

# Laos

Lao People’s Democratic Republic is a landlocked country in which a third of the country’s 6.5 million people live below the international poverty line. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and especially freedom of opinion and expression, are significantly restricted in the single-party Marxist republic of Laos.

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 severely restricted</u>
			<u>Concerns that secular or religious authorities interfere in specifically religious freedoms</u>
<u>Insufficient information or detail not included in this report</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

The constitution and some laws and policies protect religious freedom; however, other contradictory laws and policies restrict this right. Article 30 of the constitution explicitly provides for the freedom of and from religion, which states “Lao citizens have the right and freedom to believe or not to believe in religions”, however Article 9 states: “all acts of creating division of religions and classes of people are prohibited”. The government interprets this clause as justifying some restrictions on religious practice by members of all religious groups.

There is no officiated state religion, however there is symbolic deference to Buddhism and reports of suspicion and discrimination against Western religious faiths.

<[religiousfreedom.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=169&Itemid=29](http://religiousfreedom.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=169&Itemid=29)>

The government severely restricts the rights to freedom of assembly and freedom of association. It is illegal to participate in organizations that engage in public protests or that in any other way cause “turmoil or social instability.” Violators can receive sentences of up to five years in prison.

## Freedom of expression, advocacy of humanist values

Although Article 31 in the constitution states that “Lao citizens have the right and freedom of speech, press and assembly”, freedom of the press is severely restricted. All media is state owned and controlled, and journalists that criticize the government or discusses controversial political

topics faces legal punishment.