

South Sudan

South Sudan remains in a state of transition since achieving independence from Sudan in 2011. It has no state religion, and humanist advocates appear to have some presence in the country. However, despite vocal commitments to religious tolerance by political leaders, escalating inter-ethnic and inter-religious violence between Muslims and Christians is creating an increasingly repressive political environment, which is likely to negatively affect atheist, humanist or secularist groups.

This country is found to be in flux. The country is young and the constitution is transitional. There are good intentions both in the provisional constitution and voiced by leadership, however there are concerns about inter-religious tension and anti-democratic human rights violations.

Constitution and government	Education and children’s rights	Family, community, society, religious courts and tribunals	Freedom of expression advocacy of humanist values
			<u>Expression of core humanist principles on democracy, freedom or human rights is somewhat restricted</u>
<u>The state is secular, with separation of religious and political authorities, not discriminating against any religion or belief</u>			
	<u>Insufficient information or detail not included in this report</u>	<u>Insufficient information or detail not included in this report</u>	

Legend

Constitution and government

South Sudan has no state religion and the authorities have been insistent that all religious views will be tolerated as the country continues to move towards a permanent constitution.

The transitional constitution stipulates that freedom of religion or belief be respected, but does not mention non-believers. The same document ensures the right to “establish and maintain appropriate faith-based, charitable and humanitarian institutions” which would theoretically suggest that atheist, humanist and secularist groups will be given equal footing with religious organizations, but this has yet to be tested.

Education and children’s rights

The transitional constitution provides for access to education “without discrimination as to religion”. However, the education system is currently in a state of flux, and no stable curriculum is yet in

place. In 2013 the vice-president called for teaching on both Islam and Christianity to be part of the general curriculum in public schools, although it is not clear whether it will be possible to opt-out of religious education or whether any secular or philosophical alternative will be available.

Freedom of expression, advocacy of humanist values

Anecdotes from humanists active in South Sudan suggest humanism is tolerated and possibly increasingly visible. A South Sudanese representative at the December 2013 African Regional Humanist Meeting said that: "Humanism has been deep rooted in the South Sudan army and they are passing it to local Sudanese in an effort to debunk the prevailing superstitions and belief in magic".

<iheyo.org/node/1171>

Insecurity and human rights failures

The general human rights climate has seriously deteriorated since 2013. Intolerance for political dissent, restrictions on freedom of expression and attacks on civil society by law enforcement have all increased and may be expected to continue to do so in the context of escalating inter-ethnic and inter-religious violence. This is likely to create a climate of increasing pressure for any secularist, humanist or atheist activists.