

THE LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF CONVERSION TO ISLAM

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Dear Sisters and Brothers in the Lord,

If you convert to Islam, there are important changes in your legal status and what you can or cannot do. Your conversion to Islam will be registered with the Religious Department and the National Registration Department, both of which are computerised so access to this information is available throughout the country.

Under Syariah enactments of most of the 13 States of Malaysia:

- Conversion back to your former religion is either
 - a. not allowed under law, or
 - b. a criminal offence which means that you may be fined, whipped, detained or imprisoned under most State Islamic laws.
- If you are under 18 years of age, you require your parent's permission to convert to Islam
- Your identity card will record your conversion to Islam. Therefore, even if you are no longer practising Islam, you may be fined, whipped detained or imprisoned for violation of Syariah laws such as praying in Church, eating in public during fasting month, "khalwat" etc
- You cannot marry a non-Muslim. If you decide to divorce and attempt to convert out of Islam, you will lose custody of your children because they are Muslims.
- Upon death, your non-Muslim relatives will lose their rights to any property, money etc. that you want to leave to them. The corpse of a convert to Islam will be taken away from his or her non-Muslim family for Islamic rites and burial even if you have not been a practising Muslim for many years.
- In the event that your spouse converts to Islam, you may have no right to either your children or your spouse's property.

We know that certain Christians who convert to Islam for whatever reasons, are not aware of or do not consider seriously the implications of such conversion. Hence, the need to inform you.

By this, we are neither against Islam nor freedom of religion, which is guaranteed for all Malaysian in Article 11 of our Constitution which gives the right to an individual to choose freely his or her religion. But to choose correctly, you need to know clearly what you choose and the consequences of your choice.

[Signed by Archbishop Murphy Pakiam, Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur; Bishop Anthony Selvanayagam, Bishop of Penang; Bishop Paul Tan, Bishop of Melaka-Johor]