

Protests, Religious Property, and Public Order

Educational Overview of Applicable U.S. Offenses, Fines, and Legal Boundaries

Purpose

This document explains **common protest-related offenses** that may arise when demonstrations occur **in or around churches or other places of worship**, or when gatherings are deemed **unlawful or coordinated disruptive assemblies**. It outlines **typical charges, fines, and legal principles** recognized across U.S. jurisdictions.

1. Foundational Legal Principles

- **Peaceful protest on public property** (e.g., sidewalks, parks) is generally protected.
 - **Churches and houses of worship are private property**, even when open to the public for services.
 - **Disrupting worship is not protected speech.**
 - Law enforcement may lawfully intervene to protect:
 - Freedom of worship
 - Public safety
 - Property rights
 - Orderly access and egress
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2. Core Protest-Related Offenses

A. Criminal Trespass

Occurs when:

- Entering church property without permission
- Remaining after being asked to leave

Typical classification: Misdemeanor

Common fines: \$250 – \$2,500

B. Disorderly Conduct

Occurs when conduct:

- Disrupts a religious service
- Includes yelling, chanting, or aggressive behavior
- Causes alarm or disturbance

Common fines: \$100 – \$1,000

C. Disturbing a Religious Assembly

(Some states have statutes specific to worship.)

Occurs when:

- A person intentionally interferes with prayer, sermons, or rites

Common fines: \$500 – \$2,500

D. Unlawful Assembly

Occurs when:

- A group gathers with intent to commit unlawful acts
- A lawful order to disperse is ignored

Common fines: \$250 – \$1,000

E. Failure to Disperse

Occurs when:

- Law enforcement issues a lawful dispersal order
- Individuals refuse to comply

Common fines: \$100 – \$500

F. Obstruction of Passage / Access

Occurs when:

- Entrances or exits are blocked

- Congregants are prevented from entering
- Emergency access is impeded

Common fines: \$250 – \$1,000

3. Additional Protest-Related Offenses That May Arise

G. Harassment

Occurs when:

- Conduct targets specific individuals
- Repeated unwanted contact or verbal abuse occurs

Common fines: \$500 – \$2,500

H. Menacing or Threatening

Occurs when:

- Threats or intimidating gestures are used
- Individuals fear imminent harm

Common fines: \$500 – \$2,500

(May escalate to jail time)

I. Riot or Inciting a Riot

Occurs when:

- Violence or property damage occurs
- Multiple persons act together

Classification: Misdemeanor or felony

Fines: \$5,000 – \$25,000+

J. Conspiracy / Coordinated Action

Occurs when:

- Individuals plan disruptive acts in advance
- Entry or disruption is coordinated

Penalties: Can include **stacked fines** and enhanced charges

K. Vandalism or Criminal Damage

Occurs when:

- Property is defaced or damaged
- Signs, doors, or interiors are harmed

Fines: \$500 – \$10,000+ plus restitution

L. Hate-Crime Enhancements

May apply when:

- Conduct targets a protected religious group
- Motivation is religious hostility

Effect: Increases fines and penalties

M. Resisting or Obstructing Law Enforcement

Occurs when:

- Physical or verbal resistance to arrest
- Interference with police duties

Common fines: \$500 – \$2,500

N. Noise Ordinance Violations

Occurs when:

- Amplified sound exceeds legal limits
- Services are disrupted by noise

Common fines: \$50 – \$500

O. Permit Violations

Occurs when:

- Required permits are not obtained

- Conditions of permits are violated

Common fines: \$100 – \$1,000

4. Financial Reality: Total Cost of a Case

Beyond base fines, individuals may incur:

- Court costs: **\$150 – \$500**
- Probation fees: **\$25 – \$60/month**
- Mandatory classes or community service
- Restitution for damages
- Legal fees (often the largest expense)

A minor protest charge can realistically cost **\$2,000–\$5,000+** overall.

5. Factors That Increase Penalties

Penalties commonly increase when:

- Worship is actively interrupted
 - Clergy or congregants are targeted
 - Children are present
 - Protest is coordinated or planned
 - Dispersal orders are ignored
 - Threats or intimidation occur
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6. What Is Usually Lawful (With Limits)

Generally lawful:

- Peaceful protest on public sidewalks
- Silent presence
- Leafleting without blocking access

Generally unlawful:

- Entering or occupying a church to protest

- Interrupting services
 - Blocking entrances
 - Ignoring lawful police orders
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7. Educational Summary

- **Churches are private property with heightened protection**
 - **Disrupting worship carries real legal and financial consequences**
 - **Multiple charges may arise from a single incident**
 - **Courts prioritize the right to worship without interference**
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Disclaimer

This document is for **educational purposes only** and does not constitute legal advice. Laws vary by state and municipality.

200 Protest & Activism-Related Charges (Educational List)

I. Assembly, Order & Crowd-Control Offenses (1–25)

1. Unlawful assembly
2. Failure to disperse
3. Refusal to obey lawful order
4. Riot
5. Inciting a riot
6. Participating in a riot
7. Disorderly conduct
8. Disturbing the peace
9. Breach of the peace
10. Tumultuous conduct
11. Creating a public nuisance

- 12.Reckless endangerment
 - 13.Obstructing governmental operations
 - 14.Obstructing public administration
 - 15.Interfering with public safety operations
 - 16.Emergency order violation
 - 17.Curfew violation (emergency or riot curfew)
 - 18.Crowd obstruction
 - 19.Failure to comply with emergency declaration
 - 20.Mass disturbance
 - 21.Mob action
 - 22.Affray
 - 23.Public alarm offense
 - 24.Unsafe gathering
 - 25.Assembly without permit
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II. Trespass & Property-Related Offenses (26–55)

- 26.Criminal trespass
- 27.Trespass after warning
- 28.Trespass on private property
- 29.Trespass on religious property
- 30.Trespass on government property
- 31.Trespass on critical infrastructure
- 32.Burglary (entering with intent to disrupt)
- 33.Breaking and entering
- 34.Remaining unlawfully
- 35.Occupation of property
- 36.Squatting
- 37.Encroachment
- 38.Vandalism
- 39.Criminal mischief

- 40. Property damage
- 41. Graffiti
- 42. Defacement of property
- 43. Tampering with property
- 44. Destruction of monuments
- 45. Desecration of memorials
- 46. Damage to religious property
- 47. Damage to historic property
- 48. Damage to utilities
- 49. Damage to barricades
- 50. Damage to fencing
- 51. Looting
- 52. Attempted looting
- 53. Theft
- 54. Possession of stolen property
- 55. Arson (including attempted)

III. Obstruction & Access Interference (56–80)

- 56. Obstruction of a public way
- 57. Blocking a sidewalk
- 58. Blocking a roadway
- 59. Blocking a highway
- 60. Blocking an entrance or exit
- 61. Obstructing emergency access
- 62. Obstructing fire lanes
- 63. Obstructing ADA access
- 64. Interference with ingress/egress
- 65. Interference with transportation
- 66. Interfering with commerce
- 67. Interfering with public services

- 68. Interfering with elections
 - 69. Obstructing voting locations
 - 70. Chain-locking to structures
 - 71. Sit-in obstruction
 - 72. Lock-down protest violation
 - 73. Use of barricades
 - 74. Use of human chains
 - 75. Obstructing bridges
 - 76. Obstructing railways
 - 77. Airport obstruction
 - 78. Port obstruction
 - 79. Obstructing schools
 - 80. Obstructing hospitals
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IV. Law Enforcement Interaction Offenses (81–110)

- 81. Resisting arrest
- 82. Resisting without violence
- 83. Resisting with violence
- 84. Obstructing a peace officer
- 85. Interfering with police duties
- 86. Assault on a law enforcement officer
- 87. Battery on a law enforcement officer
- 88. Threatening a law enforcement officer
- 89. Harassing a law enforcement officer
- 90. Fleeing or evading police
- 91. Failure to identify
- 92. Providing false identification
- 93. False statements to police
- 94. Interfering with an arrest
- 95. Aiding escape

- 96. Disarming an officer
 - 97. Attempted disarming of officer
 - 98. Throwing objects at officers
 - 99. Spitting on officers
 - 100. Tampering with police equipment
 - 101. Interfering with body cameras
 - 102. Interfering with police vehicles
 - 103. Blocking police movement
 - 104. Obstructing police lines
 - 105. Assault with a projectile
 - 106. Use of lasers against officers
 - 107. Using shields against police
 - 108. Masked resistance (where prohibited)
 - 109. Violating dispersal order
 - 110. Contempt of court (protest injunction)
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V. Weapons & Dangerous Instrument Offenses (111–135)

- 111. Unlawful possession of a weapon
- 112. Carrying a prohibited weapon at a protest
- 113. Brandishing a weapon
- 114. Improper exhibition of a firearm
- 115. Possession of incendiary devices
- 116. Possession of explosives
- 117. Possession of Molotov cocktail
- 118. Use of fireworks as weapons
- 119. Use of chemical irritants
- 120. Use of smoke devices
- 121. Use of flares
- 122. Possession of body armor during riot
- 123. Possession of shields during riot

- 124.Armed assembly
 - 125.Armed unlawful assembly
 - 126.Use of blunt instruments
 - 127.Carrying batons or clubs
 - 128.Carrying slingshots
 - 129.Use of lasers
 - 130.Use of drones (restricted zones)
 - 131.Weapon discharge
 - 132.Attempted weapon discharge
 - 133.Improvvised weapon possession
 - 134.Reckless weapon handling
 - 135.Terroristic weapons possession
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VI. Speech-Related but Criminally Actionable Conduct (136–160)

- 136.Criminal threats
- 137.Terroristic threats
- 138.Menacing
- 139.Harassment
- 140.Stalking
- 141.Coercion
- 142.Intimidation
- 143.Witness intimidation
- 144.Voter intimidation
- 145.Extortion
- 146.Blackmail
- 147.Incitement to violence
- 148.Solicitation of violence
- 149.Hate-crime conduct (enhancement)
- 150.Threats against religious groups

- 151.Threats against public officials
 - 152.Threats against schools
 - 153.Threats against houses of worship
 - 154.Disorderly speech (fighting words)
 - 155.False emergency reporting
 - 156.Swatting
 - 157.Hoax device threats
 - 158.Conspiracy to commit offense
 - 159.Criminal solicitation
 - 160.Criminal facilitation
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VII. Regulatory, Permit & Civil Violations (161–180)

- 161.Failure to obtain protest permit
- 162.Permit condition violation
- 163.Sound ordinance violation
- 164.Amplified noise violation
- 165.Unlawful use of megaphones
- 166.Sign ordinance violation
- 167.Banner hanging violation
- 168.Mask ordinance violation
- 169.Curfew violation (non-emergency)
- 170.Park closure violation
- 171.After-hours presence violation
- 172.Fire code violation
- 173.Occupancy limit violation
- 174.Health and safety code violation
- 175.Unlawful vending
- 176.Unlicensed distribution of materials
- 177.Littering
- 178.Sanitation violations

179.Environmental damage during protest

180.Civil injunction violation

VIII. Escalation, Coordination & National-Security Related (181–200)

181.Criminal conspiracy

182.Racketeering (RICO)

183.Domestic terrorism (state-defined)

184.Material support for terrorism

185.Interference with critical infrastructure

186.Cyber interference related to protest

187.Doxxing (where criminalized)

188.Coordinated disruption

189.Use of encrypted coordination for crime

190.Paramilitary activity

191.Militia activity (where prohibited)

192.Sedition (rare, high threshold)

193.Insurrection (rare, federal)

194.Interference with federal officers

195.Interference with interstate commerce

196.Federal property damage

197.Federal trespass

198.Violation of federal protective zones

199.Interstate conspiracy

200.Civil forfeiture related to protest offenses

Closing Note

- **Many incidents involve multiple stacked charges**
- **Most arrests stem from escalation**, not initial protest
- **Churches, schools, hospitals, and infrastructure receive heightened protection**

- **Dispersal orders are a major legal turning point**
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