

THE DEFAMATION ORDINANCE, 2002
(LVI of 2002)

CONTENTS

1. Short title, extent and commencement
2. Definitions
3. Defamation
4. Defamation actionable
5. Defences
6. Absolute privilege
7. Qualified privilege
8. Notice of Action
9. Remedies
10. Code of Civil procedure and Qanun-e-Shahadat order to apply
11. Ordinance not to prejudice action for criminal defamation
12. Limitation of actions
13. Trial of cases
14. Court to decide the cases expeditiously
15. Appeal
16. Power to make rules

TEXT

¹THE DEFAMATION ORDINANCE, 2002
(LVI of 2002)

[1st October, 2002]

An
Ordinance
to make provisions in respect of defamation

Preamble.— WHEREAS it is expedient to make provisions in respect of defamation and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto;

AND WHEREAS, the President is satisfied that circumstances exist which render it necessary to take immediate action;

NOW, THEREFORE, in pursuance of the Proclamation of Emergency of the fourteenth day of October, 1999, and the Provisional Constitution Order No.1 of 1999, read with the Provisional Constitution (Amendment) Order No. 9 of 1999, and in exercise of all powers enabling him in that behalf, the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is pleased to make and promulgate the following Ordinance:—

1. Short title, extent and commencement.— (1) This Ordinance may be called the Defamation Ordinance, 2002.

²[(2) It extends to the whole of the Punjab].

(3) It shall come into force at once.

2. Definitions.— In this Ordinance, unless there is anything repugnant in the subject or context,—

³[(a) [xxxx];

(b) “broadcasting” means the dissemination of writings, signs, signals, pictures and sounds of all kind, including any electronic device, intended to be received by the public either directly or through the medium of relay stations, by means of,

(i) a form of wireless radio-electric communication utilizing Hertzian waves, including radio telegraph and radio telephone, or

¹In pursuance of the Proclamation of Emergency of the fourteenth day of October, 1999, and the Provisional Constitution Order No.1 of 1999, read with the Provisional Constitution (Amendment) Order No.9 of 1999, and in exercise of all powers enabling him in that behalf, the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan promulgated this Ordinance which was published in the Gazette of Pakistan, Extraordinary, 1st October, 2002, pages 1219-1222.

This Ordinance was originally in the Federal ambit, however, the subject on which this law was enacted devolved to the provinces by virtue of 18th Amendment in the Constitution, hence it was adapted, with amendments, for the province of the Punjab by the Defamation (Amendment) Act 2012 (VIII of 2012); and published in the Punjab Gazette (Extraordinary), pages 40131-40132, dated 11.2.2012.

²Sub-section (2) of Section 1 is substituted for “It extends to whole of the Pakistan” by the Defamation (Amendment) Act, 2012 (VIII of 2012); and published in the Punjab Gazette (Extraordinary), dated 11.2.2012, pages 40131-40132, s.2.

³Clause (a) omitted by the Defamation (Amendment) Act, 2004 (IX of 2004); and published in the Gazette of Pakistan (Extraordinary), Part I, dated 30.11.2004, pages 180-182, s.2(i).

- (ii) cables, computer, wires, fibre-optic linkages or laser beams, and “broadcast” has a corresponding meaning;
- ⁴[(bb) “Court” means the District Court;]
- (c) “editor” means a person or operator having editorial or equivalent responsibility for the content or the statement or the decision to publish or circulate it;
- ⁵[(cc) “Government” means Government of the Punjab;
- ⁶[(d) “newspaper” means a paper containing public news, intelligence or occurrences or remarks or observations or containing only, or principally, advertisements, printed for distribution to the public and published periodically, or in parts or number, and includes such other periodical works as the Government may, by notification in the official Gazette, declare to be newspaper;]
- ⁷[(dd) “originator” means the initiator of the defamatory statement or any other defamatory act;]
- (e) “publication” means the communication of the words to at least one person other than the person defamed and includes a newspaper or broadcast through the internet or other media; and
- (f) “publisher” means a commercial publisher, that is, a person whose business is issuing material to the public, or a section of the public, who issues material containing the statement in the course of that business.

3. Defamation.— (1) Any wrongful act or publication or circulation of a false statement or representation made orally or in written or visual form which injures the reputation of a person, tends to lower him in the estimation of others or tends to reduce him to ridicule, unjust criticism, dislike, contempt or hatred shall be actionable as defamation.

(2) Defamation is of two forms, namely:—

- (i) slander; and
- (ii) libel.

(3) Any false oral statement or representation that amounts to defamation shall be actionable as slander.

⁴Clause (bb) inserted by the Defamation (Amendment) Act, 2004 (IX of 2004); and published in the Gazette of Pakistan (Extraordinary), Part I, dated 30.11.2004, pages 180-182, s.2(ii).

⁵Inserted by the Defamation (Amendment) Act, 2012 (VIII of 2012); and published in the Punjab Gazette (Extraordinary), dated 11.2.2012, pages 40131-40132, s.3(a).

⁶Substituted clause (d) of Section 2 for [“newspaper” means a paper containing public news, intelligence or occurrences or remarks or observations or containing only, or principally, advertisements, printed for distribution to the public and published periodically, or in parts or member, and includes such other periodical works as the Federal Government may, by notification in the official Gazette, declare to be newspaper” by the Defamation (Amendment) Act, 2012 (VIII of 2012); and published in the Punjab Gazette (Extraordinary), , dated 11.2.2012, pages 40131-40132, s.3(b).

⁷Inserted by the Defamation (Amendment) Act, 2004 (Federal Act IX of 2004); and published in the Gazette of Pakistan (Extraordinary), Part I, dated 30.11.2004, pages 180-182, s.2(iii).

(4) Any false written, documentary or visual statement or representation made either by ordinary form or expression or by electronic or other modern means or devices that amounts to defamation shall be actionable as libel.

4. Defamation actionable.—The publication of defamatory matter is an actionable wrong without proof of special damage to the person defamed and where defamation is proved, damage shall be presumed.

5. Defences.— In defamation proceedings a person has a defence if he shows that—

- (a) he was not the author, editor, publisher or printer of the statement complained of;
- (b) the matter commented on is fair and in the public interest and is an expression of opinion and not an assertion of fact and was published in good faith;
- (c) it is based on truth and was made for public good;
- (d) assent was given for the publication by the plaintiff;
- (e) offer to tender a proper apology and publish the same was made by the defendant but was refused by the plaintiff;
- (f) an offer to print or publish a contradiction or denial in the same manner and with the same prominence was made but was refused by the plaintiff;
- (g) the matter complained of was privileged communication such as between lawyer and client or between persons having fiduciary relations; and
- (h) the matter is covered by absolute or qualified privilege.

6. Absolute privilege.— Any publication of statement made in the Federal or Provincial legislatures, reports, papers, notes and proceedings ordered to be published by either House of the Parliament or by the Provincial Assemblies, or relating to judicial proceedings ordered to be published by the Court or any report, note or matter written or published by or under the authority of a Government, shall have the protection of absolute privilege.

Explanation.— In this section legislature includes a local legislature and Court includes any tribunal or body exercising the judicial powers.

7. Qualified privilege.— Any fair and accurate publication of parliamentary proceedings, or judicial proceedings which the public may attend and statements made to the proper authorities in order to procure the redress of public grievances shall have the protection of qualified privilege.

8. Notice of action.— No action lies unless the plaintiff has, within two months after the publication of the defamatory matter has come to his notice or knowledge, given to the defendant, fourteen days notice in writing of his intention to bring an action, specifying the defamatory matter complained of.

9. Remedies.— Where defamation shall be proved to have occurred, the Court may pass order directing the defendant to tender an apology, if acceptable to the plaintiff, and publish the same in similar manner and with the same prominence as the defamatory statement made and pay reasonable compensatory damages as general damages with a minimum of Rs. 50,000 (Rupees fifty thousand) ⁸[****] and in addition thereto, any special damage incurred that is proved by the plaintiff to the satisfaction of the Court ⁹[:]

¹⁰[Provided that in case of the originator the minimum compensatory damages as general damages shall be three hundred thousand rupees.]

10. Code of Civil Procedure and Qanun-e-Shahadat Order to apply.— The Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (Act No. V of 1908) and the Qanun-e-Shahadat, 1984 (P.O. No. 10 of 1984) shall *mutatis mutandis*, apply to the proceedings under this Ordinance.

11. Ordinance not to prejudice action for criminal defamation.— Nothing in this Ordinance shall prejudice any action for criminal libel or slander under any law for the time being in force.

12. Limitation of actions.— An action against—

- (a) an author, editor, proprietor or publisher of a newspaper;
- (b) the owner of a broadcasting station;
- (c) an officer, servant or employee of the newspaper or broadcasting station; or
- (d) any other purpose,

for defamation contained in the newspaper or broadcast from the station or its publication otherwise shall be taken within six months after the publication of the defamatory matter came to the notice or knowledge of the person defamed.

¹¹[**13. Trial of cases.**— The District Court shall have the jurisdiction to try the cases under this Ordinance.]

14. Court to decide the cases expeditiously.— The Court shall decide a case under this Ordinance within a period of ¹²[ninety days].

¹³[**15. Appeal.**— An appeal against the final decision and decree of the Court shall lie to the High Court within thirty days and the High Court shall decide the appeal within sixty days:

⁸Words “or shall undergo three months imprisonment” omitted by the Defamation (Amendment) Act, 2004 (IX of 2004); and published in the Gazette of Pakistan (Extraordinary), Part I, dated 30.11.2004, pages 180-182, s.3(i).

⁹Replace the full-stop by the Defamation (Amendment) Act, 2004 (IX of 2004); and published in the Gazette of Pakistan (Extraordinary), Part I, dated 30.11.2004, pages 180-182, s.3(ii).

¹⁰Inserted by the Defamation (Amendment) Act, 2004 (IX of 2004); and published in the Gazette of Pakistan (Extraordinary), Part I, dated 30.11.2004, pages 180-182, s.3(ii).

¹¹S.13 substituted by the Defamation (Amendment) Act, 2004 (IX of 2004); and published in the Gazette of Pakistan (Extraordinary), Part I, dated 30.11.2004, pages 180-182, s.4.

¹²Words “six months” substituted by the Defamation (Amendment) Act, 2004 (IX of 2004) ; and published in the Gazette of Pakistan (Extraordinary), Part I, dated 30.11.2004, pages 180-182, s.5..

Provided that no appeal shall lie against an interlocutory order of the Court.]

16. Power to make rules.— The ¹⁴[****] Government may, by notification in the official Gazette, make rules to carry out the purposes of this Ordinance.

¹³S.15 substituted by the Defamation (Amendment) Act, 2004 (IX of 2004); and published in the Gazette of Pakistan (Extraordinary), Part I, dated 30.11.2004, pages 180-182,s.6.

¹⁴The word "Federal" is omitted by the Defamation (Amendment) Act, 2012 (VIII of 2012); and published in the Punjab Gazette (Extraordinary),, dated 11.2.2012, pages 40131-40132, s.4.