

18 U.S.C. § 249

Section 249 - Hate crime acts

(a) IN GENERAL.-

(1) OFFENSES INVOLVING ACTUAL OR PERCEIVED RACE, COLOR, RELIGION, OR NATIONAL ORIGIN.-Whoever, whether or not acting under color of law, willfully causes bodily injury to any person or, through the use of fire, a firearm, a dangerous weapon, or an explosive or incendiary device, attempts to cause bodily injury to any person, because of the actual or perceived race, color, religion, or national origin of any person-

(A) shall be imprisoned not more than 10 years, fined in accordance with this title, or both; and

(B) shall be imprisoned for any term of years or for life, fined in accordance with this title, or both, if-

(i) death results from the offense; or

(ii) the offense includes kidnapping or an attempt to kidnap, aggravated sexual abuse or an attempt to commit aggravated sexual abuse, or an attempt to kill.

(2) OFFENSES INVOLVING ACTUAL OR PERCEIVED RELIGION, NATIONAL ORIGIN, GENDER, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY, OR DISABILITY.-

(A) IN GENERAL.-Whoever, whether or not acting under color of law, in any circumstance described in subparagraph (B) or paragraph (3), willfully causes bodily injury to any person or, through the use of fire, a firearm, a dangerous weapon, or an explosive or incendiary device, attempts to cause bodily injury to any person, because of the actual or perceived religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability of any person-

(i) shall be imprisoned not more than 10 years, fined in accordance with this title, or both; and

(ii) shall be imprisoned for any term of years or for life, fined in accordance with this title, or both, if-

(I) death results from the offense; or

(II) the offense includes kidnapping or an attempt to kidnap, aggravated sexual abuse or an attempt to commit aggravated sexual abuse, or an attempt to kill.

(B) CIRCUMSTANCES DESCRIBED.-For purposes of subparagraph (A), the circumstances described in this subparagraph are that-

(i) the conduct described in subparagraph (A) occurs during the course of, or as the result of, the travel of the defendant or the victim-

(I) across a State line or national border; or

(II) using a channel, facility, or instrumentality of interstate or foreign commerce;

(ii) the defendant uses a channel, facility, or instrumentality of interstate or foreign commerce in connection with the conduct described in subparagraph (A);

(iii) in connection with the conduct described in subparagraph (A), the defendant employs a firearm, dangerous weapon, explosive or incendiary device, or other weapon that has traveled in interstate or foreign commerce; or

(iv) the conduct described in subparagraph (A)-

(I) interferes with commercial or other economic activity in which the victim is engaged at the time of the conduct; or

(II) otherwise affects interstate or foreign commerce.

(3) OFFENSES OCCURRING IN THE SPECIAL MARITIME OR TERRITORIAL JURISDICTION OF THE UNITED STATES.-Whoever, within the special maritime or territorial jurisdiction of the United States, engages in conduct described in paragraph (1) or in paragraph (2)(A) (without regard to whether that conduct occurred in a circumstance described in paragraph (2)(B)) shall be subject to the same penalties as prescribed in those paragraphs.

(4) GUIDELINES.-All prosecutions conducted by the United States under this section shall be undertaken pursuant to guidelines issued by the Attorney General, or the designee of the Attorney General, to be included in the United States Attorneys' Manual that shall establish neutral and objective criteria for determining whether a crime was committed because of the actual or perceived status of any person.

(5) LYNCHING.-Whoever conspires to commit any offense under paragraph (1), (2), or (3) shall, if death or serious bodily injury (as defined in section 2246 of this title) results from the offense, be imprisoned for not more than 30 years, fined in accordance with this title, or both.

(6) OTHER CONSPIRACIES.-Whoever conspires to commit any offense under paragraph (1), (2), or (3) shall, if death or serious bodily injury (as defined in section 2246 of this title) results from the offense, or if the offense includes kidnapping or an attempt to kidnap, aggravated sexual abuse or an attempt to commit aggravated sexual abuse, or an attempt to kill, be imprisoned for not more than 30 years, fined in accordance with this title, or both.

(b) CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENT.-

(1) IN GENERAL.-No prosecution of any offense described in this subsection may be undertaken by the United States, except under the certification in writing of the Attorney General, or a designee, that-

(A) the State does not have jurisdiction;

(B) the State has requested that the Federal Government assume jurisdiction;

(C) the verdict or sentence obtained pursuant to State charges left demonstratively unvindicated the Federal interest in eradicating bias-motivated violence; or

(D) a prosecution by the United States is in the public interest and necessary to secure substantial justice.

(2) **RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.**-Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to limit the authority of Federal officers, or a Federal grand jury, to investigate possible violations of this section.

(c) **DEFINITIONS.**-In this section-

(1) the term "bodily injury" has the meaning given such term in section 1365(h)(4) of this title, but does not include solely emotional or psychological harm to the victim;

(2) the term "explosive or incendiary device" has the meaning given such term in section 232 of this title;

(3) the term "firearm" has the meaning given such term in section 921(a) of this title;

(4) the term "gender identity" means actual or perceived gender-related characteristics; and

(5) the term "State" includes the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and any other territory or possession of the United States.

(d) **STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS.**-

(1) **OFFENSES NOT RESULTING IN DEATH.**-Except as provided in paragraph (2), no person shall be prosecuted, tried, or punished for any offense under this section unless the indictment for such offense is found, or the information for such offense is instituted, not later than 7 years after the date on which the offense was committed.

(2) **DEATH RESULTING OFFENSES.**-An indictment or information alleging that an offense under this section resulted in death may be found or instituted at any time without limitation.

(e) **SUPERVISED RELEASE.**-If a court includes, as a part of a sentence of imprisonment imposed for a violation of subsection (a), a requirement that the defendant be placed on a term of supervised release after imprisonment under section 3583, the court may order, as an explicit condition of supervised release, that the defendant undertake educational classes or community service directly related to the community harmed by the defendant's offense.

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Added and amended Pub. L. 111-84, div. E, §§4707(a)4711,, 47114711,, 123 Stat. 2838, 2842; Pub. L. 117-13, §5(h), May 20, 2021, 135 Stat. 272; Pub. L. 117-107, §2, Mar. 29, 2022, 136 Stat. 1125.

EDITORIAL NOTES

AMENDMENTS2022-Subsec. (a)(5), (6). Pub. L. 117-107 added pars. (5) and (6). 2021-Subsec. (e). Pub. L. 117-13 added subsec. (e).2009-Subsec. (a)(4). Pub. L. 111-84, §4711, added par. (4).

STATUTORY NOTES AND RELATED SUBSIDIARIES

SEVERABILITY Pub. L. 111-84, div. E, §47094709,, 123 Stat. 2841, which related to severability of provisions, was editorially reclassified as section 30505 of Title 34, Crime Control and Law Enforcement.

RULE OF CONSTRUCTION Pub. L. 111-84, div. E, §47104710,, 123 Stat. 2841, which related to construction, was editorially reclassified as section 30506 of Title 34, Crime Control and Law Enforcement.

FINDINGS Pub. L. 111-84, div. E, §47024702,, 123 Stat. 2835, which set out Congressional findings related to hate crimes, was editorially reclassified as section 30501 of Title 34, Crime Control and Law Enforcement.

