



Freedom of Religion or Belief

The offence of blasphemy is provided for under Irish law. Article 40.6.1 of the Irish Constitution states that:

“the publication or utterance of blasphemous, seditious, or indecent matter is an offence which shall be punishable in accordance with law.”

In 2013, the Government-established Convention on the Constitution recommended that the offence of blasphemy be removed and replaced with a general provision to include a prohibition on incitement to hatred.

In 2014 concluding observations on Ireland, the UN Human Rights Committee reiterated that blasphemy should be removed from the Constitution.

In October 2014, the Government signaled that it had accepted a recommendation of the Convention and announced that a referendum would be held on the issue. However no timeline was provided and no referendum was held prior to the conclusion of the Government's tenure in office in February 2016.

Recommendations

Amend Article 40.6.1 of the Constitution to remove the offence of blasphemy from Irish law

Replace the religious oaths in Articles 12.8, 31.4 and 34.5 of the Constitution and all oaths in court with neutral declarations

Religious Oaths

A number of Articles in the Constitution (Art 12.8, Art 31.4 and Art 34.5.1) require the President of Ireland, Judges and members of the Council of State, including the Prime Minister (Taoiseach) and Deputy Prime Minister (Tánaiste) to swear religious oaths when taking office.

For information on the role of religion in the provision of education in Ireland please see:

Fact Sheet No. 3 – Right to Education



Facts and Figures

Recent polls suggest that less than half (47 percent) of people surveyed in Ireland would describe themselves as religious, with one in ten people identifying as either atheist/agnostic. –
WIN/Gallup International

About Your Rights. Right Now

Your Rights. Right Now is a coalition of 17 Irish NGOs, trade unions and civil society groups established by the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL) in 2010 to coordinate the civil society response to Ireland's first examination under the Universal Periodic Review. This group was re-convened in 2015 in advance of Ireland's second examination. The coalition conducted a number of general and thematic consultations and invited written submissions to inform its report which was submitted to the UN in September 2015.

Members of the coalition are:

- Age Action
- Educate Together
- Free Legal Advice Centres
- Gay and Lesbian Equality Network
- Immigrant Council of Ireland
- Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- Irish Council for Civil Liberties
- Irish Family Planning Association
- Irish Penal Reform Trust
- Irish Traveller Movement
- Mercy Law Resource Centre
- NUI Galway, Centre for Disability Law and Policy
- Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre
- Transgender Equality Network Ireland
- Union of Students in Ireland
- Disability Federation of Ireland

For more information see
www.rightsnow.ie