

Remove the sentence that makes Blasphemy an offence from the Constitution -

To support your freedom of expression;

Because in 2013 the Constitutional Convention recommended its removal, and the Government soon promised to hold a referendum to let us vote to remove it, but has since said that they will not hold this referendum before the next general election;

To support the right to life of 10 staff at Charlie Hebdo in Paris, and of 3 officers of French police, and of the 4 Jewish people who were also killed; and to support their right to freedom of expression, and all people's right to read any writing, cartoon, or other communication, whether or not it criticises or satirises any idea, whether religious, political, social, sporting, or scientific - because Pakistan mentions Ireland's law to support its law against blasphemy, and murders connected with blasphemy in Pakistan contribute to encouraging such murders as those of the Charlie Hebdo staff;

To start the change to a secular constitution.

*There is another Mid-West Humanists leaflet on secular changes to the Constitution*

*There are already laws to protect individuals and groups against libel, defamation, and slander; and against incitement to hatred or to commit crimes against the person*

## Mid West Humanists

The Mid West Humanists are a group of people (in Limerick, Clare, and Tipperary) with no religion, or leaning that way (since 2008), who meet in Limerick, 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month at 20:00, now in the Absolute Hotel. They meet similar people, with no rule about what a person thinks or believes in order to attend.

*Meeting details at*  
[www.midwesthumanists.com](http://www.midwesthumanists.com)

*Inquiries to*  
[info@midwesthumanists.com](mailto:info@midwesthumanists.com)



## Humanism

Humanism is the idea that humans can think, plan, and do all the things that humans need for a good life. For most humanists this means a life with other people - being and doing good for other people as well as for themselves. Humanism means that humans can get the knowledge they need, by reason and science, and that they do not need information about the world that is said to be revealed by a god/ gods. Humanism also means that humans can make good moral rules.

## Mid-West Humanists' Leaflets

Let Ireland's Constitution be Secular  
National School Leases are Secular  
A National School Lease (example lease)  
Schools should be Secular  
Mid-West Humanists and Humanism

## Mid West Humanists

Why we should  
remove the  
Blasphemy  
provision from  
the Constitution  
now

*- So that people in Ireland do not depend on French law to secure freedom of expression.*

In France, since the Charlie Hebdo murders, the government and people have stood firmly for the right to publish any matter, irrespective of any offence to any ideas.

Ireland's Constitution since 1937 makes blasphemy an offence, and the 2009 Defamation Act created the law to enforce it.

The journalists, cartoonists, publishers, and police in France, and in other parts of the world, have been *defending Irish people's right to freedom of expression*. The people of Ireland ought to support the French state, and those journalists and police (and stop undermining them) by removing the offence of blasphemy from Ireland's constitution.

## How laws against Blasphemy in Ireland affect events in France

We in Ireland can read Charlie Hebdo because secular law in France allows it to be published there.

Government and others in Pakistan have often quoted Ireland's law to say that it is normal, including in Europe, to prohibit criticism of religion. While murders may not be the intention of the government in Pakistan, people released from a blasphemy charge, a lawyer defending a person so accused, a judge who did not make the popular decision in a case, and a state governor who spoke in favour of repealing the law, have all been murdered in Pakistan. This has added to the idea among some people that it is right to kill people who satirise the ideas of a religion.

Our constitution and law fail to support the strong efforts of the secular constitution and law of France to maintain and defend freedom of expression. Through the effect on Pakistan, Ireland's anti-blasphemy law and constitution have given support to murders such as those in Paris, thus undermining France's defence of our freedom of expression in Ireland.

## How laws against Blasphemy cause trouble

When you choose a religion you can agree to follow its rules. If a thousand million people thereby undertake not to draw pictures of Mohammed, that does not create a right to stop the other six thousand million people on earth drawing and publishing what they choose. A law

against blasphemy is not about freedom of religion: rather it lets some people stop other people exercising religious and other freedoms.

Where the law and society accept that people are entitled to be insulated from criticism of their ideas, which now here happens only about religious ideas, people get used to that, and are surprised or shocked when they do hear criticism. This *encourages* people to become outraged at the criticism.

All religions disagree with the doctrines of other religions. That is, all religions blaspheme the other religions.

Thus a state law cannot reasonably control blasphemy, unless the state allows people only one religion. Some states do this now, and states in Europe did it many centuries ago.

## Ideas, and not Persons, are what we need to be free to criticise

The case we make here is about *freedom to criticise ideas*. It is not about criticising persons. Criticism of a person's idea is *not* criticism of the person.

Every idea may be partly or wholly mistaken. People try to choose the more sensible ideas, though you could adopt an idea that later turns out to be wrong. People do not like being shown to be wrong, but at times they do accept other people showing that one of his or her ideas includes a mistake. They count this as a help.

The case for removing the offence of Blasphemy is about allowing criticism of ideas. People

make society based on ideas, so having the least mistaken ideas is important. When things have gone wrong in society, at times this has been due to ideas.

The law in Ireland does not stop public criticism of ideas, no matter how closely or personally a person holds these ideas, except where the ideas concern religion. Some people attach strongly and emotionally to a particular sporting team, or to a political party or cause. No matter how deeply people feel about these, the law does not try to stop other people criticising or satirising your ideas. Few people want the law to protect them from other people insulting their choice in sport or in politics.

It is bad for a society to encourage people to be too sensitive to criticism of their ideas. Approving of such sensitivity makes it harder to get people to debate and discuss matters on which various people have different opinions, and such debate is needed to let a society reach consensus and have peace. Laws that stop people criticising those ideas do not produce a peaceful society but rather a troubled society.

A peaceful society will arise instead where people accept that such criticism is normal. Law should not prohibit such criticism.

*We should have a referendum in 2016 to remove the provision that makes Blasphemy an offence from Ireland's Constitution.*