Verdict on Apostasy

Al-Irtidaad (to renegade from Islam)

The religion of Islam is the most perfect and complete religion. The laws of Islam are flawlessly designed by Allah. These laws of Islam are for the benefit and of mankind.

Islam induces unity and always condemns division and sects.

Once a person accepts Islam, he sees its beauty and perfection. If after seeing the beauty of Islam, a Muslim turns away from it, it means he turned away from perfection towards imperfection, disassociating himself from the unity of the Muslims ummah towards a way that is unacceptable by Allah.

Allah always wishes good for His servants. By one accepting Islam, he will be Insha Allah entitled to paradise. However, after accepting Islam, one turns renegade, it means he has become entitled to Jahannam (Hell). This is not what Allah wishes for His servants. To prevent more people from becoming true candidates of the fire of Hell, Allah legislated a deterrent for it, i.e. the law of execution.

This law of executing the renegade is a unanimously accepted rule according to all Muslims.

Al-Hadith

Sayyiduna Ibn Abbaas radhi allahu anhuma says: Nabi sallalahu alayhi wasallam said "Execute the one who renegades from his Deen." (Sahih al-Bukhariy Hadith6299, Sunan al-Nasaa’iy Hadith4059 edited by Shaikh Abdul Fattah Abu Ghuddah)

Sayyiduna ‘Uthmaan radhiyallahu anhu narrates hearing Nabi Sallallahu alayhi wa sallam as saying "……The one who changes his religion after accepting Islam must be executed." (Sunan al-Nasaa’iy Hadith4057 edited by Shaikh Abdul Fattah Abu Ghuddah)

Sayyiduna Abdullah radhiallahu anhu narrates Nabi Sallallahu alayhi wa sallam as saying "It is not Halaal to kill a Muslim except for 3 reason: …no.3.The one that turns away from his Deen, thereby disassociating himself from the group of Muslims."(Sahih Muslim Hadith4351 edited by Shaikh Khalil ma’moon Sheeha)

Ijma’

The one who renegades from Islam must be executed is the unanimous verdict of the sahaaba, none of them rejected it.

The unanimity of the Sahaaba on an issue is conclusive evidence of the same.

The Fuqaha (Jurists)

All the 4 Mazhabs are unanimous that a renegade must be executed if he does not revert to Islam. Hereunder are classical texts from each of the 4 Mazhabs:

Al-Hanafiyyah

Imam al-Marghinaaniy says: "If a Muslim, may Allah forbid turns away from Islam, the religion of Islam should be presented to him. If he has any doubts they should be cleared…and he should be kept under supervision for 3 days. If he reverts to Islam, he must be set free, otherwise he should be executed. (Al-Hidayah)

Allamah Ibn ‘Aabideen says: "Note well! It is unanimous that a renegade from Islam must be executed" (Rasaa’il Ibn Aabideen)
Al-Maalikiyyah

Imam Maalik says: "The one who renegades from Islam to another religion and exposes it will be asked to repent from his action. If he does not repent, he must be executed." (Al-Mu'atta lil Imam Maalik)

Al-shaafi'iyyah

Imam al-Shaafi’i says: "One who renegades from Islam will not be left alone, either he reverts to Islam or he will be executed." (Kitab al-Umm)

Al-Hanaabilah

Allamah Ibn Qudaama al-Hanbaliy says: "All the scholars are unanimous that a renegade must be executed." (Al-Mughniy with Sharh al-Kabir Vol.10 Pg.74 Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah Beirut)

From the above it is explicitly clear that there is no leeway in the religion of Islam regarding executing a renegade from Islam.

and Allah Ta'ala Knows Best

Mufti Ebrahim Desai

In addition to the above below are a few more references on Apostasy:

i) There is a complete chapter in Sahih Bukhari named “Dealing with Apostates” having a number of ahadith on the same subject.

ii) Reliance of a traveller has a separate chapter named “Apostasy from Islam (Rida)”: “8.1 When a person who has reached puberty and is sane voluntarily apostatizes from Islam, he deserves to be killed.”

iii) The famous Salafi scholar Shaykh Uthaymeen on Apostasy:
"It is our opinion that whoever claims the acceptability of any existing religion today-others than Islam-such as Judaism, Christianity and so forth is a non believer. He should be asked to repent. If he does not, he must be killed as an apostate because he is rejecting the Quran” (Sheikh Muhammad as Saleh al Uthaimin. The Muslim Belief. pg 22)