

# Interfaith Coalition

AGAINST DOMESTIC & SEXUAL VIOLENCE

jwi.org

## Statement on Behalf of the Interfaith Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence

Submitted for the hearing entitled

### Sharia-Free America: Why Political Islam and Sharia Law are Incompatible with the U.S. Constitution

House Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Constitution and Limited Government

February 10, 2026

The Interfaith Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (Interfaith Coalition) submits this written testimony for the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Constitution and Limited Government hearing, *Sharia-Free America: Why Political Islam & Sharia Law are Incompatible with the U.S. Constitution*. The Interfaith Coalition comprises national faith organizations dedicated to advocating for public policies that protect all people from domestic violence and sexual assault, with a particular concern for women and families. We submit this testimony in response to the Committee's discussion of domestic violence.

This testimony will situate Sharia, and in particular its elements related to domestic violence, within the larger context of religious and spiritual legal codes, doctrines, and theological frameworks in other faith traditions. Due to our membership composition, we will focus primarily on domestic violence within Abrahamic faith traditions, though we recognize that the principles we discuss have broader application across non-Abrahamic traditions as well.

We will establish that Sharia is analogous to legal codes, doctrines, and theological frameworks in other Abrahamic faith traditions, particularly as it pertains to domestic violence, and discuss the ways any faith tradition can be manipulated to justify abuse. We will conclude that any constitutional challenge to the First Amendment's application to Sharia would equally invalidate the religious legal codes, doctrines, and theological frameworks of all other faith traditions.

#### *Religious Legal Codes, Doctrines, and Theological Frameworks*

Most Abrahamic faith communities have religious legal codes, doctrines, or theological frameworks that guide observant members. These codes, doctrines, and frameworks are based on foundational religious texts such as the Hebrew Bible, the Christian Scriptures, and the Quran as well as supplementary texts such as the Talmud (Judaism), Papal Encyclicals (Catholicism), and Hadith (Islam). The purpose of these legal codes, doctrines, and frameworks is to help observant members of the faith tradition to live a holy life, close to God.

Religious legal codes, doctrines, and frameworks establish religious and ethical foundations that provide guidance on how to incorporate religious principles into everyday life, establishing ethical codes and religious and ritual practices and traditions. They guide individual and community relationships, moral expectations, and the promotion of the common good of the community. People of faith choose whether or not to abide by these codes and frameworks—adoption is entirely voluntary, and many less observant members of faith communities choose not to follow such codes, doctrines, or frameworks. *In all cases, when religious guidance conflicts with civil or criminal law in the United States, secular law prevails.*

Devout members of the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christian traditions subscribe to the Code of Canon Law and the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches respectively. Observant Jews follow the Halacha. Presbyterians are guided by the Principles of Order and Government, and the laws and doctrine of the United Methodist Church are published in the Book of Discipline. Sharia does not differ meaningfully from legal codes of other religions in its fundamental nature or function. None of these codes, doctrines, or frameworks are static. For example, many Protestant laws and doctrines are updated periodically to address emerging issues. The Jewish Halacha is expressed differently by Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Mizrahic Jews, and Halachic rulings are often issued in response to emerging issues. The Catholic Code of Canon law has been amended, although rarely. And Sharia is not a uniform, codified set of laws but is interpreted differently in different Muslim communities.

Understanding these religious frameworks is essential to addressing how they relate to domestic violence.

### *Spiritual Abuse*

The Interfaith Coalition's work focuses on domestic violence, which affects approximately 40% of women and 25% of men in the United States. Domestic violence occurs in faith communities at rates mirroring society as a whole, but victims in faith communities face an additional form of abuse: spiritual abuse.

Spiritual abuse is the misuse of religion, religious texts, or religious authorities to justify domestic violence, exert coercive control, or prevent victims from seeking help. Abusers across all faith traditions may distort or weaponize religion to excuse their behavior. This is why our Coalition's work is relevant to this hearing: we have seen firsthand how any religious tradition can be manipulated to justify abuse.

Faith communities that are educated about domestic violence stand with survivors and hold abusive partners accountable. Faith and prayer can be profoundly healing, and support from faith communities can make the difference between a survivor escaping an abusive relationship or remaining trapped. However, when religion itself is distorted and weaponized, the very source of potential healing becomes a tool of harm.

Critics of religion may point to passages in holy texts that seemingly allow domestic violence in all Abrahamic faiths. Yet these same texts also enjoin readers from causing harm, and modern interpretations across all traditions make clear that holy texts do not promote or excuse

domestic violence. No mainstream religious community in the United States—Christian, Jewish, or Muslim—endorses domestic violence. All condemn it, and the religious legal codes, doctrines, and theological frameworks discussed in this statement prohibit it.

The challenge of combating domestic violence is not unique to any one religion. When we see religion invoked to justify abuse, we must recognize this as a distortion of faith, not its true expression. Religious communities proactively prohibit their adherents from committing domestic violence. Some adherents may ignore these religious prohibitions and commit domestic violence, but that does not mean their faith communities permit such behavior. *Just as individuals who commit domestic violence in violation of criminal law do not implicate the government in permitting it, individual violations of religious law do not implicate the religion itself.*

### *Conclusion*

Observant members of religious communities choose to be guided by religious legal codes, doctrines, and theological frameworks, and such codes, doctrines, and frameworks exclusively govern religious matters, not secular criminal or civil matters. When religious guidance conflicts with U.S. civil or criminal law, secular law prevails. When we see religion invoked to justify domestic violence, we must recognize this as a distortion of faith, not its true expression. Sharia does not differ meaningfully from legal codes of other religions in its fundamental nature or function. The United States' commitment to freedom of religion applies equally to Muslims and to members of all other faith traditions. *If Sharia is unconstitutional, so would be the religious codes, doctrines, and theological frameworks of all faith traditions*, including the Jewish Halacha, the Catholic Code of Canon Law, the Presbyterian Principles of Order and Government, and the United Methodist Church's Book of Discipline. The First Amendment protects the right of individuals of all faiths, including Muslims, to seek religious guidance and follow religious codes in their personal spiritual lives, just as it has always protected Catholics seeking Canon Law guidance, Jews following Halacha, and Methodists adhering to the Book of Discipline.

Please contact [rgraber@jwi.org](mailto:rgraber@jwi.org) with any questions.