

Saint Lucia

Saint Lucia is an island nation in the eastern Caribbean Sea which maintains a multi-party parliamentary democracy under a constitutional monarchy. The country maintains no official religion, however concerns about religious privileging do exist.

Constitution and government	Education and children’s rights	Family, community, society, religious courts and tribunals	Freedom of expression advocacy of humanist values
<u>There is systematic religious privilege</u>			<u>Criticism of religion is restricted in law or a de facto ‘blasphemy’ law is in effect</u>
<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>Insufficient information or detail not included in this report</u>	

Legend

Constitution and government

The constitution does not establish any religion, but it begins by invoking “faith in the supremacy of the Almighty God”.

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of religion or belief, freedom of expression, and freedom of assembly and association. These rights are generally respected in practice.

Certain privileges exist for religious groups and institutions which are not extended to secular organizations, with exemption from some labour requirements.

Education and children’s rights

The school curriculum includes Christian education and religious instruction is permitted in public schools, however, non-Christian students are not required to participate. Several religious schools exist which are funded by religious institutions.

Freedom of expression, advocacy of humanist values

The Criminal Code, article 314, includes merely exposing a person to “ridicule” as a matter of defamation, suggesting that any satire of a public figure could be liable to prosecution.

Blasphemy

There are a number of anti-blasphemy or quasi blasphemy law provisions in place, though we have no record of their use.

Under the heading of “Public worship offences”, the Criminal Code criminalizes:

- behaving “irreverently near any church, chapel, or other building for religious worship during divine service” (article 566);
- anyone who “disturbs or molests any other person in any place of divine worship, whether during divine service or at any other time” as well as behaviour that is “riotous, indecent, disorderly, or insulting” at a place of worship at any time (article 567);
- anyone who “disturbs or molests any minister of religion while celebrating any religious rite or office in any public way or public place, or any other person aiding, assisting, or attending at the celebration”.

Anyone convicted under these provisions is subject to “a fine of one thousand dollars or to imprisonment for one year”.

It is unclear if an act of blasphemy in and of itself (without some attendant abuse or harassment) would earn a prison term under these provisions, though it seems likely that some forms of legitimate protest, for example against a religious minister, might fall foul of these provisions.

When considering exemptions to the defamation law, for example on grounds of making a complaint against an official, or expressing an opinion in ‘good faith’, the Criminal Code, article 318 (g), specifically *excludes* “blasphemous” matter from such exemptions, even though the material may otherwise needed to be shown in a court of law. Publications are privileged:

*“if the matter published is in fact a fair report of anything said, done, or shown in a civil or criminal inquiry or proceeding before any Court, **unless** the Court prohibits the publication of anything said or shown before it, on the ground that it is seditious, immoral, or blasphemous;”* [emphasis added]

Again, in the list of potential justifications for libel (a justification might include for example pleading that a statement was true, or that making it was in the public interest), the Criminal Code, under article 326 (6), again excludes “blasphemous” matter, stating:

“No plea of justification shall be pleaded to any indictment or count of a charge of seditious, blasphemous or obscene libel.”