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]

**BIBLIOGRAPHIC RESOURCES**


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**Source URL:** https://casebook.icrc.org/glossary/religion

**Links**

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