



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on March 5, 2022

## Senator John Kennedy Calls for DOJ Investigation of Anti-Catholic Arson, Vandalism, and Other Crimes

As vandalism and arson against Catholic institutions continues to occur at an escalating rate across the nation, Senator John Kennedy (R-La.) has called on the Department of Justice (DOJ) to crack down on the rash of anti-Catholic crime. In a letter to Attorney General Merrick Garland Wednesday, Kennedy urged the DOJ to act, saying he has received no response since he first brought the issue to the DOJ in 2020.

In Wednesday's [letter](#), Kennedy cited multiple episodes of attacks on Catholic churches and institutions. Examples included arson, vandalism, and the beheading of holy statues. In his letter, Kennedy wrote:



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If the government continues to let these crimes go unpunished, it will further inhibit the people's practice and enjoyment of their fundamental, constitutional right. Thus, I again ask that the DOJ increase efforts to identify and prosecute criminals targeting Catholic people and property so that the tens of millions of Catholics in our country can continue to practice their faith safely.

This letter comes more than a year and a half after his August 2020 letter to then-Attorney General William Barr went unanswered. In that letter — penned as the BLM/Antifa Summer of Terror caused a surge in anti-Catholic crimes — Kennedy asked Barr to “act swiftly and carefully in bringing an end to this injustice.” The new letter cites more than 80 attacks since the August 2020 letter. In fact, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has cataloged more than 100 such attacks since May 2020.

Many of the attacks have been against property. Kennedy wrote of one such event, saying, “In my state of Louisiana, a delinquent broke the heads off statues of Jesus and the Virgin Mary and threw planters and statues at the church's stained-glass windows.” Other attacks are more serious: “In March, Missouri nuns woke up to bullets coming through their walls, only feet from where they were sleeping.”

It is likely that the average American is unaware of the frequency of crimes against Catholic churches and institutions — liberal mainstream media don't exactly go out of their way to report such things. But, can one imagine the media coverage if these crimes were committed against those who practice other religions? For instance, what if vandals attacked a mosque and threw planters at the windows, or if it were a synagogue that had gotten shot up, nearly hitting Jews inside, or if a Buddhist temple were attacked and statues destroyed?

If more than a hundred of those things were to happen in less than two years — *God forbid* — liberal



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mainstream media from *The New York Times* to the *Los Angeles Times* would simply fall all over themselves using words and phrases such as “travesty,” “hate crime,” “intolerance,” and — perhaps most importantly — “DOJ investigation.”

As the *Washington Times* reported on Kennedy’s letter:

The Justice Department said Thursday that Mr. Garland has made it a top priority to counter hate crimes and incidents, including those against houses of worship, citing his two hate-crime directives and listing a half dozen, high-profile prosecutions of attacks on synagogues, churches and a mosque.

Examples included a California woman sentenced to 15 months in March 2021 for threatening to bomb a Catholic prep school in Washington, D.C., and a Tennessee man sentenced last month to seven years for setting fire to four churches — three Baptist and one Catholic.

“The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has vigorously investigated hate crimes and has supported efforts by federal, state, and local partners in their investigations of such crimes,” said the DOJ in an email. “In 2021, the FBI’s Criminal Investigative Division designated civil rights crimes as a national threat priority, thereby elevating civil rights from the FBI’s fifth investigative priority to one of the top priorities across all FBI investigative programs.”

That all sounds well and good. But after citing 114 instances of arson, vandalism, and desecration in 29 states documented by the bishops, CatholicVote President Brian Burch pushed for the DOJ to investigate these crimes back in December. In his letter, he wrote, “We haven’t seen widespread vandalism against the Church like this since the rise of the Ku Klux Klan.” And unlike Senator Kennedy, Burch at least got a reply.

Sort of.

Assistant Attorney General Vanita Gupta wrote him back in late January, and her letter positively dripped with the types of platitudes that seem to never actually solve crimes. “We share your concern with and commitment to preventing and addressing acts of vandalism, property destruction, and other incidents that target religious symbols, shrines, statues, or churches,” she wrote. “The Department is taking numerous steps to address such violence, consistent with our commitment to combat unlawful acts of hate in all their forms.”

Again, imagine the response if these crimes were committed against Sikhs or Hindus. It is difficult to imagine the DOJ attempting to salve the concerns of those religious communities with the same types of platitudes Gupta wrote to Brian Burch.

And CatholicVote is not the only Catholic organization to join Kennedy in trying to light a fire under the DOJ where these crimes are concerned. C.J. Doyle, executive director of the Catholic Action League, said that in Massachusetts, crimes against Catholics have been underreported. As evidence, he pointed to the Massachusetts hate-crime report from February 18 that listed only two incidents of hate crimes against Catholics, even though the Catholic Action League cited at least eight such crimes reported by *local* media. Examples included arson, theft, and vandalism.

While the United States is home to people of many differing religions, and theological differences do exist, no group should find itself targeted for violence, vandalism, arson, or any other crime. This should



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be something *all* Americans agree on. No Methodist should want to see a Baptist church vandalized. No Catholic should want to see a Presbyterian church burned. And no Sikh should want to see a synagogue desecrated.

But when you introduce radical leftists into the equation, the game changes — especially when those radical leftists have cover from both liberal mainstream media and forces within the government. After all, it is reasonable to expect the DOJ to investigate what for all the world appears to be interstate crime targeting people based on religion. So why is the DOJ responding with platitudes instead of an investigation?



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