



BELIZE

**CONTROL OF PUBLIC MEETINGS AND
PUBLIC PROCESSIONS ACT
CHAPTER 132**

REVISED EDITION 2000
SHOWING THE LAW AS AT 31ST DECEMBER, 2000

This is a revised edition of the law, prepared by the Law Revision Commissioner under the authority of the Law Revision Act, Chapter 3 of the Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 1980 - 1990.

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CHAPTER 132

CONTROL OF PUBLIC MEETINGS AND

PUBLIC PROCESSIONS

ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

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SCHEDULE

CHAPTER 132

**CONTROL OF PUBLIC MEETINGS AND
PUBLIC PROCESSIONS**

[5th July, 1967]

CAP. 103,
R.E. 1980-1990.
14 of 1967.
15 of 1981.
6 of 1984.
22 of 1987.
S.I. 78 of 1973.
Short title.

1. This Act may be cited as the Control of Public Meetings and Public Processions Act.

Interpretation.

2. In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires:-

15 of 1981.

“appropriate officer” means, for any public meeting or public procession in the Belize Judicial District, the Commissioner of Police or a senior police officer designated by him, and for any public meeting or public procession in any other judicial district, the senior police officer in such district;

15 of 1981.

“designated place” means any place designated by the Minister in exercise of the powers conferred upon him by section 18;

“meeting” means any gathering or assembly of five or more persons convened or held for any purpose which includes any political purpose, but does not

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include any gathering or assembly convened and held exclusively for the lawful purposes of any public body, any gathering or assembly of members of any registered trade union convened and held exclusively for the lawful purposes of such trade union, or any gathering or assembly convened and held exclusively for social, cultural, charitable, recreational, religious, professional, commercial or industrial purposes;

“Minister” means the Minister of Government responsible for National Security; 15 of 1981.

“noisy instrument” means any apparatus which is designed, adapted or intended for the reproducing of sounds over a wide area and includes a loudspeaker, amplifier, microphone, juke box and other similar instrument, apparatus or device;

“offensive weapon” means any article made or adapted for use for causing injury to the person or intended by the person having it with him for such use by him; 15 of 1981.

“public body” means the Government or any local or public authority, and any board, commission, committee or other body which under any law is invested with functions of a public nature;

“public meeting” means any meeting held in a public place;

“public place” means any place to which whether for the time being or at all times the public or any section of the public are entitled or permitted to have access whether on payment or otherwise;

“public procession” means any procession in, to or from a public place;

“town” means any town specified in the Schedule to this Act and includes Belize City and the City of Belmopan. Schedule.

Certain meetings
require permission.
15 of 1981.

3.-(1) No public meeting shall take place in any town other than in a designated place unless a permit for such meeting has been issued in accordance with the provisions of section 4.

(2) Where a public meeting is to be held at a designated place after notice to the appropriate officer or at any other place upon a permit issued by such officer, the appropriate officer may declare in writing addressed to the person giving the notice of the meeting or to the person applying for a permit, that:-

- (a) the said meeting shall commence no earlier than a stated time and shall cease no later than a stated time;
- (b) no person shall carry any firearm, cutting weapon of any kind or any other offensive weapon at the meeting;
- (c) the said meeting shall be subject to such other restrictions as the appropriate officer may think necessary to maintain public order.

(3) Where any meeting is held in contravention of any of the conditions so imposed under subsection (2) by the appropriate officer it shall render:-

- (a) any person who held, commenced or organised the said meeting; and
- (b) the person actually acting in contravention of any such condition,

guilty of an offence under this Act and liable upon summary conviction to a fine of one thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a term of six months, or to both such fine and term of imprisonment.

Application for
permission.

4.-(1) Any person wishing to hold, convene or organise a public meeting in a town other than in a designated place in such town shall inform the appropriate officer in writing at least thirty-six hours before such meeting is to be held.

(2) The appropriate officer shall, unless he is of the opinion that the holding of such meeting is likely to cause any obstruction to traffic or to cause inconvenience to the public or to cause a breach of the peace, issue a permit in writing for such meeting: 15 of 1981.

Provided that the appropriate officer may refuse a permit for the holding of any meeting at any place which is, in his opinion, in too close proximity to the site of any meeting of which he has received notice or for which he has already granted a permit.

(3) Any person who is aggrieved by the refusal of the appropriate officer to issue a permit may appeal to a magistrate and the magistrate may, after hearing such person and the appropriate officer or such other police officer as the appropriate officer may appoint, if he is of the opinion that the public meeting is not likely to cause any obstruction to traffic or to inconvenience the public or to cause a breach of the peace, allow the appeal and the appropriate officer shall thereupon issue a permit: 15 of 1981.

Provided that no permit shall be issued for the holding, convening or organising of any public meeting on any day between the hours of 12:00 midnight and 6:00 a.m. of the following day.

(4) Where any person wishes to appeal against the refusal of an appropriate officer to issue a permit he shall appear before a magistrate and shall give to the appropriate officer notice in writing of the fact and time of his appearance at least six hours before such appearance.

5.-(1) Any person who wishes to hold, convene or organise a public meeting either in a designated place in a town or anywhere other than in a town shall give notice in writing to the appropriate officer at least twelve hours before such meeting is to be held but no permit shall be required for such a meeting: Notice of meeting. 15 of 1981.

Provided that no person shall on any day hold, convene or organise any such public meeting between the hours of 12:00 midnight and 6:00 a.m. of the following day.

(2) Upon receipt of such notice the appropriate officer may, if he is of the opinion that such public meeting is in too close proximity to a meeting of which he has already received notice or for which he has already granted a permit, prohibit the holding of such public meeting.

Penalty.
15 of 1981.

6.-(1) Any person who holds, convenes or organises a public meeting for which no permit is required without giving twelve hours notice in writing to the appropriate officer or after such meeting has been prohibited by the appropriate officer under subsection (2) of section 5 is guilty of an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding five hundred dollars.

15 of 1981.

(2) Any person who holds, convenes or organises a public meeting for which a permit is required without a permit having been issued for such meeting is guilty of an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding five hundred dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, or to both such fine and term of imprisonment.

15 of 1981.

(3) Any person who attends or takes part in any public meeting for which a permit is required but for which no permit has been issued is guilty of an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding five hundred dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two months, or to both such fine and term of imprisonment.

Processions.

7. No person shall organise, form or take part in any public procession in any town unless a permit for such procession has been granted by the appropriate officer.

Permits.

8.-(1) Any person wishing to organise or form a public procession in a town shall apply to the appropriate officer at least thirty-six hours before such procession is to be formed.

(2) The appropriate officer may, if he thinks fit, grant a permit in writing to any applicant to organise or form a public procession and shall, in such permit, set out the route which such procession is to follow, the time at which it may commence and the time by which it shall cease: 15 of 1981.

Provided always that all processions shall cease by 7:00 o'clock in the evening.

(3) The appropriate officer may, if he considers it necessary, require any applicant to enter into a bond in favour of Her Majesty in a sum not exceeding one thousand dollars with one or more sureties to his satisfaction conditioned for the good behaviour of all persons taking part in such public procession, and where there is any contravention of the foregoing provisions of this subsection, the amount secured by the bond shall be forfeited forthwith. 15 of 1981.

(4) No person shall in any public procession carry or have on or about his person any naked flame or any offensive weapon, except with lawful authority, the proof of which shall lie with him. 15 of 1981.

9. Where any permit for a public meeting or a public procession has been issued under the provisions of this Act such permit shall during the continuance of such meeting be displayed in a conspicuous place at such meeting or, in the case of a public procession, at the starting place of such procession. Display of permit

10.-(1) Any person who organises or forms a public procession for which a permit has not been granted in accordance with the provisions of this Act shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding five hundred dollars or to a term of imprisonment not exceeding one year, or to both such fine and term of imprisonment. Penalty. 15 of 1981.

(2) Any person who takes part in any public procession for which a permit has not been granted or who is in breach of section 8(4) is guilty of an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding five hundred dollars

or to a term of imprisonment not exceeding six months, or to both such fine and term of imprisonment.

Exceptions.

11.-(1) Subject to subsection (2), the provisions of this Act shall not apply to any funeral or religious procession.

(2) Where any religious or funeral procession is to pass down a one-way street in the direction other than that specified for vehicles to proceed in such street at least six hours notice shall be given to the appropriate officer.

Power to require dispersal of meetings.
15 of 1981.

12.-(1) Any police officer not below the rank of Assistant Inspector may in relation to any meeting that is being held in contravention of any permit issued for the purpose require any person addressing or known to have addressed such meeting or appearing to him to be the organiser or one of the organisers of the meeting to call on the meeting to disperse.

(2) Any person required under subsection (1) to call on any meeting to disperse, who refuses, fails or neglects immediately to call on such meeting to disperse shall be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine of five hundred dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, or to both such fine and term of imprisonment.

Leader of procession may be required to call on procession to disperse.
15 of 1981.

13.-(1) Any police officer not below the rank of Assistant Inspector may require any person:-

- (a) who is the organiser or who is the leader of any procession-
 - (i) that is in contravention of the provisions of this Act;
 - (ii) that is otherwise than in accordance with the terms of a permit issued for the purpose; or

(iii) that takes place in such circumstances as have caused such police officer reasonably to apprehend that any person or persons has acted or is acting or is about to act in a manner prejudicial to public safety or public order; or

(b) reasonably appearing to him to be the organiser or the leader or one of the organisers or leaders of any such procession,

to call on such public procession to disperse.

(2) A person required under subsection (1) to call on any public procession to disperse who refuses, fails or neglects immediately to call on such public procession to disperse shall be guilty of an offence and shall on summary conviction be liable to a fine of one thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding six months, or to both such fine and term of imprisonment.

(3) Where any person who is required under subsection (1) to call upon any public procession to disperse refuses, fails or neglects so to do, any such police officer may call upon such public procession to disperse.

(4) Any person present at any public procession that is called upon to disperse under subsection (1) or subsection (3) who fails to comply with such requirements shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding two hundred dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months, or to both such fine and term of imprisonment.

14. No public meeting may be conducted in such a manner as to result in a public procession that is not permitted under this Act, and if a public meeting is conducted in such a manner that such a public procession originates or takes place following such a public meeting, the holder or holders or the organiser or organisers of such public meeting shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars or to

Prohibition on public procession and demonstration at public meetings. 15 of 1981.

imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, or to both such fine and term of imprisonment.

Permission
required for a
non-national to
address meetings.
15 of 1981.

15.-(1) Any person other than a national or resident of Belize who desires to address a public meeting or take part in a public procession shall no more than seventy-two hours before the date on which such meeting or procession is to take place apply to the appropriate officer for a permit so to do, and the appropriate officer may in any case grant or refuse the application.

(2) Any such person other than a national or resident of Belize who without a permit issued for the purpose addresses a public meeting or takes part in a public procession shall be guilty of an offence and on summary conviction be liable to a fine not exceeding two thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding twelve months, or to both such fine and term of imprisonment.

Use of noisy
instruments
prohibited in
certain
circumstances.
15 of 1981.

16.-(1) Any person who wishes to publicise the holding of any public meeting or public procession by means of any noisy instrument or to use any such instrument at any public meeting or procession shall at least twenty-four hours before the hour at which it is proposed to commence the meeting or procession and before any such instrument is used for the said purpose apply to the appropriate officer for a permit to use such noisy instrument.

(2) The appropriate officer may, if he considers that the grant of a permit in terms of subsection (1) will not inconvenience the public or the neighbourhood in which it is proposed to use it, issue a permit for the use of a particular noisy instrument stipulating such conditions as to the time and route as he may consider necessary. The refusal of the appropriate officer to issue such a permit shall be final.

(3) Notwithstanding the issue of a permit under subsection (2) of this section, no person shall for the purpose of any public meeting or public procession use any noisy instrument at any time of day or night within one hundred yards of any hospital, or of any court of law or school while the court

or school is in session or of any church, chapel or other building appropriated for religious worship while any divine worship is going on.

(4) The permit issued by the appropriate officer under this section shall be carried and made available for examination by any police officer at all times when such public meeting or public procession is being publicised or held.

(5) Any person who organises, holds, speaks at or takes part in any public meeting or public procession at which a noisy instrument is used without a permit issued by the appropriate officer or in violation of any condition subject to which it is issued or in contravention of the provisions of subsection (3) or (4) of this section shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, or to both such fine and term of imprisonment, and the noisy instrument which was the subject of the offence shall be liable to be forfeited to the Crown.

17. The Minister may, by Order published in the *Gazette*, amend the Schedule to this Act by adding any town thereto or deleting any town therefrom and any such amendment shall be subject to negative resolution. Amendment.
Schedule.

18. The Minister may, by Order, published in the *Gazette*, declare any place in a town to be a designated place for the purposes of this Act. Designated
places.

SCHEDULE

[Section 21]

Towns

Belize City

Benque Viejo del Carmen

City of Belmopan

Corozal Town

Dangriga

Orange Walk Town

Punta Gorda

San Ignacio and Santa Elena