



i Welcome to the new look of justice.gov. In the coming months you'll see more pages in this new design. Please share your feedback with our [webmaster](#). ×

 An official website of the United States government
[Here's how you know](#) 



Civil Rights Division
U.S. Department of Justice



Menu

Search



Deprivation Of Rights Under Color Of Law

Share



Summary:

- Section 242 of Title 18 makes it a crime for a person acting under color of any law to willfully deprive a person of a right or privilege protected by the Constitution or laws of the United States.
For the purpose of Section 242, acts under "color of law" include acts not only done by federal, state, or local officials within their lawful authority, but also acts done beyond the bounds of that official's lawful authority, if the acts are done while the official is purporting to or pretending to act in the performance of his/her official duties. Persons acting under color of law within the meaning of this statute include police officers, prisons guards and other law enforcement officials, as well as judges, care providers in public health facilities, and others who are acting as public officials. It is not necessary that the crime be motivated by animus toward the race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status or national origin of the victim.

The offense is punishable by a range of imprisonment up to a life term, or the death penalty, depending upon the circumstances of the crime, and the resulting injury, if

any.

TITLE 18, U.S.C., SECTION 242

Whoever, under color of any law, statute, ordinance, regulation, or custom, willfully subjects any person in any State, Territory, Commonwealth, Possession, or District to the deprivation of any rights, privileges, or immunities secured or protected by the Constitution or laws of the United States, ... shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than one year, or both; and if bodily injury results from the acts committed in violation of this section or if such acts include the use, attempted use, or threatened use of a dangerous weapon, explosives, or fire, shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than ten years, or both; and if death results from the acts committed in violation of this section or if such acts include kidnapping or an attempt to kidnap, aggravated sexual abuse, or an attempt to commit aggravated sexual abuse, or an attempt to kill, shall be fined under this title, or imprisoned for any term of years or for life, or both, or may be sentenced to death.

Updated May 31, 2021



Civil Rights Division

U.S. Department of Justice

950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW

Office of the Assistant Attorney General, Main

Washington DC 20530



Civil Rights Division

202-514-3847

TTY

202-514-0716



Signup for Email Updates

Social Media



U.S. Department of
JUSTICE

[Archives](#)

[Budget & Performance](#)

[FOIA](#)

[Accessibility](#)

[Legal Policies & Disclaimers](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[For Employees](#)

[Information Quality](#)

[Office of the Inspector General](#)

[No FEAR Act Data](#)

[Small Business](#)

[Vote.gov](#)

[Español](#)

Have a question about Government Services?

[Contact USA.gov](#)