

Kiribati

Kiribati (officially pronounced *Kiribas*) is a presidential republic, which gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1979 and joined the United Nations as a full member in 1999. The majority of the population live on the largest island, Tarawa, but overpopulation is causing problems. Many on outer islands live at a near-subsistence level.

Kiribati looks set to disappear entirely thanks to global warming. The nation is comprised of 33 low-lying atolls and reef islands and one raised coral island. Some coastal communities have already had to relocate, and there is a threat to drinking water as fresh water aquifers become contaminated with sea water. In June 2008, the Kiribati President Anote Tong said Kiribati had reached “the point of no return” and: “To plan for the day when you no longer have a country is indeed painful but I think we have to do that.”

Constitution and government	Education and children’s rights	Family, community, society, religious courts and tribunals	Freedom of expression advocacy of humanist values
		<u>Discriminatory prominence is given to religious bodies, traditions or leaders</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>Some concerns about political or media freedoms, not specific to the non-religious</u>

Legend

Constitution and government

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as well as freedom of opinion, expression, and assembly. These rights are generally respected in practice. There is no state religion and the government does not favour a particular religious group.

Although there is no state religion, governmental meetings and events often begin and end with an ordained minister or other church official delivering a Christian prayer.

Religious groups with memberships of over 2% of the population are required to register with the government by submitting a request to the Ministry of Women, Youth and Social Affairs. There are no legal consequences for not registering. Registered religious organisations are subject to an income tax exemption. The government continued to administer a small grants program for church projects from registered religious organizations. It is unclear if analogous non-religious organizations would be permitted to apply for such funding.

Two islands in the southern part of Kiribati, Arorae and Tamana, uphold a “one church only” policy, apparently in deference to the first Protestant missionaries that visited the islands in the 1800s. Regardless of whether there is any demand, this may mean that the right to practice other religions is in practice restricted on these islands.

<state.gov/documents/organization/256323.pdf>

Most governmental meetings and events begin and end with an ordained minister or other church official delivering a Christian prayer.

<state.gov/documents/organization/281072.pdf>

Education and children's rights

There is no mandated religious education in public schools.

Public schools in the country allow a variety of religious groups, including Catholics, Methodists, Seventh-day Adventists, and Mormons, to provide religious instruction in schools. Students who opt out must participate in a supervised study period.

<state.gov/documents/organization/281072.pdf>

Communities of Baha'is have played a significant role in development of the state's education. By 1963 the Baha'is had established a number of schools. The Ootan Marawa Baha'i Vocational Institute is the only teacher training institution for pre-school teachers in Kiribati. The Institute is open to everyone, regardless of religion. Baha'i Local Spiritual Assemblies also administer 5 pre-schools on Tarawa and the outer islands, accepting children of any religious background. The Elena Marsella Institute is a national permanent Baha'i training institute that develops human resources needed in the growth of faith.

<news.bahai.org/story/301>

Family, community and society

Predominantly, the people of Kiribati are classed as Roman Catholics (55.8%). A variety of Christian groups make up most of the rest of the population including some Mormons (4.7 %). There are Baha'is, (2.3%), a small number of Muslims (0.12%). "Nones" account for 0.5% of the Kiribati population according to the 2010 Census.

<mfed.gov.ki/sites/default/files/Census-Report-2010-Volume-1_3.pdf>

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

Conservative religious influence on society

The churches are socially influential and have been blamed for failing to curb the tradition of large families which led to overcrowding. However this attitude may now be changing in the face of huge social and practical problems caused by overpopulation.

<radionz.co.nz/international/programmes/datelinepacific/audio/2602062/unfpa-concern-over-kiribati-overpopulation>

Abortion is banned in all circumstances and the sentence for a woman who procures an abortion could be a life prison sentence. Homosexuality between men is criminalized as "Indecent practices between males". All anal sex is criminalized.

<hsph.harvard.edu/population/abortion/KIRIBATI.abo.htm>

No law specifically prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

<state.gov/documents/organization/277331.pdf>

Freedom of expression advocacy of humanist values

The constitution provides for freedom of conscience, expression, assembly, and association. These rights may be limited by law “which is reasonably required” in the interests of public defense, safety, order, morality, or health, or to protect the rights of others, however, they are generally respected by the government.

<freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/kiribati>

There were some concerns about the lack of local independent media and lack of transparency of the registration process for media organizations as most locally based news media is operated either by the government’s Broadcasting and Publications Authority or by a media company owned by a member of parliament.

<state.gov/documents/organization/277331.pdf>