANCIAL CONTROL when the receiver's independence is compromised. If aid is tied to obedience, dress, silence, mosque loyalty, or family compliance, then generosity has become a financial leash.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> **CODIFIED** Zakat rates and hajj licensing are codified; state-administered zakat boards operate under published regulation.

Stage 7 · Discard

You become expensive — too many questions, too much independence — and the urgency ramps up until you are removed.

You are called kafir (unbeliever), munafiq (hypocrite), Westernized, an agent. Family withdraws, marriage prospects are gone, and in some jurisdictions there is legal jeopardy. Custody and inheritance can turn on religious status.

What it asks of you: The cost of leaving is paid privately, by individuals, in family living rooms — which is exactly why institutions can deny it exists.

27 · Manufactured Crisis

Creating urgency to suppress critical thinking and generate loyalty.

How it shows here

- Islamic communities may manufacture crisis through fears of hell, apostasy, Western corruption, fitna, family dishonor, moral collapse, Islamophobia, and children losing Islam.
- A woman removing hijab may be treated as a family and spiritual emergency.
- A doubter may be rushed to imam, family intervention, marriage, mosque attendance, or prayer before they can think freely.
- Community harm may be silenced because public exposure is framed as helping enemies of Islam.

The strongest defense. Muslim communities face real prejudice and real moral challenges.

The counter. Real threats become MANUFACTURED CRISIS when they are used to control internal dissent. If every private choice is framed as danger to faith, family, and ummah, fear has replaced conscience.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CONTESTED Apostasy consequences run from statutory penalty in a handful of states to purely familial cost elsewhere — the range is the finding.

28 · Discard

Removing members who become too costly — too many questions, too much independence, too visible a contradiction.

How it shows here

- A Muslim who doubts, removes hijab, leaves prayer, dates outside expectation, or questions Islam may be treated as spiritually dangerous.
- Family warmth may become shame, panic, silence, or exclusion.
- Converts once celebrated as proof of guidance may be pitied, corrected, or discarded when they no longer perform conversion correctly.
- In severe contexts, apostasy can carry social, familial, legal, or safety consequences.
- The person's identity shifts from guided soul to warning sign.

The strongest defense. Muslims are concerned because leaving faith has eternal consequences.

The counter. Concern becomes DISCARD when love becomes conditional on visible submission. If family and community withdraw basic belonging once belief changes, the issue is not eternal care. It is control over the living.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Family withdrawal and exclusion after doubt or leaving are community practice with no written rule behind them. Where apostasy is a statutory offence (sections 8 and 15), the penalty bears on only one bullet.

Stage 8 · Replace

Your seat is filled before the door shuts, and nobody is responsible for any of it because the authority was attributed to God.

The mosque does not shrink. The community absorbs the loss without a ripple. And the last defense is the strongest in this codex: this is not our law, it is divine.

What it asks of you: Divine law does not require a religious affairs ministry, a licensing regime, or a salary. Ask why those exist alongside it.

29 · Replacement

Your seat is filled before the door closes behind you.

How it shows here

- A convert who leaves is replaced emotionally by a new shahada story.
- A woman who refuses expected modesty or marriage roles may be compared unfavorably to more compliant women.
- Families may shift affection toward siblings or relatives who perform Islam correctly.

- Mosques may celebrate growth while ignoring those alienated by control or shame.

The strongest defense. Communities naturally rejoice when people embrace faith.

The counter. Rejoicing becomes REPLACEMENT when new converts are used to erase harmed ones. If the community loves the conversion story more than the convert's long-term freedom, the person was valued as proof.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Replacing those who leave with new conversion stories is community practice; no written rule directs it.

30 · Plausible Deniability

The institution is never responsible, because the authority is attributed to God — who isn't available for cross-examination.

How it shows here

- A mosque or family may say hijab is a choice while making removal socially devastating.
- Communities can deny compulsion while apostasy, doubt, dating, dress, marriage, and gender behavior carry severe family or social penalties.
- An imam may never explicitly order a family to shame a daughter, but sermons about modesty, fitna, obedience, and family honor supply the script.

- A convert is welcomed warmly, then pressured through "guidance" into dress, prayer, diet, marriage, and community expectations. Later, the community says, "We only advised."
- Abuse may be hidden under avoiding fitna, preserving the ummah, or protecting a man's reputation, while leaders deny silencing victims.

The strongest defense. Islam says there is no compulsion in religion. Modesty and family honor are religious values. Culture, not Islam, causes abuse.

The counter. A doctrine against compulsion does not erase coercive social enforcement. If "choice" has only one acceptable outcome, it is not free. "Culture, not Islam" becomes PLAUSIBLE DENIABILITY when religious language is used to enforce the culture and religious leaders benefit from the obedience.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CODIFIED Where religious law is state law, the authority claim is statutory — penal codes and ministry regulations are public documents.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Count grades, not names. A long list of Contested entries says something very different from a short list of Codified ones. A bias to watch for in yourself: people rate the same pressure as "normal" when their own group applies it and as "manipulation" when another group does. Before you judge an entry, try imagining it applied by a group you distrust. Does it look different?

13

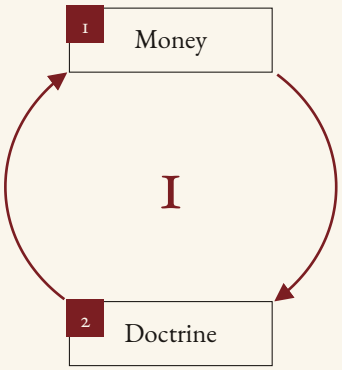
The loops

BEFORE YOU READ

How the techniques connect into cycles. A single practice can look harmless on its own. The loops show how one step feeds the next, so that, for example, a newcomer's welcome turns into an obligation.

> The seven loops below show how the practices connect, so that each step makes the next one easier and the last step feeds the first. The loops are analysis built from findings recorded elsewhere on this page PATTERN OBSERVED; each step names the section or technique where its fact is recorded.

1 · Money to Doctrine to Money



Zakat is a fixed obligation, administered where the state runs it by boards whose distribution criteria a payer can rarely trace, and the same states pay the preachers who teach the obligation.

How it runs.

1. Zakat is taught as an obligation at a fixed rate of 2.5%, a pillar of the faith (sections 1 and 9; technique 2).
2. Where the state runs it, zakat is collected by state boards and distributed by appointed distributors at official discretion (sections 7 and 9).
3. Collection totals are disclosed, but distribution criteria and discretionary awards are not, and published criteria rarely let a payer trace where their own zakat went (sections 9 and 14).

4. The same states license the imams, approve the sermons and pay the salaries of the preachers who teach the obligation (sections 7 and 14).

5. The next sermon teaches the obligation again, and the giving continues.

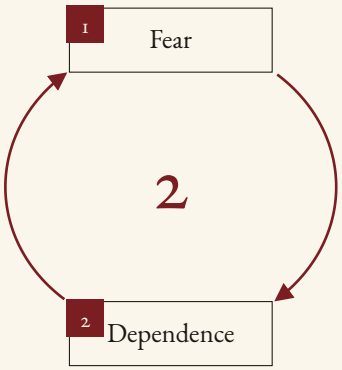
Techniques that feed it. 26 · Financial Control, 2 · Weaponized Generosity, 3 · Future Faking, 15 · Triangulation.

Why it closes. The obligation is precise to the percentage point, and the accounting is unavailable at any percentage (section 12, stage 6). The preacher who teaches the duty is paid by the state that spends the money, so no step in the circuit answers to the payer.

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens wherever distribution is published. A payer can give directly, or ask a mosque or board for last year's accounts before giving. Where a mosque is a registered charity, a regulator can act, as the Charity Commission did at Brighton (sections 8 and 19). This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. The say-do table in section 14 sets "Zakat is the right of the poor" beside the record: where the state collects it, distribution is at official discretion.

2 · Fear to Dependence to Fear



Eternal punishment for apostasy is installed early, relief comes through community belonging, and families transmit it as protection.

How it runs.

1. A child is Muslim by birth in the standard legal framing, and religious schooling begins very young (section 11; technique 19).
2. Fear of hell, the grave, Judgment Day and dying outside Islam becomes so normal that the anxiety is renamed taqwa (technique 13).
3. Relief comes through prayer, fasting, repentance, the mosque community and the ummah, the same community that carries the warning (technique 20).
4. When someone drifts, family and community call them back with reminders of death, hell and dying outside Islam, framed as love (techniques 4 and 16; section 15).
5. Those who stay pass the same warning to their own children as protection.

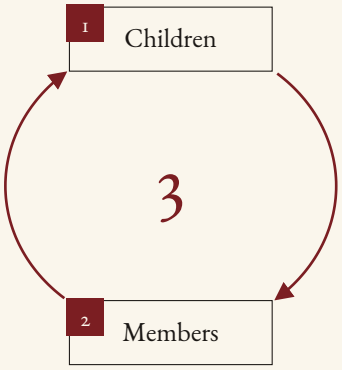
Techniques that feed it. 3 · Future Faking, 4 · Hoovering, 13 · Normalization / Desensitization, 20 · Trauma Bonding.

Why it closes. The fear and the relief come through the same people. Section 15 records the eternal-punishment framing as typically put as a warning given out of love, so the person who delivers the fear also offers the safety, and leaving means losing both at once (technique 20).

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens where a family separates its love from the warning, and where a person can say "I no longer believe" without losing their relationships (technique 4). The tradition's own standard, "there is no compulsion in religion", gives a believer grounds to ask for that (section 4). This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. Section 12, stage 2 describes retrieval that arrives through the family rather than an institution: Ramadan, your mother's voice, come back for her sake.

3 · Children to Members to Children



Hifz schooling begins very young and, in some madrasa systems, substitutes for general education, and families with no affordable alternative send the next generation to the same schools.

How it runs.

1. A child is Muslim by birth in the standard legal framing (section 11; technique 19).
2. Qur'an memorization (hifz) schooling begins very young and, in some madrasa systems, substitutes for general education (section 11).
3. Modesty rules and gender segregation begin at puberty or earlier (section 11).
4. In residential religious schools, documented abuse meets weak reporting pathways, and the school is often the family's only affordable education (sections 11 and 17).
5. Families with no affordable alternative send the next generation to the same schools (section 17).

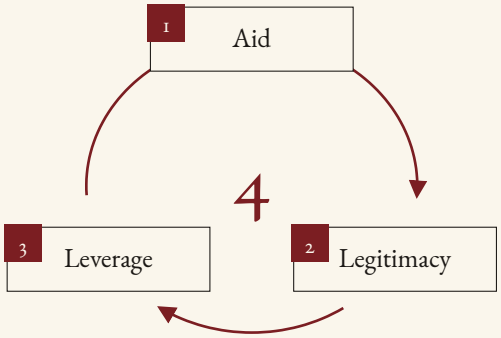
Techniques that feed it. 19 · Manufactured Consent, 13 · Normalization / Desensitization, 23 · Infantilization, 2 · Weaponized Generosity.

Why it closes. Each child is enrolled before they can consent, in a school that is often the family's only affordable option, so the same constraint shapes the choice made for the next child.

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens where general education is required alongside religious schooling, and where abuse in a religious school is reported to the police; section 23 asks whether it was. Section 18 names teachers as the tier that could refuse any arrangement that puts community reputation before a child. This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. Section 18 records that madrasa and weekend-school teachers see "which children are being beaten, and which families will not report it", and are asked to handle it internally.

4 · Aid to Legitimacy to Leverage to Aid



Funded mosques and schools abroad buy influence over which interpretation a community receives.

How it runs.

1. Gulf states and royal foundations have funded mosques, schools and translated literature across the world for decades, and the buildings are real and needed (sections 7 and 16).
2. From the 1970s, oil wealth made interpretation an export market (section 5).
3. The funding comes with doctrinal strings, so communities receive an interpretation along with the infrastructure (sections 9 and 16).
4. Funders gain influence over the mosque boards that hire and fire imams (sections 9 and 18).
5. The interpretation that arrived with the money shapes the community, and the funder's standing grows with each project.

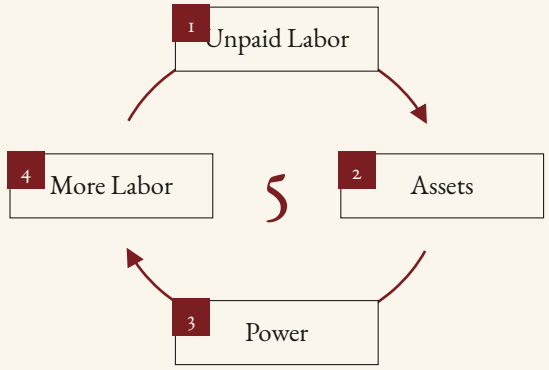
Techniques that feed it. 2 · Weaponized Generosity, 22 · Benevolent Control, 26 · Financial Control, 15 · Triangulation.

Why it closes. The aid is needed and the doctrine travels with it, so a community cannot take one without the other. Each funded institution then teaches the interpretation that makes the next grant welcome.

Where it could be broken, and by whom. Section 20 records diaspora congregations that funded their mosques locally to refuse strings-attached foreign money, at the cost of slower building and smaller facilities. Section 18 names mosque committees as the tier that could refuse to let a single donor select the interpretation the whole community hears. This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. Section 16 records that the buildings are real and needed, and that local communities receive them alongside an interpretation they did not choose: "aid as curriculum".

5 · Unpaid Labor to Assets to Power to More Labor



Community fundraising builds the mosque, the committee holds it and hires the imam, and major donors gain influence over the imam.

How it runs.

1. Mosques and schools are built through community fundraising (section 9).
2. The mosque committee or trust holds the institution and hires and fires the imam (section 18).
3. Major donors gain influence over imams, and the committee is asked to keep the donor happy (sections 9 and 18).

4. The women who organize the women's section run the religious life of half the community from a room with no vote (section 18).

5. The giving and the work continue, and the decisions stay with the board.

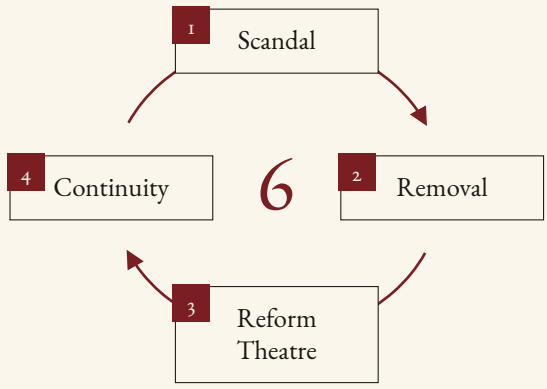
Techniques that feed it. 26 · Financial Control, 2 · Weaponized Generosity, 23 · Infantilization, 29 · Replacement.

Why it closes. The people who produce the institution's resources hold no vote over how they are used. Value flows one way, from the community to the board, and the board and its donors decide how it is used.

Where it could be broken, and by whom. Section 4 names mosques with elected boards and financial transparency as healthy practice. Where a mosque is a registered charity, the Charity Commission can act on its governance (sections 19 and 22). This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. Section 19 records the Charity Commission's inquiry into the Brighton Mosque and Muslim Community Centre, which disqualified a trustee.

6 · Scandal to Removal to Reform Theatre to Continuity



A case is handled as a community matter, the teacher is relocated rather than reported, and no reporting policy follows.

How it runs.

1. Abuse in a madrasa or a marriage is raised, and the person raising it is told they are shaming the community or serving Islamophobes (section 12, stage 4; technique 12).
2. The case is handled as a community matter, and the teacher is relocated rather than reported (section 14).
3. The victim is told to be patient, avoid fitna and preserve family honor, or to resolve it privately through family or religious mediation (technique 18).
4. The bodies that handled it, mosque committees and state religious ministries, face no safeguarding requirement that this page records for unregistered mosques or ministries (section 14).
5. The next case surfaces through a secular journalist, the community divides over the reporting, and no policy changes (section 14).

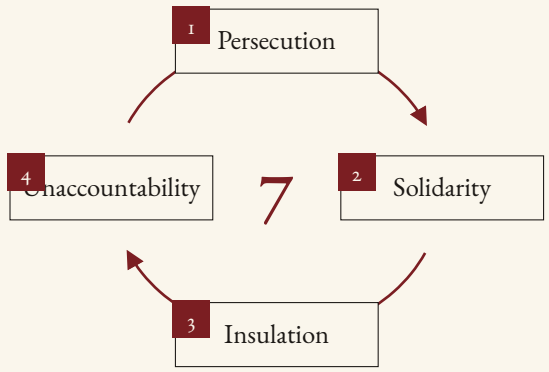
Techniques that feed it. 18 · Silent Treatment / Stonewalling, 12 · DARVO, 25 · Spiritual Bypassing, 30 · Plausible Deniability.

Why it closes. Moving the individual answers the complaint without creating a rule, so the next case meets the same empty chair. Section 15 records family privacy and community reputation suppressing reporting.

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens where a written policy requires abuse to be reported to the police. Section 23 asks the question that would test it: when a child was abused in a madrasa, was it reported? Section 18 names teachers as the tier that could refuse to handle it internally. This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. Section 14 records the pattern observed in religious schools: abuse handled as a community matter, with the teacher relocated rather than reported. It names no single case.

7 · Persecution to Solidarity to Insulation to Unaccountability



Genuine surveillance and hostility toward Muslims are used to reclassify internal criticism as collaboration.

How it runs.

1. Hostility toward Muslims is real, documented and dangerous, and Muslims in the West bear it daily (section 3; section 5, 2001 to the present).
2. Internal criticism is framed as helping the enemies of Islam, and internal critics are accused of Islamophobia even when they describe real abuse (techniques 11 and 17).
3. Family and community close ranks, and private doubts are framed as a betrayal of Muslims worldwide (techniques 15 and 16).
4. Reports of abuse are met with denial and accusations of fitna or of dishonoring the ummah (technique 12).
5. Nothing inside is examined, and the next critic is met the same way (section 23).

Techniques that feed it. 12 · DARVO, 17 · Smear Campaign, 11 · Projection, 27 · Manufactured Crisis, 15 · Triangulation.

Why it closes. Each new instance of outside hostility makes the charge of collaboration more persuasive, so the more real the threat, the more protection it gives against internal scrutiny (section 12, stage 4).

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens when criticism comes from inside and cannot be dismissed as hostile. Section 3 notes that the reformers cited on this page are Muslims, and section 21 names Muslim women and organizations who changed family law from within. This paragraph is

analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. In section 2, Aliyah's cousin ends a voice note: *anyway don't say anything, they'll make it about the mosque and you know how people are right now.*

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

The loops explain why good people stay in arrangements they would never sign up for from scratch. The more you have already put in, the harder it is to walk away. Researchers call this the sunk-cost effect (Arkes & Blumer, 1985), and it works on time, money and relationships alike. Ask yourself: if you were starting today, knowing what you know, would you join?

The seven loops below show how the practices connect, so that each step makes the next one easier and the last step feeds the first.

14 Say versus do

BEFORE YOU READ

Direct, checkable comparisons: a public statement on one side, the documented record on the other, and the receipt that links them. This is the most falsifiable section on the page, because each row either matches its source or it doesn't.

What they say, what the record shows

THEY SAY	THE RECORD SHOWS	RECEIPT
There is no compulsion in religion.	Several states maintain criminal penalties for leaving it, and this page records no case of the scholars on those states' payrolls calling for their repeal.	OFFICIAL POLICY · national penal codes
Islam has no clergy and no church between you and God.	Government ministries license the preacher, write or approve the sermon, and pay the salary.	OFFICIAL POLICY
Modesty is a personal act of worship.	In specific jurisdictions it is enforced by police, and a young woman died in their custody.	GOVERNMENT REPORT

Zakat is the right of the poor.	Where the state collects it, distribution is at official discretion, and published criteria rarely let a payer trace where their own zakat went.	GOVERNMENT REPORT

Accountability or theatre?

Last time the chair ran. No single case is named on this page. The pattern observed in religious schools is that abuse is handled as a community matter and the teacher relocated rather than reported.

PATTERN OBSERVED

Who holds the chair now. Mosque committees and state religious ministries hold it. In England and Wales the trustees of a mosque registered as a charity have legal safeguarding duties [53], but supplementary schools, including madrasahs, are not subject to compulsory minimum standards [49]. This page records no equivalent rule for unregistered mosque committees or for state ministries.

Prediction. The next case will surface through a secular journalist, the community will divide over the reporting rather than the abuse, and no policy will change.

The pattern observed in religious schools is that abuse is handled as a community matter and the teacher relocated rather than reported.

Words used here

TERM	WHAT IT MEANS INSIDE	WHAT IT DOES	SAID PLAINLY
Fitna	It means discord, sedition, or trial within the community.	It is a genuine and serious theological concept, and also the standard word for someone raising a divisive concern. Its dual meaning is precisely its utility.	'You are causing a problem by mentioning the problem.'
Adab	It means proper conduct and courtesy, particularly toward scholars.	It is a real and admirable virtue, deployed to make the manner of a question the subject rather than its content.	'Your tone is now the topic.'
Bid'ah	It means innovation in religious matters.	It is a serious charge that can be applied to reform proposals, including governance and transparency reforms with no doctrinal content whatsoever.	'Change is illegitimate because it is change.'

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Test one row yourself. Pick a "they say" line you have actually heard said in person, then read the receipt. If the record matches the statement, this page is wrong about that row, and you should tell us. If it doesn't, what does it mean that you had never seen the receipt?

15 Cost & cover

BEFORE YOU READ

What leaving actually costs here, in family, work, housing, money and legal status, and how each of those costs is officially denied. Where the cost is low, the page says so plainly.

What leaving costs

- Apostasy carries criminal penalties in a number of states — up to death in several — and severe social and family consequences far more widely. **OFFICIAL POLICY** · national penal codes — nine states, per Humanists International
- Marriage, custody, and inheritance law in many jurisdictions is conditioned on religious status.

The ledger of exit

COST	DOCUMENTED?	DETAIL	THE OFFICIAL DENIAL
Legal jeopardy	It is documented in specific jurisdictions.	Apostasy and blasphemy statutes carry penalties up to death in a few states.	Typically put as: no one is executed for belief, only for sedition.
Family and marriage	It is documented very often.	Leavers can lose family, marriage prospects and custody, and personal-status law (the law of marriage, divorce, custody and inheritance) conditions rights on religion.	Typically put as: that's family and culture, not Islam.
Community and reputation	It is documented.	Leavers are labeled kafir, munafiq, or a Western agent, and diaspora communities are small and total.	Typically put as: anyone can believe what they want.

Spiritual threat	It is documented.	Apostasy is framed as deserving eternal punishment.	Typically put as: it is a warning given out of love.

How the cost is denied

CHANNEL	LEVEL	NOTE
Explicit policy	Low	Where the state enforces religion, the control is statutory — penal codes and ministry regulations are public documents.
Informal enforcement	High	Outside state-enforcement contexts, family and community pressure carries nearly all of it.
Leadership distance	High	No central authority means no one is answerable for what is done in Islam's name.
Doctrinal ambiguity	High	Madhhab diversity allows any specific practice to be attributed to a different school.
Cultural outsourcing	High	'Honor' violence, FGM, and forced marriage are attributed to culture — accurately, and also conveniently.
Volunteer enforcement	High	Relatives and neighbors do the enforcing; no institution issues an order.
Sacred secrecy	Medium	Family privacy and community reputation suppress reporting.
Exit cost denial	Medium	Officially there is no compulsion in religion; the penal codes and family outcomes say otherwise.

Sources for this section: 1 19

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

The Qur'an says there is no compulsion in religion. Yet in nine states leaving Islam is a crime that can carry death, and in many more marriage, custody and inheritance depend on religious status. The genealogy section records that these laws give governments a tool for imprisoning critics, and that blasphemy charges have also been brought against minorities and in personal quarrels. If a cousin of yours told you privately they no longer believed, what would you do with that knowledge?

16 The ledger

BEFORE YOU READ

The balance sheet. It shows who benefits, who pays, and what leverage flows back to the institution in return for what it gives.

Who benefits

- States that rule through religious legitimacy benefit: official clerical establishments trade endorsement for funding and monopoly (the Saudi religious establishment; Egypt's Al-Azhar and its relationship

with the state; Iran, covered on the Shia Islam page). ACADEMIC SOURCE

- Government religious ministries benefit, employing very large numbers of clergy (Turkey's Diyanet alone had more than 140,000 personnel in 2023 [51]) and controlling sermon content.
- Certification and compliance industries (halal, Islamic finance) benefit, because their gatekeeping generates fees. FINANCIAL RECORD

Money out, leverage back

- Gulf states have funded mosques, schools, and translated literature across the world for decades. The buildings are real and needed. The doctrinal strings mean local communities receive infrastructure alongside an interpretation they did not choose — aid as curriculum. ACADEMIC SOURCE
- Zakat administered by state boards becomes political patronage: the obligatory charity of ordinary Muslims is distributed by government appointees, making the poor's access conditional on the state's goodwill. GOVERNMENT REPORT
- The hajj is a religious obligation and a national revenue stream, licensed through agents and priced by monopoly. A duty God imposed became a market someone owns. FINANCIAL RECORD
- Halal and Islamic-finance certification generate fees at every point in ordinary commerce, with scholars on advisory boards paid by the firms they certify. Compliance became an industry. FINANCIAL RECORD

Who pays

- Women pay, under guardianship, divorce asymmetry, and compulsory dress enforcement.
- LGBTQ Muslims pay, facing criminal penalties in many jurisdictions.
- Religious minorities and dissenters pay, prosecuted under blasphemy statutes.
- Ahmadis pay — declared non-Muslim by Pakistan's 1974 Second Amendment and criminalized for "posing as Muslims" by Ordinance XX (1984) — and so do other groups legally excluded from their own religious identity. **OFFICIAL POLICY**
- Children in unregulated residential religious schools pay.
- Muslims in the West pay too. They bear surveillance and hostility from outside while internal critique is treated as betrayal — a double bind this codex names explicitly.

Sources for this section: 1 15 20 33 48 51

Gulf states have funded mosques, schools, and translated literature across the world for decades.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Find yourself in this table. Are you among those who benefit, those who pay, or both? Most readers are both. The question is whether the exchange was ever explained to you in these terms, and whether you would agree to it if it had been.

17 Who gets hurt most

BEFORE YOU READ

Where the weight lands hardest, and what it compounds with: poverty, childhood, gender, a lack of civil alternatives. This is the human stakes stated plainly.

Where the weight lands

The costs in section 15 do not fall evenly. They fall hardest where a person has the least power inside the community and the fewest places to go outside it, and where the state enforces religious law there may be no outside at all. The table names who carries the most, how, and what makes it worse.

WHO	HOW	WHAT IT COMPOUNDS WITH
Women	They carry guardianship, divorce asymmetry, custody and inheritance rules, and in some states enforced dress.	The harm compounds where personal-status law is religious law and there is no civil alternative.
LGBTQ Muslims	They face criminal penalties in numerous jurisdictions, capital in a few.	It compounds with family reporting, which removes any private space.

Ex-Muslims and doubters	They face family loss, marriage collapse and, in specific states, legal jeopardy.	It compounds in diaspora communities small enough that everyone learns immediately.
Ahmadis and minority sects	They are legally excluded from their own religious identity (Pakistan: Constitution, Second Amendment 1974; Ordinance XX 1984; Indonesia: 2008 joint ministerial decree restricting Ahmadi activity).	It compounds with mob violence and no state protection.
Children in residential religious schools	They face documented abuse with weak reporting pathways.	It compounds where the school is also the family's only affordable education.

Sources for this section: 4 5 15 19 20 48 49

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

The table puts women first, under guardianship, unequal divorce, custody and inheritance rules, where there is no civil alternative. Then LGBTQ Muslims, ex-Muslims and doubters, minority sects such as Ahmadis, and children in residential religious schools with weak reporting routes. Most of these harms come from state law or community enforcement rather than scripture. Which of them has your community ever spoken about publicly?

18 The middle tiers

BEFORE YOU READ

The people in the middle: local clergy, teachers, officials and volunteers who apply rules they did not write. The section exists so that an institution is not collapsed into a monolith, and so that people in the middle can see their own position in it.

Most of the tradition's institutional work is done below the ministries and boards, by people who see decisions without making them. Imams, mosque committees, madrasa teachers, certification supervisors and the women who organize women's sections each carry part of the load, and each stands at one point where the next decision could be declined. The table sets out what each tier does, what it sees, what it is asked to do and where it could refuse.

ROLE	DOES	SEES	IS ASKED TO	COULD REFUSE
Imams on state or committee payroll	Lead prayer and answer the community's questions	That their ruling and the ministry's position are required to coincide	Deliver approved content	Read a sermon he did not write and does not believe

Mosque committee members and major donors' representatives	Hire and fire the imam	How quickly funding shapes doctrine	Keep the donor happy	Let a single donor select the interpretation the whole community hears
Madrasa and weekend-school teachers	Teach children the tradition	Which children are being beaten, and which families will not report it	Handle it internally	Accept any arrangement that puts community reputation before a child
Certification supervisors	Sign the halal or Sharia-compliance attestation	Which firms shop for a compliant scholar	Sit on the advisory board of a firm they certify	Hold both positions at once
Women's-section organizers and teachers	Run the actual religious life of half the community	Everything, from a room with no vote	Manage complaints quietly	Counsel a woman to endure violence

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

If you are a local leader, a teacher or a volunteer, this section is about you. It is not an accusation: most of the people who carry out a rule did not write it. But the middle tier is also where a rule is most often quietly softened, or quietly enforced. Which do you do, and what would happen to you if you chose differently?

19 Documented cases

BEFORE YOU READ

Named, dated, sourced incidents: court records, government inquiries, regulators' findings and on-the-record reporting. Read the outcome lines in particular. They show what actually changed, if anything.

Instant divorce struck down (India, 2016–2017)

WHEN: 2016–2017

WHAT: Shayara Bano, divorced by her husband with a triple pronouncement of talaq, petitioned the Supreme Court. A five-judge bench ruled 3–2 that instant triple talaq was unconstitutional [2].

RECORD: *Shayara Bano v. Union of India* (2017) [2]

OUTCOME: The ruling was won by a Muslim woman using the constitution, not by any religious body [2].

TACTICS: 23 · Infantilization

GRADE: DOCUMENTED

The sharia councils review (United Kingdom, 2016–2018)

WHEN: 2016–2018

WHAT: A government-commissioned independent review, chaired by Prof. Mona Siddiqui, found women using sharia councils to obtain religious divorces, many in marriages never civilly registered and so without legal protection; it recommended requiring civil registration [8][9].

RECORD: *The Independent Review into the Application of Sharia Law in England and Wales* (Feb 2018) [8][9]

OUTCOME: The review made recommendations on civil registration, and no statutory change has followed to date [9].

TACTICS: 22 · Benevolent Control, 14 · Isolation

GRADE: DOCUMENTED

A mosque trustee disqualified (United Kingdom, 2024)

WHEN: 2024

WHAT: The Charity Commission opened a statutory inquiry into the Brighton Mosque and Muslim Community Centre in August 2022, after a former trustee was convicted on terrorism charges over a speech made at the mosque in November 2020. In July 2024 it disqualified another trustee, Karim Aboutayab, for four and a half years for failing to resolve a governance dispute within the charity [10][54].

RECORD: Charity Commission inquiry report (published January 2025) [10]

OUTCOME: Where a mosque is a registered charity, a regulator can act — the same tool that removed the trustees of the Supreme Leader's UK office (see Shia Islam).

TACTICS: 18 · Silent Treatment / Stonewalling

GRADE: DOCUMENTED

Underage marriage by permission (Morocco, 2019)

WHEN: 2019

WHAT: Morocco's 2004 family code set the marriage age at 18 but let judges authorise exceptions; in 2019 judges approved 81% of some 32,000 requests to marry a minor [6 27].

RECORD: Moroccan court statistics, as reported by TIMEP (2023) [27]

OUTCOME: The reform held on paper, and the exception became the rule in practice [27].

TACTICS: 30 · Plausible Deniability, 22 · Benevolent Control

GRADE: DOCUMENTED

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

These are not hypotheticals. Four documented cases on this page rest on a named record. The most common reaction to documented cases is "that was them, not us." Before settling on that, read the outcome lines. Did anything change in the structure that allowed each case to happen, or did one person leave while the structure stayed?

20 Precedent

BEFORE YOU READ

What has already been broken once, somewhere, and what would count as real change here. It is a benchmark, not a prediction.

It has been broken before

WHAT	WHO	WHEN	WHAT IT COST
Saudi guardianship reforms permitting women to travel and hold documents independently	Sustained internal and international pressure won it.	2019–present	Several of the women who campaigned for it were imprisoned.
Reformist and feminist Islamic scholarship establishing textual grounds for equality	Muslim scholars, mostly women	1990s–present	Its scholars faced accusations of apostasy and of Western capture.
Mosques funded locally to refuse strings-attached foreign money	Diaspora congregations	Ongoing	It meant slower building programmes and smaller facilities.
Morocco's family code (Moudawana) reform: marriage age raised to 18, polygamy restricted, divorce opened to wives, the family placed under joint responsibility of both spouses	The Moroccan women's movement argued for it in Islamic legal terms, and the monarchy enacted it.	2004	It took two decades of campaigning, and judges still grant underage-marriage exemptions. A 2024 revision would raise the exemption floor to 17 but was still unpublished on 28 September 2026 [52].
India's Supreme Court strikes down instant triple talaq (Shayara Bano v. Union of India)	Muslim women petitioners and women's groups	2017	It took years of litigation and brought public opposition within their own communities.
Tunisia withdraws the 1973 ban on Muslim women marrying non-Muslim men	Tunisian civil society and the presidency	2017	It drew condemnation from religious establishments abroad.

What would change this page

Repeal of the remaining apostasy statutes by the states that maintain them would revise this page's compulsion findings at their strongest point, and the page says so in advance.

Sources for this section: 2 5 6 7 18 26 27

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Some rows here record a change that has already happened somewhere; others name what would count as change here. When you are told something "can't change", it is fair to ask: can't, or won't? And who decided?

21 Voices from inside

BEFORE YOU READ

People from inside Islam who raised the hard question publicly, often at real cost. They answer the objection that criticism only ever comes from outsiders.

- **Musawah and Sisters in Islam.** Musawah is the global movement for equality in Muslim family law, launched in Kuala Lumpur in 2009, and Sisters in Islam is the Malaysian group that started it [34] [35].
- **Shayara Bano.** A Muslim woman, she took her divorce to India's Supreme Court and won [2].
- **Loujain al-Hathloul.** A Saudi women's-rights activist, she was imprisoned after campaigning to end the driving ban and the guardianship system, and released in 2021 [18].
- **Nahdlatul Ulama.** The world's largest Muslim organization, it replaced its chair in a contested vote in 2021 [25]. In November 2025 its supreme council declared the elected chair dismissed, which he refused to accept [41]. In 2026 its congress voted 401 to 150 to have a council of nine senior scholars choose the chair instead of a delegate vote [40].
- **Tunisia's reformers.** They won the 2017 repeal of the ban on Muslim women marrying non-Muslims [7].

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Were these people traitors, or the most loyal members their tradition had? Most were treated as the first at the time, and some are honored as the second now. If someone in your community raised one of these questions tomorrow, how would they be treated, and by you?

22 Regional variants

BEFORE YOU READ

The same tradition under different governments. What a member can say, leave, marry or inherit depends heavily on the state, and these cards show how differently it plays out.

Indonesia

APEX: There is no state-appointed grand mufti. Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah are mass membership organisations, together representing over a hundred million people.

LAW: Religious courts have jurisdiction over Muslim family law. Blasphemy provisions exist and have been used. Marriage age was raised to 19 for both sexes in 2019.

DOCUMENTED: Nahdlatul Ulama chose its chair in a contested vote in 2021 [25]. In November 2025 its supreme council declared that chair dismissed, and in 2026 its congress moved the choice of chair from a delegate vote to a council of nine senior scholars [40] [41]. Both organisations have publicly opposed hardline currents.

EXIT: Formal conversion out is legally fraught; social cost varies enormously between Java and Aceh, which operates its own sharia bylaws.

REGULATOR: Complaints can go to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the national human rights commission (Komnas HAM) or the ordinary courts.

TELL: The world's largest Muslim population has two mass religious organisations that choose their leaders through congresses of their members, and one of them has just moved the choice of chair from delegates to a council of senior scholars. That belongs in every discussion of whether Islamic institutions can be accountable — and it is almost never in one.

United Kingdom

APEX: There is no national authority. Authority lies with mosque trusts, individual scholars, and umbrella bodies with no compulsory jurisdiction.

LAW: The Charity Commission regulates mosque trusts, including through statutory inquiries and trustee removals. Sharia councils operate as arbitration and mediation bodies without civil jurisdiction over divorce.

DOCUMENTED: The Charity Commission has intervened in mosque governance disputes. The Siddiqui review (2018) examined sharia councils and recommended civil marriage registration to protect women in religious-only marriages.

EXIT: Exit costs are high in some communities and negligible in others, and family and marriage consequences dominate over institutional ones.

REGULATOR: The Charity Commission covers trusts and governance, and family courts hear family disputes. The police act on forced marriage, which also has a dedicated unit.

TELL: The gap the Siddiqui review identified — unregistered religious marriage leaving women without legal remedy — is the most actionable finding for a UK reader on this page.

Saudi Arabia

APEX: The King holds the apex as Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, and the Grand Mufti and the Council of Senior Scholars hold office by royal appointment.

LAW: The religious establishment is a branch of the state. Apostasy remains a capital offence in law. The religious police were curtailed in 2016.

DOCUMENTED: The record covers hajj quota and licensing administration, state control of scholarly appointment, and the detention of clerics who declined to endorse state positions.

EXIT: Exit costs are maximal, and they are legal, not merely social.

REGULATOR: No regulator is available to a member. This card is included precisely because its compel line is empty, and an empty compel line is a finding.

TELL: Where the religious apex is a branch of the state, 'that's politics, not religion' stops being a defence and becomes the description.

Morocco

APEX: The King holds the apex as "Commander of the Faithful" under the 2011 Constitution [39].

LAW: The 2004 family code set the marriage age at 18, made spouses jointly responsible for the family, and restricted polygamy [6].

DOCUMENTED Judges approved 81% of underage-marriage requests in 2019 [27]. A revision approved in December 2024 would raise the exemption floor to 17; as of 28 September 2026 its text had not been published [52].

EXIT: Not recorded on this page.

REGULATOR: Family courts apply the code, and their discretion is the finding [27].

TELL: Morocco has a progressive statute and a judiciary that routinely grants its exceptions, so the reform holds only as far as the judge who applies it.

India

APEX: There is none; Muslim personal law is applied by the civil courts.

LAW: Instant triple talaq was struck down in 2017 [2].

DOCUMENTED: The record covers *Shayara Bano* [2] and waqf-board land audits [21].

EXIT: Leaving is legally free.

REGULATOR: The Supreme Court and the state waqf boards are the regulators [2 21].

TELL: The largest Muslim minority on earth changed its divorce law through a secular court, on a Muslim woman's petition.

Sources for this section: 2 3 6 8 9 10 11 14 16 17 19 21 25 27 39 40 41 52

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

This page covers Indonesia, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Morocco and India. Your country changes what this tradition can do to you, and what you can do about it. If you live somewhere not listed, ask which of these cards your country most resembles. If you are a voter, note that each of these arrangements was chosen by a government.

23 The questions

BEFORE YOU READ

The six questions the documented record could not resolve. Each is set out below: why it is being asked, and a concrete example already on this page that it points back to.

QUESTION 1 OF 6

If there is no compulsion in religion, why do several states maintain criminal penalties for leaving it — and what would it take for the scholars on those states' payrolls to say so?

WHY THIS IS ASKED

The Qur'anic principle is explicit, and so are the penal codes. The question puts them side by side and asks what it would take for the scholars paid by those states to point out the contradiction.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The say-do table sets "There is no compulsion in religion" beside the record: several states maintain criminal penalties for leaving it, and this page records no case of the scholars on those states' payrolls calling for their repeal.

QUESTION 2 OF 6

Why is a woman's travel, marriage, or bank account conditional on a man's permission, in an era when she earns her own salary?

WHY THIS IS ASKED

The page's genealogy test applies here. Guardianship was framed as protection for women who could not contract or inherit alone. Once that disability is gone, the rule has lost its stated reason.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The genealogy section concludes that keeping guardianship "after removing the disability it addressed converts protection into ownership," and notes that Saudi Arabia's own recent reforms concede the point.

QUESTION 3 OF 6

When a child was abused in a madrasa, was it reported to police? If not, ask who the silence protected — and whether it was the child.

WHY THIS IS ASKED

Silence after abuse protects someone. The question asks whether it was the child, or the school and its reputation.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The who-gets-hurt table lists children in residential religious schools, with "documented abuse with weak reporting pathways," where the school is also the family's only affordable education.

QUESTION 4 OF 6

Why does the state that enforces modesty also imprison the journalists who report on the enforcement?

WHY THIS IS ASKED

A state that enforces a religious rule by force, and punishes those who report on the enforcement, is protecting its power, not the rule. The question separates the two.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The genealogy section records that state enforcement of modesty by morality police is "a 20th-century invention, principally post-1979," and that a young woman died in morality-police custody in 2022.

QUESTION 5 OF 6

If a scholar is paid by a government, how would you ever know the difference between his ruling and that government's policy?

WHY THIS IS ASKED

If a scholar's income depends on a government, his rulings and that government's policy become hard to tell apart from outside. The question asks what test a believer could use.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The reach section records that in many Muslim-majority states sermon content is written or approved by a government ministry: "information control by the state, wearing clerical dress."

QUESTION 6 OF 6

You were told that criticizing anything inside the community arms its enemies. Ask who taught you that, and what they gained from your silence.

WHY THIS IS ASKED

A rule that says criticism arms the enemy ends a question before anyone looks at the evidence. The question asks who benefits from that silence.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The reach section records that community pressure discourages engagement with critical scholarship, and that "orientalist" works in some settings as a label that ends the conversation.

In closing

Your tradition's own structure is unusually well-equipped for this: no priesthood, no intercessor, no church that owns access to God. Classical scholarship's proudest achievement was independence from rulers. Every mechanism in this profile represents a departure from that inheritance, not a fulfillment of it — which means demanding accountability is not Westernization. It is a return.

You can be devout and refuse a salaried cleric's political ruling. You can pray on time and still ask what happened to the child at the school. Holding both is not weak iman. It is the only version of this that survives contact with the truth — and Islam's own texts insist that truth is not the enemy of faith.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Choose one question and ask it this month, out loud, to a real person who could answer it. Then write down what happened. Were you answered, redirected, or told that asking was the problem? Whichever it was, the response is information.

24 Leaving safely here

BEFORE YOU READ

Practical, non-theological guidance for someone who needs to step back or step away safely. It is a safety document, not an argument.

Practical guidance, not legal advice. See the country tables on Sunni Islam and Shia Islam.

1. **Check your jurisdiction.** Leaving Islam can carry the death penalty in nine states, and no penalty in most others [19].

2. **Do not announce, and be careful online.** The laws that punish leaving usually punish saying so.
3. **Know your family-law exposure.** Marriage, divorce and custody often follow religion; a religious-only marriage may leave you without legal protection [8].
4. **Secure documents and money** in your own name first.
5. **If honour or forced marriage is invoked,** use specialist help [29] [38].
6. **Find your people quietly** [30] [31], or a Muslim helpline if you are staying [28] [36].

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Even if this section is not for you, it may be for someone you know. Most people who leave a high-demand community say that the first person who listened without trying to argue them back mattered more than anything else. Could that person be you?

25 Where to get help

BEFORE YOU READ

Organizations that can help, each checked directly against its own site, with the date of the check. Nothing here is endorsed beyond that check.

Checked 2026-09-27.

ORGANIZATION	FOR	WHERE	CONTACT
Muslim Women's Network Helpline	Muslim women facing abuse, forced marriage, or family-law problems	UK	**0800 999 5786** (freephone; Mon–Fri 10am–4pm) [28]
Karma Nirvana	Honour-based abuse, forced marriage	UK	**0800 5999 247** (Mon–Fri 9am–5pm) [29]
UK Forced Marriage Unit	Forced marriage, including British nationals abroad	UK / abroad	Via GOV.UK [11]
Faith to Faithless	People leaving high-control religion	UK	**0800 448 0748** (freephone; Monday 10:00–13:00, Wednesday 10:00–13:00, Thursday 16:00–19:00 UK time) [30]

Ex-Muslims of North America	Local affiliate support groups (listed on its site); emergency fund	US, Canada	Online [31]
Naseeha	Muslim peer mental-health helpline	North America	**1-866-627-3342** (24/7) [36]
Humanists at Risk	People prosecuted for apostasy or blasphemy	Global	Casework [37]
Dubai Foundation for Women and Children	Domestic violence, abuse, trafficking	UAE	**800111**, 24/7 [38]

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Save one contact now, before anyone needs it: **Muslim Women's Network Helpline** (Muslim women facing abuse, forced marriage, or family-law problems; UK). People in crisis rarely have the energy to research options. Having a name ready is one of the most useful things you can do for someone else.



26

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WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Don't take this page's word for anything either. People tend to believe a claim more the more often they have heard it, whether or not it is true; this is the "illusory truth effect" (Hasher, Goldstein & Toppino, 1977). Spot-check three citations at random. If any fails, tell us, and it will be corrected and logged.

27 What changed on this page

BEFORE YOU READ

A dated log of what changed on this page: corrections, additions and new sources. Changes are logged in public rather than made quietly.

- **2026-10-03:** Updated the Nahdlatul Ulama entry: its 2026 congress moved the choice of chair to a council of nine senior scholars. Corrected the count of states where apostasy can carry death to nine and named them; made the al-Azhar entry say its Grand Imam was appointed in 2010; fixed the size of the Muslim population (a quarter of humanity, two billion) and the Sunni share; and added the pending Moroccan family-code reform. Removed a sentence about critics that had no source, softened claims about scholars and about safeguarding that the record did not support, marked the typical denials as paraphrase, named the Brighton Mosque case's background, dropped an aid-to-influence card the page could not support, rewrote three loop summaries to match their steps, regraded three techniques, removed the unsupported "sourced" marks, and added 16 sources and opening hours for two help lines.
- **2026-09-27:** Checked against the sources and corrected: al-Azhar's Grand Imam is elected and irremovable; the Saudi Grand Mufti's appointment date confirmed; the apostasy and waqf labels now cite sources; population corrected to about 2 billion.

- **2026-09-27:** Added Branches, Law & state, Money in numbers, four documented cases, Voices from inside, two regional cards, Leaving safely and Where to get help.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

This page keeps a public log of its own changes, mistakes included. Does the institution you belong to, give to, or were raised in keep one like it? If not, how would you know what it got wrong, and when?

Colophon

Set in EB Garamond (SIL Open Font License), regular, italic and bold, with true small capitals and old-style figures in text and lining tabular figures in tables. Laid out with Paged.js in Chromium from the same Markdown that feeds the website. US Letter, single-sided, tagged for accessibility and checked against PDF/UA-1 with veraPDF. Built 2026-10-27. Text checked 2026-10-03.

Palette: ink, oxblood, gold, cream, rule. Seven type sizes. Rules of 0.4 pt and 2 pt only.