Religion is one of the prohibited grounds of adverse distinction [1]. Respect for religious convictions is one of the fundamental guarantees applicable to all persons in the power of a Party to the conflict.

Prisoners of war [2] are entitled to exercise their religious duties, be visited by ministers of their religion, as well as to receive articles of religious character (GC III, Art. 34 [3]). The same applies to civilian internees [4] (GC IV, Art. 93 [5]).

Protected civilians [6] are also entitled to exercise their religious duties, and in case of an occupation [7], the Occupying power shall facilitate such exercise (GC IV, Art. 27 [8]).

The dead [9] should be buried, as far as possible, in accordance with their religious beliefs. They can only be cremated if their religion mandates so (GC I, Art. 17 [10]; GC III, Art. 120 [11]; GC IV, Art. 130 [12]).

Chaplains and religious personnel [13] are offered the same special protection as medical personnel [14] (GC I, Art. 24 [15]; GC III, Art. 33 [16]; P I, Art. 15 [17]; P II, Art. 9 [18]).

Religious organizations are, under certain circumstances, equated to relief societies [19].

Religious buildings and places of worship may constitute cultural property [20] or benefit from equivalent protection and thus should be specially protected against attacks, pillage,
theft, misappropriation and vandalism.

See Discrimination [21];

CASES

• Iraq, Crimes by Militia Groups [22]

OUTLINE

Chapter 1, III. International Humanitarian Law and Cultural Relativism [23]

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**Links**

[1] https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/adverse-distinction
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