

# Bhutan

Constitution and government	Education and children's rights	Family, community, society, religious courts and tribunals	Freedom of expression advocacy of humanist values
<u>Preferential treatment is given to a religion or religion in general</u> <u>State-funding of religious institutions or salaries, or discriminatory tax exemptions</u>			<u>Expression of core humanist principles on democracy, freedom or human rights is somewhat restricted</u>
<u>Official symbolic deference to religion</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 other laws and policies guarantee the right to freedom of religion or belief. But the Kingdom of Bhutan officially recognizes only Buddhism and Hinduism, and proclaims Buddhism is the “spiritual heritage” of Bhutan. Furthermore, the government imposes some restrictions on freedom of expression, and an independent media is only just beginning to emerge.

The constitution stipulates, “A Bhutanese citizen shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. No person shall be compelled to belong to another faith by means of coercion or inducement.” It also states, “No one shall be discriminated against on the grounds of race, sex, language, religion, politics, or other status.”

### Religious privilege

However, the government supports the Drukpa Kagyupa school of Mahayana Buddhism. It subsidizes its monasteries and shrines and provides aid to its monks and nuns. The government does not provide aid to clerics of other religions.

## Education and children's rights

The government asserts there is no religious curriculum in educational institutions, but local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) report students must take part in a compulsory Buddhist prayer session each morning. Religious teaching is forbidden in all schools except monastic institutions.

## **Freedom of expression, advocacy of humanist values**

The National Security Act (NSA) prohibits “words either spoken or written, or by other means whatsoever, that promote or attempt to promote, on grounds of religion, race, language, caste, or community, or on any other ground whatsoever, feelings of enmity or hatred between different religious, racial, or language groups or castes and communities.” Violating the NSA is punishable by up to three years in prison. This does not appear to function in and of itself as a ‘blasphemy’ law, and may be presumed to rule out only genuine incitement to hatred or violence. There have been no reports of prosecutions under the act in recent years.

A 1992 law prohibits criticism of the king and the political system. A 2006 media law has allowed the creation of a small but growing number of independent radio stations and newspapers.

The penal code states that a defendant shall be found guilty of promoting civil unrest by committing an act that is “prejudicial to the maintenance of harmony between different nationalities, racial groups, castes, and religious groups and that disturbs the public tranquility.” The punishment is five to nine years in prison. There were no reports of prosecutions under this law in recent years.