

Greece

Greece, regarded by many as the birthplace of democracy in Europe, has been hit hard by the current financial crisis, and seen a rise of extreme nationalism in recent years.

Constitution and government	Education and children’s rights	Family, community, society, religious courts and tribunals	Freedom of expression advocacy of humanist values
			<u>‘Blasphemy’ is outlawed or criticism of religion is restricted and punishable with a prison sentence</u>
<u>There is systematic religious privilege State-funding of religious institutions or salaries, or discriminatory tax exemptions</u>			
	<u>State-funded schools offer religious or ideological instruction with no secular or humanist alternative, but it is optional</u>		
		<u>Insufficient information or detail not included in this report</u>	

Legend

Constitution and government

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as well as freedom of expression, assembly and association. However, anti-blasphemy laws and state sponsorship of religion exist.

Orthodox privilege

The government financially supports the Orthodox Church; for example, the government pays for the salaries and religious training of clergy, finances the maintenance of Orthodox Church buildings, and exempts from tax Orthodox Church’s revenues from properties it owns.

Education and children’s rights

Orthodox religious instruction in primary and secondary schools, at government expense, is mandatory for all students. Although non-Orthodox students may exempt themselves, in practice

public schools offer no alternative activity or non-Orthodox religious instruction for these children.

Freedom of expression, advocacy of humanist values

Blasphemy

Recent years have seen a number of blasphemy cases, coinciding with increasing xenophobia and civil strife in Greek society. Article 198 of the Greek Penal Code states that “1. One who publicly and maliciously and by any means blasphemes God shall be punished by imprisonment for not more than two years; 2. Anyone, except as described in par.1, who displays publicly with blasphemy a lack of respect for things divine, is punished with up to 3 months in prison.”

Article 199 states that “one who publicly and maliciously and by any means blasphemes the Greek Orthodox Church or any other religion tolerable in Greece shall be punished by imprisonment for not more than two years.” Similarly, the country outlaws any speech or acts that “insults public sentiment” or “offends people’s religious sentiments.”

Highlighted cases

On June 9th, 2012, three actors in the play “**Corpus Christi**” were arrested on the charge of blasphemy following a lawsuit filed by Greek Orthodox Bishop Seraphim of Piraeus. Then, in November, the Athens public prosecutor charged the organizers, producers and cast of the play with blasphemy. If convicted, they could face several months in prison. According to newspaper reports, Bishop Seraphim was accompanied to court by members of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party.

csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2012/1002/Blasphemy-in-democracy-s-birthplace-Greece-arrests-Facebook-user

In late September, 2012, a man was arrested in Evia, Greece, on charges of posting “malicious blasphemy and religious insult on the known social networking site, Facebook”. The accused, 27-year-old **Phillipos Loizos**, had created a Facebook page for “Elder Pastitsios the Pastafarian”, playing on a combination of Elder Paisios, the late Greek-Orthodox monk revered as a prophet by some, and the Greek food pastitsio, a baked pasta dish made of ground beef and béchamel sauce. “Pastafarian” refers to the spoof religion of the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster, itself an intentional pun on aspects of Creationism. A manipulated image on the Facebook page depicted Elder Pastitsios with a pastitsio where the monk’s face would normally appear.

greece.greekreporter.com/2012/11/16/greece-prosecutes-corpus-christi-for-blasphemy/

On March 14th, 2013, Greek artist **Dionysis Kavalieratos** was tried in court on blasphemy charges for three of his Christian-themed cartoons that were displayed in a private Athens art gallery. The gallery owner was a co-defendant. He was acquitted.

onthewaytoithaca.wordpress.com/2013/04/19/greek-artist-acquitted-of-blasphemy-charges/