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Prosecution over play a further tragedy for Greece

The people behind a play called *Corpus Christi* are reportedly facing prosecution in Greece for blasphemy prompting Amnesty International to call on the Greek authorities to ensure freedom of expression is being protected by dropping all charges against them.

A lawsuit is understood to have been submitted by the Orthodox Bishop of Piraeus Serafeim who claims that the play contains blasphemous messages, interpreted to include insinuations of homosexuality for figures revered by Christians.

“This is an alarming development for freedom of expression in Greece especially following the prosecution of the journalist Kostas Vaxevanis a few weeks ago,” said John Dalhuisen, Amnesty International’s programme Director for Europe and Central Asia.

The case against *Corpus Christi*’s organizers, producers and cast emerged as Amnesty International learnt that the prosecutor has decided to appeal the decision acquitting Kostas Vaxevanis for publicizing the so called Lagarde list of potential tax evasion suspects.

“The right to freedom of religion does not extent to having one’s religious beliefs protected by the state against criticism or commentary,” Dalhuisen added.

“The Greek authorities must immediately and unconditionally drop the charges against the play’s producers and cast and fully respect freedom of expression.”

On 11 October 2012, Members of Christian groups and the far-right party Golden Dawn including some of the party’s MPs attempted to stop the premiere of the play by verbally abusing and threatening the actors and audience members. The producers of the play decided to pull the play three weeks after its premiere.