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## **Blasphemy law to be abolished in Greece under new criminal code**

Humanists UK (17.06.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2XmVLnY> - Blasphemy will be abolished in Greece from 1 July 2019 under changes to the country's criminal code, in a huge step forward for the global campaign to end harsh blasphemy laws.

According to the Humanist Union of Greece – a member of [Humanists International](#) – the crime of blasphemy will be dropped from the country's Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedures from 1 July 2019. The news was welcomed by the Humanist Union of Greece after it was published on a Greek news site.

Humanists UK, which co-founded the [End Blasphemy Laws](#) campaign to abolish blasphemy laws worldwide, described the move as 'long overdue' in protecting freedom of expression in the country, adding that Greece was now the eighth country to have repealed its blasphemy laws since the campaign began.

Greece's blasphemy law is among the most restrictive in Europe, and has actively been used to prosecute people for often satirical posts deemed to insult religion. In a [high-profile blasphemy case in Greece in 2012](#), blogger [Filippos Loizos](#) used a play on words to portray a revered Greek Orthodox monk as a traditional pasta-based dish. He was sentenced to 10 months in prison after being found guilty of blasphemy. His conviction was later overthrown on appeal.

Earlier this year, [Humanists UK](#) called for the global abolition of blasphemy laws at the 40th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. In 2015, Humanists UK co-founded the [End Blasphemy Laws](#) coalition, coordinated by [Humanists International](#).

**Humanists UK Director of Public Affairs and Policy Richy Thompson said:** 'Blasphemy laws are an unconscionable violation of the right to freedom of thought, belief, and expression and in places like Pakistan they have the most dire of consequences where people face mob brutality and the death penalty.'

'In Greece, the blasphemy law has been used to target anyone who is critical of the Church, or religion in general, and some of those targeted have faced lengthy prison sentences and their human rights have been violated.'

'While it is positive that Greece has announced it will abolish its blasphemy law, the campaign to end blasphemy laws still has a long way to go. Even in the UK – in Northern Ireland and Scotland – blasphemy is still a crime. We are urging people to [write to their MLA in Northern Ireland](#) to make a stand and say that blasphemy laws do not belong in any country.'

### **NOTES:**

For further comment or information, please contact Humanists UK press manager Casey-Ann Seaniger at [casey@humanism.org.uk](mailto:casey@humanism.org.uk) or phone 020 7324 3078.

Find out more about our [Northern Ireland blasphemy campaign](#).

Read about [our 2019 intervention on global blasphemy laws at the United Nations](#).

Read more about [Greece's move to separate church from State](#).

Read more about [Humanists UK's international campaign to end blasphemy laws](#).

Significant progress on blasphemy has been made recently with France, Malta, Norway, Iceland, Canada, New Zealand, Denmark, and now Greece all having recently repealed their blasphemy laws, with Ireland having recently voted to do the same.

Humanists UK is the national charity working on behalf of non-religious people. Powered by over 85,000 members and supporters, we advance free thinking and promote humanism to create a tolerant society where rational thinking and kindness prevail. We provide ceremonies, pastoral care, education, and support services benefitting over a million people every year and our campaigns advance humanist thinking on ethical issues, human rights, and equal treatment for all.

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## **Greece quietly drops 'blasphemy' laws from new criminal code**

***Also religious oath was abolished!***

By Vassilis Tsarnas

Greek Helsinki Monitor (14.09.2019) - <https://bit.ly/31zMfgF> - Blasphemy law will be abolished in Greece from 1 July 2019, when new criminal law comes into effect.

The change comes as part of a wide-ranging overhaul of the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedures. The two previous articles outlawing 'blasphemy' have been dropped. At the same time, oaths of affirmation have been overhauled so that everyone recites the same civil affirmation, as opposed to any religious oath.

While there have been some words of criticism from leaders of the Greek Orthodox church, wider public reaction against the move has been minimal.

Humanists in Greece and internationally had been campaigning against the 'blasphemy' law, which was still actively used, sometimes to suppress religious criticism in theatre and the arts, LGBT rights groups, advertising campaigns, and social media users critical of the church or religion in general. The Humanist Union of Greece (HUG) said today they welcomed:

"these very important developments and especially that they were not met with any significant opposition. HUG hopes that they will be promptly implemented and can only regret that a week after the adoption of the new Codes by Parliament the service Minister of Interior was sworn in with a religious oath on 11 June!"

In one of the most famous of 'blasphemy' in recent years, a Facebook user Philippos Louizos was dragged through the courts for several years, over an image he made which made a pun on the name of a Greek Orthodox monk. From 2012 he faced the prospect of prison, only for the charges to be dropped in 2017.