

Blasphemy: the Constitution, Article 40.6

1° The State guarantees liberty for the exercise of the following rights, subject to public order and morality:

i The right of the citizens to express freely their convictions and opinions

The education of public opinion being, however, a matter of such grave import to the common good, the State shall endeavour to ensure that organs of public opinion, such as the radio, the press, the cinema, while preserving their rightful liberty of expression, including criticism of Government policy, shall not be used to undermine public order or morality or the authority of the State

The publication or utterance of **blasphemous**, seditious, or indecent matter is an offence which shall be punishable in accordance with law

The Defamation Act 2009 -

Section 36 -

(1) A person who publishes or utters **blasphemous** matter shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable upon conviction on indictment to a fine not exceeding €25,000

(2) For the purposes of this section, a person publishes or utters **blasphemous** matter if

(a) he or she publishes or utters matter that is grossly abusive or insulting in relation to matters held sacred by any religion, thereby causing outrage among a substantial number of the adherents of that religion, and

(b) he or she intends, by the publication or utterance of the matter, to cause such outrage

Section 37 - (lets Gardaí seize documents alleged to be blasphemous).

A Yes vote in the referendum on 26 October will delete “blasphemous”.

Blasphemy law in Pakistan

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.

There are other 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 people (in Limerick, Clare, and Tipperary) with no religion, or leaning that way, who meet in Limerick. There is no rule about what a person thinks or believes in order to attend.

Inquiries to info@midwesthumanists.com

Meeting details and details about humanism at www.midwesthumanists.com

Humanists favour good and moral lives; and morals and knowledge come from us humans.

Mid-West Humanists

Vote to remove the Blasphemy provision from the Constitution

on 26 October 2018

-- for freedom of expression in Ireland
-- to support everyone's right to free expression, including the 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

*This is to permit open criticism of all **ideas**: to criticize an idea is NOT to criticize the person who believes the idea*

-- to enable people to **hear** all criticisms of their ideas (though people sometimes don't like criticism) -- thus to help people notice their own mistakes and reconsider their ideas about morals and about society
-- so society may have more harmony and peace

How laws against Blasphemy in Ireland affect events in France

In Paris, in January 2015, some men who were Muslims murdered half the staff of Charlie Hebdo magazine, because it published cartoons that ridiculed Mohammed. The government and people of France stood firmly for the right to publish any matter, irrespective of any offence to any ideas. We in Ireland can read Charlie Hebdo because secular law in France lets it be published (blasphemy is not an offence there).

Pakistan often quotes Ireland's anti-blasphemy law and constitution to support its own law. While it has not carried out its penalty of death, Pakistan's law has encouraged murders there, and so encouraged murders such as those in Paris in 2015, thus undermining France's defence of our freedom of expression in Ireland.

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 defend their own freedom of expression by removing the offence of blasphemy from Ireland's constitution.

Blasphemy laws 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, but that led to many wars and genocides.

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 their 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.

Referendum on 26 October 2018 -- vote to remove the word that makes Blasphemy an offence from Ireland's Constitution.