

Palau

Palau, part of a former United Nations Trust territory, became independent in 1994. A population of 20,600 people inhabit an archipelago of volcanic and coral islands.

| Constitution and government | Education and children's rights | Family, community, society, religious courts and tribunals | Freedom of expression advocacy of humanist values |
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| | <u>There is state funding of at least some religious schools</u> | | |
| <u>Official symbolic deference to religion</u> | | | |
| | | <u>No religious tribunals of concern, secular groups operate freely, individuals are not persecuted by the state</u> | <u>No fundamental restrictions on freedom of expression or advocacy of humanist values</u> |

Legend

Constitution and government

The constitution preamble states that the people of Palau “venture in to the future with full reliance on our own efforts and the divine guidance of Almighty God.”

On April 13 2017, a National Day of Prayer was established, that “welcomes all expressions of religion, no matter of his or her choosing without reservation or reproach”. The celebration appears to preclude non-religious and it is reasonable to suggest that these forms of symbolic deference “welcoming” religion may be seen as “unwelcoming” to the non-religious.

However, the main text of the constitution hints at a somewhat more equitable approach, inclusive of “philosophical” convictions and “non-religious purposes”:

“The government shall take no action to deny or impair the freedom of conscience or of philosophical or religious belief of any person nor take any action to compel, prohibit or hinder the exercise of religion. The government shall not recognize or establish a national religion, but may provide assistance to private or parochial school on a fair and equitable basis for non-religious purposes.”

Government corruption and abuse are problems, with several high-ranking public officials having faced charges in recent years.

There are no reports of political or media freedoms being infringed.

Education and children's rights

Religious instruction in public schools is not permitted.

However, representatives of any religious group may request government financial support for private religious schools. The government provides funding for non-religious purposes to all the recognized private schools operated by Modekngei, Catholic, Evangelical, and Seventh-day Adventist groups, distributing \$902,000 in total throughout 2017.

<state.gov/documents/organization/281092.pdf>

Family, community and society

According to the 2015 national census, approximately 45 percent of the population is Catholic. Other religious groups include the Evangelical Church (26%), Seventh-day Adventists (7%), Modekngei (6%), an indigenous religious group, Muslims (3%) and Mormons (2%).

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

After a Human Rights Council resolution on 17 June 2011, which expressed concern for acts of violence and discrimination committed against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity, Palau promised to decriminalize homosexual acts. In 2014, President Tommy Remengesau signed a new Penal Code which does not contain provisions outlawing consensual sex between people of the same sex. However, there is no law that prohibits discrimination with respect to employment or occupation based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity, HIV-positive status, or other communicable diseases.

<scoop.co.nz/stories/WO1110/S00303/decriminalizing-homosexuality-step-to-genuine-legal-equality.htm>

Abortion is illegal under all circumstances.

There is widespread discrimination in employment, pay, housing, education, and access to social facilities against foreign workers, who amount to 30 percent of the population and 45 percent of the workforce. Crimes against non-Palauans are reportedly not pursued or persecuted by authorities with the same vigor as crimes against citizens.

Freedom of expression advocacy of humanist values

The law provides for freedom of expression, including freedom of the press, and the government generally respects these rights. The constitution also guarantees the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association, which are generally respected by the government.

<freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2013/palau>