

Saint Kitts and Nevis

Saint Kitts and Nevis, also known as The Federation of Saint Christopher and Nevis, is a two-island nation in the Caribbean which maintains a multi-party parliamentary democracy political system under a constitutional monarchy.

Constitution and government	Education and children's rights	Family, community, society, religious courts and tribunals	Freedom of expression advocacy of humanist values
<u>Official symbolic deference to religion</u>	<u>State-funded schools offer religious or ideological instruction with no secular or humanist alternative, but it is optional</u>		<u>Some concerns about political or media freedoms, not specific to the non-religious</u>
		<u>No religious tribunals of concern, secular groups operate freely, individuals are not persecuted by the state</u>	

Legend

Constitution and government

Saint Kitts and Nevis has a constitution which protects the religious rights of all individuals, regardless of whether or not they believe in a god. The government is secular and generally does not interfere with freedom of belief.

The constitution of Saint Kitts and Nevis protects freedom of expression and religion.

However some government endorsement of religion does occur, as well as some apparent discrimination against Rastafarians (see below).

Education and children's rights

Public schools undertake Christian religious instruction and religious assemblies, though students who do not want to attend may opt out from all religious activities. The government requires prayers to be said in all public schools.

The Organization for Rastafarians in Unity (ORU) have complained that both public and private schools have refused to enroll children of Rastafarian parents. However, it seems to be agreed that this discrimination is indirect, because the Ministry of Health requires immunization of all children before enrolling in school, whereas Rastafarian parents often do not vaccinate their children on purportedly "religious" grounds. In October 2017 officials agreed to permit unvaccinated children to attend schools, stating it would develop a formal process to allow for the exemption.

<state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2017/wha/281096.htm>

Family, community and society

We have found no reports of direct discrimination against non-religious individuals.

There is social and employment discrimination against Rastafarians. The Organization for Rastafarians in Unity (ORU) report that they are harassed and that the mandatory cutting of dreadlocks may occur while in prison. The government prohibits the use of marijuana, including for religious purposes.

Freedom of expression, advocacy of humanist values

Freedom House rate Saint Kitts and Nevis as “Free”, however: “There are some concerns about government corruption and transparency, particularly in regard to the Citizenship by Investment Program (CIP). Authorities in recent years have struggled to address a rising crime rate.” While freedom of expression is generally respected, Freedom House also explains that “the government owns the sole local television station, and the opposition faces some restrictions on access to it, particularly around elections. Defamation is a criminal offence that can potentially carry a prison sentence. Some journalists reportedly self-censor in order to avoid pressure from government officials.”

<freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2018/st-kitts-and-nevis>