

Conspiracy, Assault, and Tampering with Evidence in Amish Country

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Last year, [five attacks were staged in the small town of Steubenville in Ohio's farm country](#). The attacks, supposedly organized by Amish leader Sam Mullet Sr., involved cutting the beards and hair of several Amish men. In the Amish religion, it is customary for women and men to grow their hair long after marriage as a sign of devotion to God. Long beards hold substantial spiritual significance for Amish men, and losing them brings a great deal of devastation.

One victim, an Amish bishop, was attacked in his home in the middle of the night—his hair was “unevenly chopped to the scalp, leaving it bloody.” 16 members of a breakaway Amish group are accused of cooperating in five attacks between September and November of 2011; the attacks were meant to serve as religious punishment for the victims. The men are facing charges of evidence tampering, conspiracy, and assault. The defendants will likely face years behind bars if convicted.

While the defense is attempting to write this off as “internal church disciplinary matters,” prosecutors argue that the attacks should be considered religious hate crimes.

According to [A.R.S. 13-1003](#), conspiracy is committed in Arizona when one or more individuals agree to engage in an act that would constitute as an offense. The sentencing for conspiracy depends on the offense that the person or group was planning to commit. Using first degree murder as an example: if an individual or a group conspired to commit murder, but the killing was never carried out, those who conspired could still face life in prison.

[Assault](#) is a violent crime against another person and can be verbal, sexual, or physical in nature. The following can be considered as assault in Arizona:

- Knowingly touching another person with the intent to injure, insult, or provoke
- Knowingly, recklessly, or intentionally causing physical injury
- Intentionally placing another person in reasonable apprehension of impending physical injury

Tampering with evidence is defined in [A.R.S. 13-2809](#) as follows:

A person commits tampering with physical evidence in Arizona if they intentionally (1) destroy, alter, conceal, mutilate, or remove physical evidence with the intent to impair its availability, (2) prevent the production of physical evidence by an act of intimidation, deception, or force against any person, or (3) knowingly offer, make, or produce any false physical evidence. Tampering with physical evidence is a class 6 [felony](#) in Arizona.

Jeremy Geigle is a criminal defense attorney and shareholder at JacksonWhite. He has been practicing over 8 years and has handled thousands of felony and misdemeanor counts. He works in both adult and juvenile court handling DUIs, aggravated felonies and sex crimes in Arizona. He works in Federal, State and local jurisdictions including Phoenix, Mesa, Gilbert, Chandler, Scottsdale, Glendale, Tempe and Peoria. Mr. Geigle is a 5-Star-Client-Rated Attorney on Avvo. To read more about what former clients are saying about hiring Mr. Geigle or to set up a free consultation, please visit www.jacksonwhitelaw.com/criminal-defense-law.

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