



Blasphemy Laws

Bahamas • Barbados • Belize • Cambodia • Colombia
El Salvador • Fiji • Guatemala • Guinea • Kiribati
Monaco • Portugal • Senegal • Slovakia
Solomon Islands • Tuvalu • Uganda

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SUMMARY This table lists selected countries where there is a law against blasphemy or the defamation or insulting of a religion (including offenses against religious objects, persons, and sacred places of worship, etc.). The jurisdictions that were reviewed are the **Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cambodia, Colombia, El Salvador, Fiji, Guatemala, Guinea, Kiribati, Monaco, Portugal, Senegal, Slovakia, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, and Uganda**. The columns set forth the name of the jurisdiction, a summary or translation of the law, the citation and link to the law, and comments on country-specific situations or developments.

Country	Law	Citation	Comment
Bahamas	<p>§ 321. Whoever publishes, sells, or offers for sale any blasphemous or obscene book, writing or representation, shall be liable to imprisonment for two years: Provided that no one shall be convicted under this section for publishing any opinion on religious subjects expressed in good faith and in decent language, or for attempting to establish by arguments used in good faith and conveyed in decent language any opinion on a religious subject.</p> <p>(1) if the matter published is in fact a fair report of anything said, done or shown in a civil or criminal inquiry or proceeding before any court or commission of inquiry:</p>	<p>Penal Code, ch. 84, Statute Law of the Bahamas, 2010, §§ 321, 489, https://perma.cc/8QQH-W8DQ.</p>	<p>Typically unenforced according to US State Department's 2022 <i>Report on International Religious Freedom: The Bahamas</i>, https://perma.cc/5YK7-3TQE.</p>

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	<p>Provided that if the court or commissioners prohibit the publication of anything said or shown before it, on the ground that it is seditious, immoral or blasphemous, the publication thereof shall not be privileged.</p> <p>§ 489. Whoever publishes, sells, or offers for sale any blasphemous or obscene book, writing or representation, shall be liable to imprisonment for two years: Provided that no one shall be convicted under this section for publishing any opinion on religious subjects expressed in good faith and in decent language, or for attempting to establish by arguments used in good faith and conveyed in decent language any opinion on a religious subject.</p>		
Barbados	<p>§ 11. (1) Subject to this section, the publication of any report or matter referred to in the First Schedule shall be protected by qualified privilege.</p> <p>(2) In an action for defamation in respect of the publication of any report or matter referred to in Part II of the First Schedule, the provisions</p>	<p>Defamation Act, ch. 199, Laws of Barbados, 1997, § 11, https://perma.cc/RLE3-FJSX.</p>	<p>Unenforced according to US State Department 2022 <i>Report on International Religious Freedom: Barbados</i>, https://perma.cc/DH5S-KBFR.</p>

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	<p>of this section shall not be a defence if it is proved that the defendant</p> <p>(a) has been requested by the plaintiff to publish at the defendant's expense and in such manner as is adequate or reasonable in the circumstances a reasonable letter or statement by way of explanation or contradiction; and</p> <p>(b) has refused or neglected to do so or has done so in a manner not adequate or not reasonable in the circumstances.</p> <p>(3) Nothing in this section shall be construed as protecting the publication of</p> <p>(a) any matter the publication of which is prohibited by law;</p> <p>(b) any matter which is not of public concern and the publication of which is not for the public benefit; or</p> <p>(c) any blasphemous or obscene matter.</p>		

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Belize	<p>§ 18. (1) Unless the publication is proved to be made with malice, subject to the provisions of this section, the publication in a news medium of any report or other matter mentioned in Part II and Part III of the Schedule, shall be privileged.</p> <p>(2) This section is not to be construed as</p> <p>(a) protecting the publication of any matter prohibited by law, or of any matter which is not of public concern and the publication of which is not for the public benefit;</p> <p>(b) limiting or abridging any privilege subsisting before the date of commencement of this Act; or</p> <p>(c) protecting the publication of blasphemous or obscene matter.</p> <p>(3) Where a defendant relies on the defence of Qualified Privilege and the claimant intends to allege that the defendant was actuated by malice when the defamatory matter was published, the claimant shall serve a reply giving particulars</p>	<p>Defamation Act, 2022, No. 15 of 2022, § 18, https://perma.cc/A8C3-NZQX.</p>	<p>Rarely enforced according to US State Department 2022 <i>Report on International Religious Freedom: Belize</i>, https://perma.cc/JHY6-4LBV.</p> <p>Replaced the Libel and Defamation Act, ch. 169, revised laws of Belize 2020, https://perma.cc/5UUK-QBW6.</p>

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	<p>from which malice is to be inferred.</p> <p>(4) where a claimant fails to serve particulars of malice in accordance with subsection (3), he is not entitled to rely on any allegation of malice in the defamation proceedings.</p>		
Cambodia	Offenses of unauthorized wearing of Buddhist robes; theft of Buddhist sacred object; damaging Buddhist religious premises or sacred objects; intentional violence against Buddhist monks, nuns or laymen; and insult of Buddhist monks, nuns or laymen.	<p>Criminal Code, 2009, Book 4 Offences Against the Nation, Title 1 Infringements Against Major Institutions of State, Ch. 5 Offense Against State Religion, arts. 508–519, https://www.ajne.org/sites/default/files/resource/laws/7195/criminal-code-cambodia-en-kh.pdf [https://perma.cc/LKE9-CQ8K].</p>	
Colombia	<p>Colombian Criminal Code ch. 9, Crimes Against Religious Sentiment and Respect for the Deceased.</p> <p>“Whoever causes damage to objects belonging to a cult, or the symbols of any legally permitted religion, or publicly offends such cults or their members by reason of their investiture, will incur a fine.”</p>	<p>Codigo Penal de Colombia, L. 599/00, Julio 24, 2000, Diario Oficial, https://perma.cc/A7PA-PS76.</p> <p>Id. art. 203.</p>	<p>There have been no amendments to art. 203.</p>

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	<p>“Violation of religious freedom. Whoever by means of violence forces another to perform a religious act, or prevents him from participating in a ceremony of the same nature, will incur a prison term of sixteen (16) to thirty-six (36) months.”</p>	<p>Id. art. 201.</p>	<p>A 2004 amendment to art. 201 increased the possible prison term for violation of religious freedom, which had been one to two years, to 16 to 36 months.</p>
<p>El Salvador</p>	<p>The law punishes with imprisonment from six months to two years anyone who in any way prevents, interrupts or disturbs the free exercise of a religion or publicly offends religious feelings or beliefs, through actions that mock the dogmas of any religion that has proselytes in El Salvador, making apologetics contrary to religious traditions and customs, or destroying or causing damage to objects intended for worship.</p> <p>Penalties are increased when such conduct is committed with publicity or repeatedly. Incarceration can be for up to eight years when the conduct is carried out both repeatedly and with publicity.</p>	<p>Código Penal, Decreto No. 1030 (Apr. 30, 1997), art. 296, https://perma.cc/6VU6-ZVRD.</p>	
<p>Fiji</p>	<p>Offense of “sacrilege” – indictable offense (triable summarily), punishable by 14 years of imprisonment, of</p>	<p>Crimes Act 2009 (No. 4 of 2009), as amended, s 305, https://www.laws.gov.fj</p>	<p>The Crimes Act 2009 repealed the Penal Code.</p>

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	<p>breaking and entering a place of worship and committing any offense in that place; or breaking out of a place of worship having committed an offense in that place; or entering any place of worship and committing “any act of intentional disrespect in that place of worship.”</p>	<p>/Acts/DisplayAct/3164 #.</p>	
<p>Guatemala</p>	<p>The law punishes with imprisonment for up to one year those who interrupt the celebration of a religious ceremony or perform acts in contempt or offense of the worship or of objects intended for worship.</p> <p>The law punishes with imprisonment the theft (12 years) and robbery (20 years) of objects destined for worship, whether or not the object is sacred, such as the Blessed Sacrament, holy oils, or holy images, among others, including bibles or any other similar object of high religious, temporal or historical content, regardless of whether or not the actions are carried out in places intended for worship.</p> <p>The law also punishes with imprisonment of 10 years those who knowingly acquire,</p>	<p>Código Penal, Decreto No. 17-73 (July 5, 1973), art. 224, https://perma.cc/63HV-YXLB.</p> <p>Article 255-Bis (On Sacrilegious Acts) (added by Decreto No. 36-94 (Apr. 26, 1994), art. 1, https://perma.cc/H9KJ-BB2Z).</p>	

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	dispose of, export, traffic or alter in any way the aforementioned or similar objects.		
Guinea	Offenses of disturbing worship, freedom of religion, and religious assemblies; profaning religious objects or places; offending or assaulting religious ministers in their functions; provoking acts of intolerance between people of different religions, are punishable by a jail sentence of up to two years and/or a fine up to 1,000,000 Guinean Francs (approximately US\$110).	Penal Code arts. 693-697, https://www.refworld.org/docid/44a3eb9a4.html [https://perma.cc/6FD3-LD4P].	
Kiribati	Offenses of insult to religion of any class; disturbing religious assemblies; trespassing on burial places; hindering burial of dead body etc.; and writing or uttering words with intent to wound religious feelings.	Penal Code (Cap. 67, rev. ed. 1977) pt XV (ss 123-127), http://paclii.org/ki/legis/consol_act/pc66/ [https://perma.cc/N4QU-XPBY].	There have been subsequent amendments to the code, but the relevant provisions do not appear to have been amended.
Monaco	Offenses of disturbing worship, freedom of religion, and religious assemblies; profaning religious objects; offending or assaulting religious ministers in their functions, are punishable by a jail sentence of up to six months and/or a fine up to 9,000 euros (approximately US\$9,600). Assaulting a	Penal Code arts. 205-208, https://legimonaco.mc/code/code-penal/#KKZcoagjdQdRpdSsDePVCd [https://perma.cc/CQE3-3MPJ].	

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	religious minister may result in loss of civil rights.		
Portugal	Outrage on the grounds of religious belief - Whoever publicly offends another person or mocks him on the grounds of his belief or religious role, in an appropriate way to disturb public peace, is punished with imprisonment for up to one year or a fine.	Código Penal, Decreto Lei No. 48/95, de 15 de Março, as amended by Lei No. 2/2023, de 16 de Janeiro, art. 251 (1), https://www.pgdlisboa.pt/leis/lei_mostra_articulado.php?nid=109&tabula=leis [https://perma.cc/BY4V-RM8A].	There have been subsequent amendments to the code, but the relevant provisions do not appear to have been amended.
Senegal	Offenses of disturbing worship, freedom of religion, and religious assemblies; profaning religious objects or places; offending or assaulting religious ministers in their functions, are punishable by a jail sentence of up to five years and/or a fine up to 100,000 CFA Francs (approximately US\$160).	Penal Code arts. 230-233 bis, https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/70562/85594/F-2143944421/SEN-70562.pdf [https://perma.cc/H6L6-ZYTX].	
Slovakia	<p>Article 423 of the Slovak Criminal Code prohibits defamation of a group of individuals or an individual due to their real or perceived affiliation to a religion or lack of religion, nation, nationality, or ethnic group.</p> <p>The penalty is imprisonment for one to three years. If the act is committed by a member of an extremist group, a public official, or with</p>	Criminal Code of the Republic of Slovakia, adopted on May 20, 2005, version of Feb. 1, 2023, 300/2005 Coll. - Criminal Code - SLOV-LEX (in Slovak), [https://perma.cc/AV3P-WZHZ].	

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	<p>special motives, the penalty is imprisonment for two to five years.</p>		
	<p>Under the Media Services Act § 48(1b), a video-sharing platform provider must take appropriate protection measures to avoid disseminating user-generated videos and media commercial communications that promote violence or incite violence or hatred, or disparage or defame in an open or hidden form, on grounds of belief and religion.</p> <p>Under § 61(1c), a content service provided by a broadcasting organization or an on-demand audiovisual media service provider must respect human dignity, in particular, it must not promote violence or hatred, in open or hidden form, or disparage or defame on grounds of belief and religion.</p> <p>Under § 99, the broadcasting of political promotions or announcements promoting religion or atheism is prohibited, unless a special regulation provides otherwise.</p>	<p>Law on Media Services and Amendments to Certain Legal Acts (Media Services Act), June 22, 2022, temporary version of the regulation effective from Jan. 1, 2023, to June 27, 2025, https://www.slovlex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2022/264/20230101 (in Slovak), [https://perma.cc/SBK7-M7VT].</p>	

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Solomon Islands	Offenses of insult to religion of any class; disturbing religious assemblies; trespassing on burial places; hindering burial of dead body etc.; and writing or uttering words with intent to wound religious feelings.	Penal Code (Cap. 26, rev. ed. 1996) pt XV (ss 131–135), http://www.paclii.org/sb/legis/consol_act/pc66/ [https://perma.cc/CE7B-SMVU].	There have been subsequent amendments to the code, but the relevant provisions do not appear to have been amended.
Tuvalu	Offenses of insult to religion of any class; disturbing religious assemblies; trespassing on burial places; hindering burial of dead body, etc.; and writing or uttering words with intent to wound religious feelings.	Penal Code (Cap. 10.20, rev. ed. 2008) pt XV (ss 123–127), https://tuvalu-legislation.tv/cms/images/LEGISLATION/PRI NCIPAL/1965/1965-0007/PenalCode_1.pdf [https://perma.cc/RR3L-F7FH].	There have been subsequent amendments to the code, but the relevant provisions do not appear to have been amended.
Uganda	<p>The Ugandan Penal Code Act includes a chapter titled “Offences relating to religion”:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Any person who destroys, damages or defiles any place of worship or any object which is held sacred by any class of persons, with the intention of thereby insulting the religion of any class of persons, or with the knowledge that any class of persons is likely to consider such destruction, damage or defilement as an insult to its religion, commits a misdemeanour.” 	Penal Code Act, §§ 22, 118-122 (June 15, 1950, as amended through 2014), https://perma.cc/X7EW-YE8V .	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Any person who voluntarily causes disturbance to any assembly lawfully engaged in the performance of religious worship or religious ceremony commits a misdemeanour.” • “Every person who with the intention of wounding the feelings of any person or of insulting the religion of any person, or with the knowledge that the feelings of any person are likely to be wounded, or that the religion of any person is likely to be insulted thereby, commits any trespass in any place of worship or in any place of sepulture or in any place set apart for the performance of funeral rites or as a depository for the remains of the dead, or offers any indignity to any human corpse, or causes disturbance to any persons assembled for the purpose of funeral ceremonies, commits a misdemeanour.” 		

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="418 254 748 968">• “Whoever unlawfully hinders the burial of the dead body of any person, or without lawful authority in that behalf or otherwise than in accordance with rules made by the Minister disinters, dissects or harms the dead body of any person or, being under a duty to cause the dead body of any person to be buried, fails to perform such duty, commits a misdemeanour.” <li data-bbox="418 1016 748 1808">• “Any person who, with the deliberate intention of wounding the religious feelings of any other person, writes any word, or any person who, with the like intention, utters any word or makes any sound in the hearing of any other person or makes any gesture or places any object in the sight of any other person, commits a misdemeanour and is liable to imprisonment for one year.” 		

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	Whenever the law does not impose a specific punishment for a misdemeanor, "it shall be punishable with imprisonment for a period not exceeding two years."		