

Campaign to repeal Ireland's blasphemy law launched

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The National Secular Society has backed a campaign to repeal Ireland's blasphemy law which is being launched this Sunday, ahead of the referendum on the subject in a month's time.

A variety of organisations will hold an [event](#) in Dublin on Sunday afternoon to launch the Campaign to Remove the Irish Blasphemy Law. The event, which will coincide with [International Blasphemy Rights Day](#), will feature a show of solidarity with victims of blasphemy laws around the world.

The groups supporting the campaign include Atheist Ireland, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community of Ireland, the International Humanist and Ethical Union and the International Campaign Against Blasphemy Laws.

Currently Article 40.6.1°.i of Ireland's constitution says it will be an offence to publish or utter "blasphemous matter". Last week the Irish parliament [voted](#) to hold a referendum on removing the word "blasphemous" from the article on Friday 26 October.

In a [post](#) on its website Atheist Ireland outlined a series of reasons to vote for the blasphemy law's repeal. These included that it would act as a statement of support for the right to free speech and the separation of church and state, encourage media objectivity on religious issues and undermine Islamist states which have cited Ireland's blasphemy law to justify their own.

NSS spokesperson Chris Sloggett welcomed the campaign's launch.

"Blasphemy laws are never justifiable and their existence undermines the right to free expression globally. Religious sensitivity is never a good enough reason to restrict the way other people think, speak or express themselves.

"A Yes vote on 26 October would strike a blow for the right to criticise and satirise religion everywhere. It would remind those in positions of power to stand in solidarity with free thinkers worldwide. And it would remind ordinary people of the value of speaking their minds without unnecessary self-censorship.

"We wish the sponsors of this campaign the best of luck in the busy month ahead."

International Blasphemy Rights Day was set up by the US-based Center for Inquiry in 2009. It commemorates the anniversary of Danish magazine Jyllands-Posten publishing cartoons featuring Muhammad, the Islamic prophet.

The day is designed to show solidarity with those who challenge oppressive laws and social prohibitions against free expression and to support the right to challenge prevailing religious beliefs without fear of violence, arrest, or persecution.

In 2005 some Muslims in several countries responded to the publication of the cartoons by violently protesting and rioting. Around 200 people are [estimated](#) to have died as a result. Several cartoonists faced death threats and went into hiding.

What the NSS stands for

The Secular Charter outlines 10 principles that guide us as we campaign for a secular democracy which safeguards all citizens' rights to freedom of and from religion.

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