



# Colonial Courts of Admiralty Act 1890

1890 CHAPTER 27 53 and 54 Vict

**1 Short title.**

This Act may be cited as the Colonial Courts of Admiralty Act 1890.

**2 Colonial Courts of Admiralty.**

- (1) Every court of law in a British possession, which is for the time being declared in pursuance of this Act to be a court of Admiralty, or which, if no such declaration is in force in the possession, has therein original unlimited civil jurisdiction, shall be a court of Admiralty, with the jurisdiction in this Act mentioned, and may for the purpose of that jurisdiction exercise all the powers which it possesses for the purpose of its other civil jurisdiction, and such court in reference to the jurisdiction conferred by this Act is in this Act referred to as a Colonial Court of Admiralty. Where in a British possession the Governor is the sole judicial authority, the expression “court of law” for the purposes of this section includes such Governor.
- (2) The jurisdiction of a Colonial Court of Admiralty shall, subject to the provisions of this Act, be over the like places, persons, matters, and things, as the Admiralty jurisdiction of the High Court in England, whether existing by virtue of any statute or otherwise, and the Colonial Court of Admiralty may exercise such jurisdiction in like manner and to as full an extent as the High Court in England, and shall have the same regard as that Court to international law and the comity of nations.
- (3) Subject to the provisions of this Act any enactment referring to a Vice-Admiralty Court, which is contained in an Act of the Imperial Parliament or in a Colonial law, shall apply to a Colonial Court of Admiralty, and be read as if the expression “Colonial Court of Admiralty” were therein substituted for “Vice-Admiralty Court” or for other expressions respectively referring to such Vice-Admiralty Courts or the judge thereof, and the Colonial Court of Admiralty shall have jurisdiction accordingly.

Provided as follows:—

- (a) Any enactment in an Act of the Imperial Parliament referring to the Admiralty jurisdiction of the High Court in England, when applied to a Colonial Court of Admiralty in a British possession, shall be read as if the name of that possession were therein substituted for England and Wales; and

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- (b) A Colonial Court of Admiralty shall have under the <sup>M1</sup>Naval Prize Act 1864 and under the <sup>M2</sup>Slave Trade Act 1873 and any enactment relating to prize or the slave trade, the jurisdiction thereby conferred on a Vice-Admiralty Court and not the jurisdiction *thereby* conferred exclusively on the High Court of Admiralty or the High Court of Justice; but, unless for the time being duly authorised, shall not by virtue of this Act exercise any jurisdiction under the <sup>M3</sup>Naval Prize Act 1864 or otherwise in relation to prize; and
  - (c) A Colonial Court of Admiralty shall not have jurisdiction under this Act to try or punish a person for an offence which according to the law of England is punishable on indictment; and
  - (d) A Colonial Court of Admiralty shall not have any greater jurisdiction in relation to the laws and regulations relating to Her Majesty's Navy at sea, or under any Act providing for the discipline of Her Majesty's Navy, than may be from time to time conferred on such court by Order in Council.
- (4) Where a Court in a British possession exercises in respect of matters arising outside the body of a county or other like part of a British possession any jurisdiction exercisable under this Act, that jurisdiction shall be deemed to be exercised under this Act and not otherwise.

**Modifications etc. (not altering text)**

**C1** Power to amend s. 2(2) conferred by [Supreme Court Act 1981 \(c. 54, SIF 37\), s. 150\(2\)](#)

**C2** [S. 2\(3\)](#) explained by [Prize Act 1939 \(c. 65\), s. 3](#)

**Marginal Citations**

**M1** [1864 c. 25\(129:4\)](#)

**M2** [1873 c. 88\(39:8\)](#)

**M3** [1864 c. 25.](#)

**3 Power of Colonial legislature as to Admiralty jurisdiction.**

The legislature of a British possession may by any Colonial law

- (a) declare any court of unlimited civil jurisdiction, whether original or appellate, in that possession to be a Colonial Court of Admiralty, and provide for the exercise by such court of its jurisdiction under this Act, and limit territorially, or otherwise, the extent of such jurisdiction; and
- (b) confer upon any inferior or subordinate court in that possession such partial or limited Admiralty jurisdiction under such regulations and with such appeal (if any) as may seem fit:

Provided that any such Colonial law shall not confer any jurisdiction which is not by this Act conferred upon a Colonial Court of Admiralty.

**4 Reservation of Colonial law for Her Majesty's assent.**

Every Colonial law which is made in pursuance of this Act, or affects the jurisdiction of or practice or procedure in any court of such possession in respect of the jurisdiction conferred by this Act, or alters any such Colonial law as above in this section mentioned, which has been previously passed, shall, unless previously approved by Her Majesty through a Secretary of State, either be reserved for the signification of Her

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Majesty's pleasure thereon, or contain a suspending clause providing that such law shall not come into operation until Her Majesty's pleasure thereon has been publicly signified in the British possession in which it has been passed.

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#### Textual Amendments

- F1** Para. inserted at the end of s. 4 by S.R.&O. 1937/230 (Rev. X, p. 545, 1937, p. 963), Sch. Pt II repealed by Burma Independence Act 1947 (11&12 Geo. 6 c. 3, SIF 26:11), **Sch. 2 Pt. I** and Statute Law (Repeals) Act 1976 (c. 16), **Sch. 1 Pt. VII**

#### Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C3** S. 4 excluded by Statute of Westminster 1931 (22&23 Geo. 5 c. 4, SIF 26:1), **ss. 6, 10**; Ceylon Independence Act 1947 (11&12 Geo. 6 c. 7, SIF 26:40), s. 1, **Sch. 1 para. 4**; Ghana Independence Act 1957 (c. 6, SIF 26:15), s. 1, **Sch. 1 para. 5**; Nigeria Independence Act 1960 (c. 55, SIF 26:28), s. 1, **Sch. 1 para. 5**; Sierra Leone Independence Act 1961 (c. 16, SIF 26:36), s. 1(2), **Sch. 2 para. 5**; Jamaica Independence Act 1962 (c. 40, SIF 26:18), s. 1, **Sch. 1 para. 5**; Trinidad and Tobago Independence Act 1962 (c. 54, SIF 26:44), s. 1, **Sch. 1 para. 5**; Kenya Independence Act 1963 (c. 54, SIF 26:19), s. 1, **Sch. 1 para. 5**; Malawi Independence Act 1964 (c. 46, SIF 26:22), s. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 4(b)**; Malta Independence Act 1964 (c. 86, SIF 26:24), s. 1, **Sch. 1 para. 4(b)**; Gambia Independence Act 1964 (c. 93, SIF 26:14), s. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 4(b)**; Guyana Independence Act 1966 (c. 14, SIF 26:16), s. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 4(b)**; Barbados Independence Act 1966 (c. 37, SIF 26:7), s. 1, **Sch. 1 para. 4(b)**; Mauritius Independence Act 1968 (c. 8, SIF 26:25), s. 1, **Sch. 1 para. 4(b)**; Fiji Independence Act 1970 (c. 50, SIF 26:13), s. 1, **Sch. 1 para. 4(b)**; Bahamas Independence Act 1973 (c. 27, SIF 26:6), s. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 4(b)**; Turalu Act 1978 (c. 20, SIF 26:44A), s. 1, **Sch. 1 para. 4(b)**; Belize Act 1981 (c. 52, SIF 26:7A), s. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 4(b)**

## 5 Local Admiralty appeal.

Subject to rules of court under this Act, judgments of a court in a British possession given or made in the exercise of the jurisdiction conferred on it by this Act, shall be subject to the like local appeal, if any, as judgments of the court in the exercise of its ordinary civil jurisdiction, and the court having cognizance of such appeal shall for the purpose thereof possess all the jurisdiction by this Act conferred upon a Colonial Court of Admiralty.

## 6 Admiralty appeal to the Queen in Council.

- (1) The appeal from the judgment of any court in a British possession in the exercise of the jurisdiction conferred by this Act, either where there is as of right no local appeal or after a decision on local appeal, lies to Her Majesty the Queen in Council.
- (2) Save as may be otherwise specially allowed in a particular case by Her Majesty the Queen in Council, an appeal under this section shall not be allowed—
  - (a) from any judgment not having the effect of a definite judgment unless the court appealed from has given leave for such appeal, nor
  - (b) from any judgment unless the petition of appeal has been lodged within the time prescribed by rules, or if no time is prescribed within six months from the date of the judgment appealed against, or if leave to appeal has been given then from the date of such leave.

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- (3) For the purpose of appeals under this Act, Her Majesty the Queen in Council and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council shall, subject to rules under this section, have all such powers for making and enforcing judgments, whether interlocutory or final, for punishing contempts, for requiring the payment of money into court, or for any other purpose, as may be necessary, or as were possessed by the High Court of Delegates before the passing of the Act transferring the powers of such court to Her Majesty in Council, or as are for the time being possessed by the High Court in England or by the court appealed from in relation to the like matters as those forming the subject of appeals under this Act.
- (4) All Orders of the Queen in Council or the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council for the purposes aforesaid or otherwise in relation to appeals under this Act shall have full effect throughout Her Majesty's dominions, and in all places where Her Majesty has jurisdiction.
- (5) This section shall be in addition to and not in derogation of the authority of Her Majesty in Council or the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council arising otherwise than under this Act, and all enactments relating to appeals to Her Majesty in Council or to the powers of Her Majesty in Council or the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in relation to those appeals, whether for making rules and orders or otherwise, shall extend, save as otherwise directed by Her Majesty in Council, to appeals to Her Majesty in Council under this Act.

## 7 Rules of court.

- (1) Rules of court for regulating the procedure and practice (including fees and costs) in a court in a British possession in the exercise of the jurisdiction conferred by this Act, whether original or appellate, may be made by the same authority and in the same manner as rules touching the practice, procedure, fees, and costs in the said court in the exercise of its ordinary civil jurisdiction respectively are made:  
Provided that the rules under this section shall not, save as provided by this Act, extend to matters relating to the slave trade, and shall not (save as provided by this section) come into operation until they have been approved by Her Majesty in Council, but on coming into operation . . . <sup>F2</sup>any enactment inconsistent therewith shall, so far as it is so inconsistent, be repealed.
- (2) It shall be lawful for Her Majesty in Council, in approving rules made under this section, to declare that the rules so made with respect to any matters which appear to Her Majesty to be matters of detail or of local concern may be revoked, varied, or added to without the approval required by this section.
- (3) Such rules may provide for the exercise of any jurisdiction conferred by this Act by the full court, or by any judge or judges thereof, and subject to any rules, where the ordinary civil jurisdiction of the court can in any case be exercised by a single judge, any jurisdiction conferred by this Act may in the like case be exercised by a single judge.

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### Textual Amendments

**F2** Words repealed by [Statute Law \(Repeals\) Act 1986 \(c. 12\)](#), [Sch. 1 Pt. XII](#)

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**Modifications etc. (not altering text)**

- C4** S. 7 excluded by Statute of Westminster 1931 (22&23 Geo. 5 c. 4, SIF 26:1), **ss. 6, 10**; Ceylon Independence Act 1947 (11&12 Geo. 6 c. 7, SIF 26:40), s. 1, **Sch. 1 para. 4**; Ghana Independence Act 1957 (c. 6, SIF 26:15), s. 1, **Sch. 1 para. 5**; Nigeria Independence Act 1960 (c. 55, SIF 26:28), s. 1, **Sch. 1 para. 5**; Sierra Leone Independence Act 1961 (c. 16, SIF 26:36), s. 1(2), **Sch. 2 para. 5**; Jamaica Independence Act 1962 (c. 40, SIF 26:18), s. 1, **Sch. 1 para. 5**; Trinidad and Tobago Independence Act 1962 (c. 54, SIF 26:44), s. 1, **Sch. 1 para. 5**; Kenya Independence Act 1963 (c. 54, SIF 26:19), s. 1, **Sch. 1 para. 5**; Malawi Independence Act 1964 (c. 46, SIF 26:22), s. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 4(b)**; Malta Independence Act 1964 (c. 86, SIF 26:24), s. 1, **Sch. 1 para. 4(b)**; Gambia Independence Act 1964 (c. 93, SIF 26:14), s. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 4(b)**; Guyana Independence Act 1966 (c. 14, SIF 26:16), s. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 4(b)**; Barbados Independence Act 1966 (c. 37, SIF 26:7), s. 1, **Sch. 1 para. 4(b)**; Mauritius Independence Act 1968 (c. 8, SIF 26:25), s. 1, **Sch. 1 para. 4(b)**; Fiji Independence Act 1970 (c. 50, SIF 26:13), s. 1, **Sch. 1 para. 4(b)**; Bahamas Independence Act 1973 (c. 27, SIF 26:6), s. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 4(b)**; Turalu Act 1978 (c. 20, SIF 26:44A), s. 1, **Sch. 1 para. 4(b)**; Belize Act 1981 (c. 52, SIF 26:7A), s. 1(2), **Sch. 1 para. 4(b)**

**8 Droits of Admiralty and of the Crown.**

- (1) Subject to the provisions of this section nothing in this Act shall alter the application of any droits of Admiralty or droits of or forfeitures to the Crown in a British possession; and such droits and forfeitures, when condemned by a court of a British possession in the exercise of the jurisdiction conferred by this Act, shall, save as is otherwise provided by any other Act, be notified, accounted for, and dealt with in such manner as the Treasury from time to time direct, and the officers of every Colonial Court of Admiralty and of every other court in a British possession exercising Admiralty jurisdiction shall obey such directions in respect of the said droits and forfeitures as may be from time to time given by the Treasury.
- (2) It shall be lawful for Her Majesty the Queen in Council by Order to direct that, subject to any conditions, exceptions, reservations, and regulations contained in the Order, the said droits and forfeitures condemned by a court in a British possession shall form part of the revenues of that possession either for ever or for such limited term or subject to such revocation as may be specified in the Order.
- (3) If and so long as any of such droits or forfeitures by virtue of this or any other Act form part of the revenues of the said possession the same shall, subject to the provisions of any law for the time being applicable thereto, be notified, accounted for, and dealt with in manner directed by the Government of the possession, and the Treasury shall not have any power in relation thereto.

**9 Power to establish Vice-Admiralty Court.**

- (1) It shall be lawful for Her Majesty, by commission under the Great Seal, to empower the Admiralty to establish in a British possession any Vice-Admiralty Court or Courts.
- (2) Upon the establishment of a Vice-Admiralty Court in a British possession, the Admiralty, by writing under their hands and the seal of the office of Admiralty, in such form as the Admiralty direct, may appoint a judge, registrar, marshal, and other officers of the court, and may cancel any such appointment; and in addition to any other jurisdiction of such court, may (subject to the limits imposed by this Act or the said commission from Her Majesty) vest in such court the whole or any part of the jurisdiction by or by virtue of this Act conferred upon any courts of that British

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possession, and may vary or revoke such vesting, and while such vesting is in force the power of such last-mentioned courts to exercise the jurisdiction so vested shall be suspended.

Provided that—

- (a) nothing in this section shall authorise a Vice-Admiralty Court so established . . . <sup>F3</sup> . . . <sup>F4</sup><sup>F5</sup> . . . <sup>F3</sup> in any . . . <sup>F3</sup> British possession] having a representative legislature, to exercise any jurisdiction, except for some purpose relating to prize, to Her Majesty's Navy, to the slave trade, to the matters dealt with by the <sup>M4</sup>Foreign Enlistment Act 1870 . . . <sup>F3</sup> or to matters in which questions arise relating to treaties or conventions with foreign countries, or to international law; and
  - (b) in the event of a vacancy in the office of judge, registrar, marshal, or other officer of any Vice-Admiralty Court in a British possession, the Governor of that possession may appoint a fit person to fill the vacancy until an appointment to the office is made by the Admiralty.
- (3) The provisions of this Act with respect to appeals to Her Majesty in Council from courts in British possessions in the exercise of the jurisdiction conferred by this Act shall apply to appeals from Vice-Admiralty Courts, but the rules and orders made in relation to appeals from Vice-Admiralty Courts may differ from the rules made in relation to appeals from the said courts in British possessions.
- (4) If Her Majesty at any time by commission under the Great Seal so directs, the Admiralty shall by writing under their hands and the seal of the office of Admiralty abolish a Vice-Admiralty Court established in any British possession under this section, and upon such abolition the jurisdiction of any Colonial Court of Admiralty in that possession which was previously suspended shall be revived.

#### Textual Amendments

**F3** Words repealed by [Statute Law \(Repeals\) Act 1986 \(c. 12\), Sch. 1 Pt. IX](#)

**F4** Words repealed by [Burma Independence Act 1947 \(11&12 Geo. 6 c. 3, SIF 26:11\), Sch. 2 Pt. I](#)

**F5** Words substituted by S.R.&O. 1937/230 (Rev. X, p. 545, 1937, p. 963), Sch. Pt. II

#### Marginal Citations

**M4** [1870 c. 90\(39:2\)](#)

## 10 Power to appoint a vice-admiral.

Nothing in this Act shall affect any power of appointing a vice-admiral in and for any British possession or any place therein; and whenever there is not a formally appointed vice-admiral in a British possession or any place therein, the Governor of the possession shall be *ex-officio* vice-admiral thereof.

## 11 Exception of Channel Islands and other possessions.

- (1) The provisions of this Act with respect to Colonial Courts of Admiralty shall not apply to the Channel Islands.
- (2) It shall be lawful for the Queen in Council by Order to declare, with respect to any British possession which has not a representative legislature, that the jurisdiction conferred by this Act on Colonial Courts of Admiralty shall not be vested in any court

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of such possession, or shall be vested only to the partial or limited extent specified in the Order.

## 12 Application of Act to courts under Foreign Jurisdiction Acts.

It shall be lawful for Her Majesty the Queen in Council by Order to direct that this Act shall, subject to the conditions, exceptions, and qualifications (if any) contained in the Order, apply to any Court established by Her Majesty for the exercise of jurisdiction in any place out of Her Majesty's dominions which is named in the Order as if that Court were a Colonial Court of Admiralty, and to provide for carrying into effect such application.

## 13 Rules for procedure in slave trade matters.

- (1) It shall be lawful for Her Majesty the Queen in Council by Order to make rules as to the practice and procedure (including fees and costs) to be observed in and the returns to be made from Colonial Courts of Admiralty and Vice-Admiralty Courts in the exercise of their jurisdiction in matters relating to the slave trade, . . .
- (2) Except when inconsistent with such Order in Council, the rules of court for the time being in force in a Colonial Court of Admiralty or Vice-Admiralty Court shall, so far as applicable, extend to proceedings in such court in matters relating to the slave trade.
- (3) . . . . . <sup>F6</sup>

### Textual Amendments

**F6** Ss. 13(3), 16–18, Schs. 1, 2 repealed by Statute Law (Repeals) Act 1986 (c. 12), Sch. 1 Pt. IX

## 14 Orders in Council.

It shall be lawful for Her Majesty in Council from time to time to make Orders for the purposes authorised by this Act, and to revoke and vary such Orders, . . . <sup>F7</sup>

### Textual Amendments

**F7** Words repealed by Statute Law (Repeals) Act 1986 (c. 12), Sch. 1 Pt. XII

## 15 Interpretation.

In the construction of this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—

The expression “representative legislature” means, in relation to a British possession, a legislature comprising a legislative body of which at least one half are elected by inhabitants of the British possession.

The expression “unlimited civil jurisdiction” means civil jurisdiction unlimited as to the value of the subject-matter at issue, or as to the amount that may be claimed or recovered.

The expression “judgment” includes a decree, order, and sentence.

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The expression “appeal” means any appeal, rehearing, or review; and the expression “local appeal” means an appeal to any court inferior to Her Majesty in Council.

The expression “Colonial law” means any Act, ordinance, or other law having the force of legislative enactment in a British possession and made by any authority, other than the Imperial Parliament or Her Majesty in Council, competent to make laws for such possession.

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**Textual Amendments**  
F8 Ss. 13(3), 16–18, Schs. 1, 2 repealed by Statute Law (Repeals) Act 1986 (c. 12), **Sch. 1 Pt. IX**



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