

5.4. Blasphemy law

Pakistan’s blasphemy laws have their roots in British colonial laws intended to curb incitements to religious violence.1123 Article 295A of the PPC stipulates, in general terms, that ‘deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs […] shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, or with fine, or with both’.1124 For the two descriptions of imprisonment, see section 5.6. Punishments under the law below.

Referring to acts specifically relating to Islam, Article 295B of the PPC provides that ‘defiling, etc., of copy of Holy Quran […] shall be punishable with imprisonment for life’, while article 295C notably stipulates that ‘use of derogatory remarks, etc., in respect of the Holy Prophet […] shall be punished with death, and shall also be liable to fine’.1125 Additionally, Article 298 of the PPC provides for imprisonment of up to three years and/or a fine for persons who make ‘derogatory remarks, etc., in respect of holy personages’ (298A), engage in ‘misuse of epithets, descriptions and titles, etc., reserved for certain holy personages or places’ (298B), as well as for ‘any person of the Quadiani group or the Lahori group (who call themselves 'Ahmadis' or by any other name), who directly or indirectly, poses himself as a Muslim, or calls, or refers to, his faith as Islam, or preaches or propagates his faith’ (298C).1126

In blasphemy cases, police are allowed to make arrests without a permission of the local magistrate, and blasphemy is a non-bailable offence.1127 Measures aiming to introduce protections against abuse of the blasphemy laws, notably through criminal law amendments (2005 and 2017) and a 2014 Supreme Court decision, remained largely unenforced.1128

While thus far, the death penalty has not been implemented in blasphemy cases,1129 hundreds of people remained imprisoned on blasphemy charges.1130 As of early 2026, a removal of the death penalty for blasphemy was reportedly under discussion.1131 For more information, see section (d) Individuals accused of blasphemy.

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  HRW, “A Conspiracy to Grab the Land”, June 2025, url, p. 4

- 1124

  Pakistan, Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) (as amended up to 2025), 1860, url, section 295A

- 1125

  Pakistan, Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) (as amended up to 2025), 1860, url, section 295B, C

- 1126

  Pakistan, Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) (as amended up to 2025), 1860, url, section 298 A, B, C

- 1127

  IIRF, Blasphemy Law: The Reason for Injustice in Pakistan, 12 November 2025, url, p. 8

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  HRW, “A Conspiracy to Grab the Land”, June 2025, url, pp. 6-7

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  Shahid, K.K., Is Pakistan Ready to Reform Its Lethal Blasphemy Laws?, The Diplomat, 24 January 2026, url; HRW, “A Conspiracy to Grab the Land”, June 2025, url, p. 4

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  Rehman, Z., Accused of Online Blasphemy, and Languishing in Pakistan's Jails, The New York Times, 25 August 2025

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