**Freedom to sin**

[Syed Ishrat Husain](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/syed-i-husain/)

November 29, 2020

The existence of the means to sin, within your reach, ought to be the means of trial, not force. Coercion breeds hypocrisy, not godliness, and the Qur&#39;an regards hypocrisy as worse than unbelief

Had your Lord willed, all the people on earth would have believed. So can you [Prophet] compel people to believe?

Al Yunus, the Quran

Why, then most Muslim societies have a strong tendency towards, coercion in religion? Sin and crime are two different things. Sin is defined by God. Crime is defined by civil codes.

Crime is defined as an action that constitutes an offence that may be prosecuted by the state and is punishable by law. All crimes are sin but all sins are not crime. Crime is a legal concept, it is something that is set by social codes of a country, sin is a moral concept, it’s a subjective term and has no parameters, believed by religious people and ignored by others.

It’s been that way since the dawn of time because human beings are, at their core, tainted by the fall in the Garden of Eden. A sin may not necessarily be a crime and a crime may not necessarily be a sin. There is no forgiveness in the law, but God can forgive a sin if you repent. To repent means turn away from sin. Sin and crime are all around us and always with us. Thinking about which sins should be crimes and which should not is an interesting moral exercise.

Most crimes, such as murder, rape, theft, and fraud, are also sins according to most religions. Islamic scholars have made a distinction by separating the rights of God from the rights of men. The Quran forbids gambling, usury, and eating pork and animals sacrificed to idols. It is also obligatory to perform certain duties, such as praying five times a day, fasting during the month of Ramzan, paying zakat, and a pilgrimage to Mecca once in a lifetime (if one has enough means). Violating these bans and not performing the above duties without a good punishment in this world. Punishments are only for specific sins, such as theft, slanderous accusation of adultery, and adultery.

The Quran teaches that, in the afterlife, God will judge the life led by every individual in this world. It is the responsibility of the believer to obey God’s commandments.

The means to commit sin should be available, so the world can remain as a Trial Abode, where people are tested by God. For example, in a country where alcohol is prohibited, it is not possible for a Muslim to prove that he or she is free to choose to abstain. Or in most Muslim countries, during the month of Ramzan all places of sale of food and beverages are closed during the hours of fasting, eating in public is punishable. Whereas in the West all restaurants are open, alcohol is available everywhere, but I have observed that the majority of Muslims fast and abstain from alcohol, although they have the option of not fasting or consuming alcohol freely.

“They are those who, if established in the land by Us, would perform prayer, pay alms-tax, encourage what is good, and forbid what is evil. And with Allah rests the outcome of all affairs.”

Al Hajj, the Quran

The above verse which specifies commanding rights, merely called people to Islam, and prohibited the worship of idols and demons. But after a few centuries, some religious scholars have argued that &quot;the right of control&quot; refers to all that God and His Prophet commanded, and &quot;forbidding evil&quot; to all that they forbade. It is the interpreters&#39; preference to reproach other Muslims for activities such as drinking, and making music, though making or listening to music is not declared illegal in the Quran.

If they deny you O Prophet, so did the people of Noah before them, as well as the tribes of’Ad and Thamud, the people of Abraham, the people of Lot, and the residents of Midian.

And Moses was denied too. But I delayed the fate of the disbelievers until their appointed time then seized them. And how severe was My response!

Many are the societies We have destroyed for persisting in wrongdoing, leaving them in total ruin. Many are also the abandoned wells and lofty palaces!

Have they not travelled throughout the land so their hearts may reason, and their ears may listen? Indeed, it is not the eyes that are blind, but it is the hearts in the chests that grow blind. They challenge you O Prophet to hasten the torment. And Allah will never fail in His promise. But a day with your Lord is indeed like a thousand years by your counting. Many are the societies whose end We delayed while they did wrong, then seized them. And to Me is the final return. Say, O Prophet, O humanity! I am only sent to you with a clear warning.

So those who believe and do good will have forgiveness and an honourable provision.

All authority on that Day is for Allah alone. He will judge between them. So those who believe and do good will be in the Gardens of Bliss. But those who disbelieve and deny Our revelations, it is they who will suffer a humiliating punishment.

Al Hajj, the Quran

The Quran praises those, believe and do good, and enjoin on each other truth, and enjoin on each other patience.

Enjoining is no imposition. Religious righteousness must be sought only under the aegis of freedom. The existence of the means to sin, within your reach, ought to be the means of trial, not force. Coercion breeds hypocrisy, not godliness, and the Qur&#39;an regards hypocrisy as worse than unbelief. What ought to count the most is what people have in their hearts.
All we must reconsider is that we are accountable to God in the afterlife or to those in charge in this world? This world is the Abode of Trial in which God tests men, they should be free to make their own religious choices, as mentioned in the Koran, that “there is no coercion in religion”.

“Indeed, the believers, Jews, Sabians, Christians, Magi, and the polytheists—Allah will judge between them ˹all˺ on Judgment Day. Surely Allah is a Witness over all things.”