

ATHEIST ALLIANCE INTERNATIONAL

ORAL STATEMENT TO UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW OF IRELAND

Freedom of Religion and Belief

Our affiliate Atheist Ireland campaigns for freedom of religion and belief in Ireland.

The chairs of both major UN Human Rights Committees have strongly criticised Ireland's lack of separation of church and state.

Ireland now claims that it is constitutionally obliged (not merely permitted, but obliged) to allow religious discrimination, in order to buttress religion, including in publicly funded schools.

Ireland needs a Religious Equality Referendum to be able to meet its UN human rights obligations.

Law Against Blasphemy

Ireland should urgently hold a referendum to remove the offence of blasphemy.

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation seeks global laws against defamation of religion. As part of this, Pakistan at the UN has cited specific language from the Irish blasphemy law.

Heiner Bielefeldt, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion, has advised us:

"The major damage done by this law is international. Those countries that have an intimidating anti-blasphemy practice like to quote European countries to unmask Western hypocrisy."

Religious Discrimination in Education

Nine different sets of United Nations and Council of Europe committees have concluded that Irish schools breach the human rights of atheist and minority faith children, families and teachers.

Irish schools breach very fundamental human rights like freedom of religion and belief, freedom from discrimination, equality before the law, and no effective remedy.

Ireland should oblige publicly funded schools to deliver educational services, including employment, state curriculum and enrolment, in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner, and with no religious discrimination of any kind.

Law Against Abortion

We support the many recommendations to strengthen women's right to abortion in Ireland.

We support the Campaign to repeal the Eighth Amendment of the Irish Constitution, to enable the Irish Parliament to legislate for the right to abortion.