



Community Policing in Islam as a Panacea to Crime Control and Prevention in *Shari'ah* Implementing states

Dr. Lawal Musa Kagara^{1*}, Dr. Abdullahi Haruna² & Dr. Bawa Dan Muhammad Anka³

¹Department of Arts and Social Science Education, Faculty of Education, Federal University Dutse, Ibrahim Aliyu Bypass, P.M.B 7156

²Department of Islamic Studies, Zamfara State College of Education, Maru

³Department of Islamic Studies, Federal University Gusau

ARTICLE HISTORY

RECEIVED

25-07-2026

ACCEPTED

28-07-2026

PUBLISHED

01-08-2026

Corresponding author:

Dr. Lawal Musa Kagara

Department of Arts and Social Science Education, Faculty of Education, Federal University Dutse, Ibrahim Aliyu Bypass, P.M.B 7156



Abstract

Islam as a religion has provide a unique guidance on how to control and prevent crimes in a given community and if followed properly security issues would have been better than how they are now. In this regard communities have a better role to pay in preventing and controlling the increase in crimes in their respective communities. This can be done through proper enlightenment campaign/sensitization to perpetrators by the elite/stake holders in the community and also assisting security agents of all types to see to it that such have been reduced to minimal level. Looking into the present situation there is need for the active involvement of vigilant groups (Yan Banga). Those that volunteer for fight against insecurity (Yan Sakai). And others take holders in order to prevent such immoral act. The paper analyzed how Islam support the ideal of community policing as such some Qur'anic verses and Ahadith of the Prophet (S.A.W.) were sighted to buttress the argument. The paper used both Quantitative and Quantitative methods whereby relevant sources were consulted and analyzed the paper find out that looking into the security challenges the communities of Muslim are facing nowadays there is need for community policing and as a result of the introduction of the policing Muslim and non-Muslim have being benefitting from Community Policing. The paper called on government and well to do individuals to support the idea of community policing, finally conclusion and recommendations were provided on how best to improve the policing.

Keywords: Community, Policing, Control, Prevention, Crime, Shari'ah, Implementing

Introduction

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent the Merciful, may peace and blessing of Allah be upon our noble prophet (SAW), his family and those who follow his path till the last Day.

Community policing is a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies which support the systematic use of partnership and problem solving techniques to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety (Lawal, 2018: 144). In community policing there are neighborhood watch called block watch which involves a neighbor or a member of the policing to watch his own neighbor or any member of the community doubt on his movement and activities. The aim is to increase surveillance by resident and community members if he cannot take any action, he report the person (www.policeandcrimecontrol.com).

Community policing is considered of paramount importance within Islamic societies and Allah (SWT) enjoyed believers to partake in the fight against any form of crime. As a result of this there is no better time than now that community policing is needed and to explore and unveil the participation of community in crime control and prevention. It is not a mere opinion that communities are facing serious security challenges to extent that the formal state security actors cannot neutralize the situation since they have been overpowered by the criminals in terms of sophisticated weapons, numerical strength and live in the jungle that they cannot be without the assistance of the members of the community. Under these situations the involvement of communities is needed in order to fill the gap that exists in the control of crimes in the communities, as a matter of fact the introduction of vigilante group (*Yan banga*), those that volunteer to fight criminals (*Yan sakai*), community protection guard, and other individuals or group of people as well other relevant stake holders becomes omnipresence and important in the present day communities. The inability of the formal security actors to face the criminals resulted into the formation of community policing so as to assist and cooperate with the formal security actors to achieve a common goal. One thing to note, the maintenance of such policing mostly depends on the contributions being made by the members of the community in order to boost their morale. It is against this background that the paper unveils the importance of this policing and the benefit of it formation. Because if not of this policing some villages and towns will be no more in existence or they will all be deserted by their dwellers as a result of the level of insecurity in some Muslim communities, this paper therefore, covers conceptual clarifications, history of community policing, community policing in the Qur'an and *Sunnah*, need for the community policing, its benefits, challenges, lastly recommendations were provided.

Conceptual clarifications

It is important to make clarifications on the meaning of some concepts that make up the title of this paper to avoid misleading because of their different meaning depending on their places of usage.

Policing is defined by Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary 6th edition as the activity of keeping order in a place or act of controlling an industry or an activity to make sure that people obey the rules in an organization or community. In the context of this paper policing is referring to efforts being made by the members of a community to reduce or control the wave of crimes in their respective communities.

On the other hand, the community refers to people who live in a particular area or group of people who share the same religion, race, job or the feeling of sharing of things and belonging to a group in

the place where they live. In this paper, community is referring to some people who live in one area because of the insecurity prevailing in the area they joined hand with other security agencies and fight against criminal activities prevailing in the area.

The same dictionary defined control to mean to stop something from spreading or getting worst. In the context of this paper control refers to how people in the community controls the spread of crimes in their communities.

Prevention means the act of stopping something from happening, in this regard the word is used as preventing or stopping crimes from happening or escalating in a given community.

History of Community Policing in the Muslim communities.

The history of community policing is as far back as establishment of such community (Ibrahim,2004) for the fact that ever since and in every grown community there will be those that encourage good and dissuades evils this is evident as in the case of *Sheikh* Usmanu bn Fodiyo that established Muslim community and used the community to fought against all those things that are considered unislamic.

Muhammad (2023) maintained that in 1981 community policing takes another direction in the sense that an independent organization was formed by some communities to assist the formal security actors in the fight against crime known as vigilante group the recruitment or joining the organization is voluntary, members did a sacrifice or volunteer to join the organization without expecting anything from either the government or philanthropies in the community, mostly they rely on the contributions being made by their respective communities and even such sometimes will be meant for the purchase of torchlights, uniform, battery, and other needed equipment that assisted them in the discharge of their duties.

In another version of history, the concept of community policing didn't materialize in Nigeria until in the early 2000s when the issue of insecurity and the increase in crime rate became a major problem to contend with (www.crime.com)

Also in the same year (2000) after the *Shari'ah* re-implementation some state Governors established *Hisbah* commissions/boards and *Hisbah* guards in their respective states aimed at controlling and preventing crimes. (Lawal,2018)

The foremost community policing organization in the in the area is *Yan sakai* (those that willingly volunteer to protect the lives and properties as well as prevent and control crime in their respective communities). The organization was an upgrade of the vigilante group (*Yan Banga*), they formed this organization because of the increase in crime and criminal activities in their respective communities.

It is common knowledge that communities of nowadays need such organizations because of the banditry activities and other related crimes that have been disturbing the Muslims and non-Muslims populace, therefore, there is need for the formation of such organization in order to assist the formal security operators in the fight against such criminal acts. As maintained earlier community policing is needed because they are in better position to face these criminals, without them the socio-economic, religious, and political lives of the Muslims of the affected communities will be hindered.

Concept of *Shari'ah* and its Re-Implementation

Shari'ah is an Arabic word derived from *Shari'i* literally means the path to be followed or the way to watering place. Also it means the way to success. (Abdurrahman,1985). Meaning to follow a good path, to enter or commence. (Auwalu,2002), it means away to river where animal drink water. (Imam, ND). In another literal definition

Shari'ah means the straight path or the path that leads to the spring where water can be found it is called *Shari'ah* because it is comparable to the sources of water in the sense that it is the way of life for man and food for him in the way that water is the source of life. (Anbali,2002)

Technically, it means the all-embracing divine guidance from Almighty Allah (S.W.T) to mankind that leads to salvation it is the path not only leading to Allah (S.W.T), but the path believed by all Muslims to be the path shown by Allah through His messenger Muhammad (S.A.W). (Abdurrrahman,1985) the word *Shari'ah* is used in the Qur'an where Allah said:

Then we put you on the (right) way of religion: so follow thou that (way) and follow not desires of those who know not. Q 45:18

Many reasons have initiated *shari'ah* re-implementation in some Northern states, and they have emanated as a result of judicial shake-up before and after colonialism, most especially in criminal justice. These issues have culminated in the setback of the Muslims in the area and other parts of the country. Thus, it can be said that it is one of the major reasons when the *shari'ah* re-implementation arose Muslims in these states welcomed and supported the movement, to the extent that even Governors who rebuked or showed lukewarm attitude towards *shari'ah* in their states were faced with serious intimidation from the electorate.

Lawal et al, (2024) outlined other reasons that influenced the then state governors of the northern Nigeria to re-implement *shari'ah* legal system:

1. The shortcoming of the penal code by its common law orientation
2. The inefficacy and failure of the common law which is best illustrated by the high statistics on the rise of crimes like corruption, adultery, fornication, moral decadence, and delay in the adjudication of justice.
3. The constitutional basis of the *shari'ah*
4. Promise made by the Governors to re-implement *shari'ah* especially the governor of Zamfara State.

List of states and the dates of *Shari'ah* re-implementation in Nigeria

S/N	STATE	MONTH	YEAR
1.	Zamfara	January	2000
2.	Sokoto	January	2001
3.	Kano	June	2000
4.	Katsina	June	2000
5.	Jigawa	June	2000
6.	Kebbi	December	2000
7.	Niger	July	2000
8.	Bauchi	August	2001
9.	Borno	August	2001
10.	Gombe	February	2002
11.	Yobe	March	2002
12.	Kaduna	November	2002

As shown in the above table, between January 2000 and March 2002, twelve states in Northern Nigeria re-implemented the *shari'ah* penal and criminal codes. Zamfara state was the first to do so in January 2000 as seen in the table, and this triggered a wave of adoption across the region. By June 2000, five additional states that are: Sokoto, Jigawa, Katsina, Kano, and Kebbi had followed suit. The re-

implementation continued into 2001 and 2002 with Bauchi, Borno, Kaduna, Gombe, and Yobe.

Ibrahim (2004) argued that This wave of re-implementation was largely a response to public demand for a justice system rooted in Islamic principles, as well as reaction to perceived failures of the common law in addressing corruption, crime, and moral decay in the society. However, the timing and manner of re-implementation varied across states due to differences in political will, legislative processes, and public readiness. Despite the common objective, challenges such as lack of institutional capacity, inadequate training of *shari'ah* judges have affected the uniform application of *shari'ah* across these states.

Community Policing in the Qur'an and *Sunnah*

Lawal (2018) maintained that Islam urges Muslims to admonish their fellow believers who engage in criminal acts and other related offences. One of the fundamental missions of Islam is the promotion of righteousness and the eradication of evil. Since a community is a collection of people who often share common socio-religious and cultural affiliations, as well as the same system of government, its members may possess common interests that enhance and facilitate collective growth and development. To achieve this objective, there must be mutual trust, cooperation, and the maintenance of law and order within the community.

The Qur'an and *Sunnah* of the Prophet (s.a.w.) taught Muslim to enjoy what is good and abstain what is bad, the Qur'an stated as follows:

Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting what is good, enjoying what is right and forbidding what is wrong they are the ones to attain facility. Q 3:104

Based on the above verse, Ibn Kathir indicates that there should be a group within the Muslim community dedicated specifically to calling others toward righteousness. While promoting good and forbidding evil is a general obligation upon all Muslims, Ibn Kathir further explains the importance of having an organized group that takes on this responsibility more actively and systematically.

In another verse, Allah says:

Ye are the best of people evolved for mankind enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong---Q 3:110

Based on the aforementioned Qur'anic exhortations, it is incumbent upon every Muslim to actively promote good and discourage wrongdoing within the community. This obligation constitutes a fundamental command of Allah (s.w.t.), upon which an ideal Muslim society is expected to be founded. Such a society, in turn, aspires to be harmonious, free from conflict and uncertainty, and characterized by unity, strength, and prosperity.

In a tradition of the Prophet (s.a.w.) believers are enjoined to correct or change any abomination found in the society. The Prophet (s.a.w) said:

Narrated by Abu Sa'id Khudri "Whoever among you sees an abomination let change it with his hand and if he cannot, then with his tongue, and if that is not possible, he should correct it with his heart, and that is the weakest degree of faith (Sahih Muslim, Kitab al- Iman, Hadith No 49)

The above hadith clearly informed Muslim brothers and sisters that it is the responsibility of every Muslim to strive and make others to abandon evil deeds and perform what is right by using any lawful means available to him.

In addition, community policing is a collective responsibility of all and sundry and if properly adopted as enshrined by Islam it will inculcate into the minds of fellow Muslims the spirit of cooperation between the formal and non-formal security actors for the control and prevention of crimes and solved community problems, promote public safety and enhance the security of lives and properties in the communities as well as combating the present security threats that, the three levels of governments and formal security actors cannot prevent and control single handled as such community policing could be used to curb or to minimize the increase of crime rate in their respective community.

The Prophet (s.a.w.) encouraged Muslims to guard their communities against enemies, mischiefs persons and criminal activities, he also maintained that reward of a person who guards his community against criminal activities and harm is better than the whole universe and what it contains.

Prophet (s.a.w.) said:

Sahl ibn Sa'd al-Sa'idi reported that the Messenger of Allah says: A day of *Ribat* (standing guard) in the cause of Allah is better than this world and whatever is in it---'' (Sahih al Bukhari, Book of Jihad, Hadith NO, 2892)

The above hadith emphasizes the immense spiritual reward of *Ribat* (guarding and protecting the Muslim community in comparison to worldly affairs.

In another narration:

Salaman al-Farisi reported that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) said: *Ribat* (standing guard) for a day and a night is better than fasting for a month and standing in prayer every night. If a person dies while performing it, his deeds will continue for him as they used to, this provision will be granted to him, and he will be protected from the trial of the grave (Sahih Muslim, Book of Leadership, Hadith No 1913)

The cited hadith indicates that Islam permits and, in certain contexts, encourages the active involvement of Muslims in safeguarding their communities, highlighting the spiritual merit associated with such efforts. It further suggests that communities are justified in adopting precautionary and preventive measures against mischief and criminal activities. This may include the provision of adequate personnel and the use of appropriate modern resources to support effective community-based security, thereby enhancing stability and social order, among others.

The Need for Community Policing in Islam

Islam is a religion of peace and complete way of life has provided a divine guidance for the safety, protection, peace, and stability of individuals and community which if properly adhered to people living in the community will become safe. Though communities cannot eliminate crimes totally, because no matter how religious, pious and Allah's fearing a community is, some crimes will still be committed by some of its members which if not properly addressed could rise and eventually devastate the security and peace being enjoyed by that community. Since this is the case, one of the measures to checkmate the escalation of such criminal acts is the formation of community policing (Ammaru, 2018). This is the reason why Muslims introduced and are in support community policing. It is well-known fact that if not because of strong community policing being enjoyed by the Muslims community things would have been deteriorated to the worst state, ranging from rampant killings, kidnapping, cattle rustling, among others would

have been the order of the day despite the fact that they have been experiencing such, but not as before when such policing have no support from the community and government. Protection of lives and properties in Islam is paramount important. Allah (s.w.t) has declared that Muslim's life and property are inviolable from other people (Yahaya,2003:53)

The above saying is reflected in a number of Qur'anic verse and ahadith of the Prophet (s.a.w.)

Allah said:

And do not eat up your property among yourselves for vanities, nor for use it as bail for judges, with that ye may eat up wrongfully and knowingly. A little of other people's property Q 2:188

It is also reported in a number of hadith of the Prophet (s.a.w.) concerning eating another person property unlawfully.

Prophet (s.a.w.) said:

Whoever (wrongfully takes) even a hand span of land, he will be made to wear it around his neck on the day of resurrection from seven earths (Sahih Bukhari, Hadith No, 3198)

Similarly, Prophet (s.a.w.) also maintained that:

Whoever takes the right of a Muslim by an oath (sworn falsely), Allah will make the fire obligatory for him and forbid paradise for him (Sahih Muslim, Book of Faith, Hadith No 218)

In another hadith Prophet(s.a.w.) said:

It is haram (unlawful) for a Muslim to take (so much as a stick) without the consent of the owner.

From the foregoing Qur'anic exhortation and hadith of the Prophet (S.A.W.), it is evident that the unlawful confiscation of people's property is contrary to the teachings of Islam. Consequently, there is a need for community policing to help ensure that Muslims adhere to the ethical principles and regulations prescribed by Islamic law.

Community policing is essential for safeguarding the lives and property of both Muslims and non-Muslims against criminal activities. In Islamic thought, human life is regarded as a profound manifestation of the wisdom, knowledge, and power of Allah. It is considered a sacred gift bestowed upon humanity, one that cannot be taken without just cause. The authority to give and take life ultimately belongs to Allah alone, in accordance with His will. Consequently, the unjust taking of a single human life is viewed as equivalent to the destruction of all humanity, and conversely, the preservation of one life is akin to saving the entire human race and this further corroborated by the following Qur'anic verse:

On that account: we ordained for the children of Israel that if any one slew a person unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land it would be as if He slew the whole people: and if any one saved a life it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people--- Q 5:35

From the forgoing, it is incumbent upon all Muslims, both individually and collectively, to safeguard the lives of others within their community. One effective means of achieving this is through engagement in community policing, as the aforementioned Qur'anic verse enjoins the preservation and protection of human life within society.

Benefits of Community Policing

The following are the benefits of community policing for the Muslim *Ummah* as opined by Lawal (2018)

1. Community policing provides a broader perspective on crime control and prevention. Collaboration between the community and security agencies can contribute significantly to reducing persistent crime and enhancing overall security within the community.
2. Community policing enhances the work of security agencies, making them more effective and efficient in preventing and controlling the incidence of crime within communities.
3. Community policing helps ensure the improvement of the quality of life for all members of the community.
4. It fosters a sense of trust among community members, thereby reducing fear and enhancing social cohesion within the community.
5. The intervention may foster positive community perception, as residents are likely to appreciate the role of formal security agencies in tackling crime.
6. It serves as a mechanism for promoting peace and social order in distressed communities.
7. Community policing enables members of the community to actively participate in crime prevention, control, and the resolution of local security challenges.
8. It helps to foster a stronger relationship between formal security and members of the community.
9. It promotes public safety and the effective maintenance of law and order within the community.
10. Spiritually, it contributes to the voluntary participation of individuals in *Ribat* activities.

From the benefits outlined above, it can be deduced that community policing plays a significant role in addressing security challenges, particularly by providing immediate protection to members of the community against criminal activities.

It is not an exaggeration to assert that Muslim communities, in particular, have been benefiting from this approach to policing. Without the strategies and measures implemented by community members, lives and property would be at considerable risk due to the prevalence and persistence of criminal activities. However, with the support of community policing initiatives, such threats have been substantially mitigated.

Challenges of Community Policing

Although community policing is an effective strategy for addressing crime prevention and improving police-public relations. However, it is still faced with several challenges that hinder its full success as viewed by Ostien (2007). Some of the factors militating against its effectiveness include:

1. There is a lack of political will and resistance to change on the part of the government at all levels. In addition, there is no proper management of community policing by the government, resulting in its operation as an independent entity. However, in recent times, the government of Zamfara State has taken steps to reorganize and formalize them as recognized security actors.
2. There is a prevailing fear that community policing may be perceived as a rival to the formal Police force. Community policing serves as a partner in progress to the formal Police force; however, communities have developed a level of mistrust toward the Police due to perceptions of human rights violations rather than the protection of lives

and property. This negative perception may also extend to individuals involved in community policing.

3. Inadequate or absent of remuneration significantly undermines the effectiveness of community policing initiatives. It is evident that individuals participating in community policing often receive no salary or allowances from the government for extended periods. Under such conditions, the sustainability and efficiency of community policing are severely compromised. For instance, in Zamfara State, selecting twenty guards from each ward and providing them with a monthly allowance of ten thousand is insufficient to ensure motivation, accountability, and effective service delivery.
4. Corruption constitutes a significant challenge undermining the effectiveness of community policing. Certain segments of formal security personnel who collaborate with non-formal security actors are affected by corrupt practices, thereby impeding the successful implementation and sustainability of community policing initiatives.

Conclusion

Community policing represents an effective strategy for combating crime and addressing insecurity within Muslim communities and society at large. For this approach to succeed, the identified challenges must be adequately addressed in order to promote a safe and peaceful environment. This is particularly significant given that Islam provides distinctive and comprehensive guidelines that support the principles and practice of community policing, as highlighted above.

Islamic teachings on community policing, if properly applied, could significantly reduce the problem of crime within society. In Islam, it is considered obligatory for every Muslim to take all necessary and possible measures to enhance the security of lives and property in the community. This paper reveals that community policing is regarded as a collective responsibility, as supported by the Qur'an and the ahadith of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Nevertheless, certain groups within the community may undertake this obligation on behalf of others. However, when security threats become severe, the entire community is collectively required to confront and address them.

Recommendations

For community policing to be effectively implemented, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Individuals involved in community policing should demonstrate a strong sense of accountability and fear of Allah while discharging their responsibilities.
2. Members of community policing groups should undergo periodic refresher training to equip them with modern methods and strategies of operation.
3. The government should provide adequate manpower, logistical support, and necessary facilities to community policing actors rather than relying solely on contributions from community members for the procurement of local weapons and other essential equipment.
4. Parents should, as a matter of urgency, educate their children and wards on the importance of safeguarding themselves and their communities against criminal activities.
5. The activities of Yan Banga (Vigilante groups) and Yan Sakai (Individuals who volunteer to safe and protect their communities against criminal activities) should be

conducted in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

6. Continuous sensitization and public enlightenment campaigns should be organized to educate community members on the importance of supporting community policing activities, as they are permissible and encouraged in Islam.
7. Individuals of proven integrity and good character should be recruited as members of community policing groups.
8. Community leaders should closely monitor and supervise the activities of community policing members to ensure accountability and effectiveness.
9. Governments at all levels should actively participate in community policing by formulating and implementing effective policies and guidelines that will strengthen and sustain community policing within society.

List of Informants

15. Aminu, M, (65), Farmer, Interview at his Home, Jangebe, 20/03/2026
16. Muhammad, S. (70), Chairman, Vigilante Group Kagara, Interview at his House, 22/02/2026

References

1. Abdurrahman, I. Doi. (1985), *Shari'ah: The Islamic Law*, Zaria: Gaskiya Cooperation
2. Ali, Y. (1981), *The Glorious Qur'an, text, Translation, and Commentary*, Lagos: Islamic Publication Bureau
3. Al-Qardawi, Y. (1984), *The Lawful and Prohibited in Islam*, Kuwait: IIF (NP)
4. Amaru, U. (nd), "Islamic view point on Personal and Community policing as panacea to security challenges", in www.islam.com, retrieved on 23/03/2026, 2:30 pm.
5. Anbali, O. (2002), "Shari'ah Implementation and the journey so far" Auwalu, H.Y. (2002), "Shari'ah Implementation in a Democratic Nigeria: Between difference to Popular will and liberation challenges" A Paper Presented and Submitted to the 3rd Annual Conference Organized by the Center for the study of Islam and Democracy Virginia U.S.A April 6-7,
6. Hornby, A.S, (2006), *Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary*, Oxford University Press. <https://www.sharia-in-Nigeria.com>
7. Ibrahim, J. (2004). The Politics of Religion in Nigeria: the rise of *shari'ah* movement in northern Nigeria. In J. Ibrahim (Ed.), *Religion and Politics in Nigeria*, Spectrum Books
8. Imam, A.M, (ND), *Lisanul Arabi*, Darul Hadith, Cairo: (NP)
9. Khan, M.M. (2018), *Sahih Bukhari*, Vol. 8
10. Lawal, M. (2018), "Shari'ah Re-Implementation and Crime Reduction in North-West, Nigeria: A Comparative Analysis from 1999-2009," Ph. D Thesis, Submitted to the Department of Islamic Studies, Usman Danfodiyo University, Sokoto.
11. Lawal, M.K (2011). The Impact of *shari'ah* re-Implementation in Zamfara State, M.A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Islamic Studies, Usman Danfodiyo University Sokoto.
12. Lawal, M & Abdullahi, H. (2024), *A Short History of Shari'ah in North-West Nigeria*, Sokoto: Usmanu Danfodiyo University Press.
13. Ostien, P. (2007). *Shari'ah Implementation in Northern Nigeria 1999-2006: A Source Book* (VOLS. 1-5, Spectrum Books www.crime.com, Community Policing in Nigeria: Overview, History, Benefits, and Challenges. Retrieved 14/03/2026,2:30pm
14. Yahaya, Y. (2003), *Crimes and Punishment under Islamic Law*, Lagos: Malthouse Press Limited.