

# Submission on List of Themes

## Racial Discrimination in Ireland

to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)  
for its Consideration of the Combined Fifth to Ninth Periodic Reports  
of Ireland (CERD/C/IRL/5-9), November 2019

Submitted by Atheist Ireland,  
the Evangelical Alliance of Ireland,  
and the Ahmadiyya Muslim  
Community of Ireland

## **1 Introduction**

Atheist Ireland, the Evangelical Alliance of Ireland, and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community of Ireland work together in a campaign for secularism and human rights. Despite our different world views, we agree that each person should be treated with respect, our right to hold our beliefs should be treated with respect, and States should treat us all equally before the law by remaining neutral between religious and nonreligious philosophical convictions.

As part of our work:

- We promote the fundamental human rights of freedom of conscience, religion and belief, equality before the law, and freedom from discrimination for all citizens.
- We promote these human rights within Irish society and political institutions, and at the United Nations and other international human rights regulatory bodies.

## **2. Suggestion for List of Themes**

We are asking you to include again on your list of themes for Ireland the issue of Non/multi-denominational education

CERD/C/IRL/CO/3-4 paragraph 26

Relevant paragraphs in the State party's report  
CERD/C/IRL/5-9 paragraph 135-157

We will be submitting a more detailed report on this for the main review.

## **3. Implementation of the Recommendations**

The State has not accelerated its efforts to establish alternative non-denominational or multi-denominational schools. There are no non-denominational schools, and there seems to be no prospect of any non-denominational schools being established. The policy of divesting a number of Catholic schools to other patron bodies has ground to a halt.

The State has amended the existing legislation that inhibits students from enrolling into a school because of their faith or belief, but it has only done so for Catholic schools. Also, even though they can no longer legally discriminate in access, these schools are still allowed to ask parents their religion because that part of the Act is not yet in operation.

The State has not encouraged diversity and tolerance of other faiths and beliefs in the education system by monitoring incidents of discrimination on the basis of belief. In fact, it encourages intolerance of non-faith families or families who seek a secular education for their children. It promotes moral education through religion, and does not support the right to opt out without discrimination from these courses.

## **4 Our Recommendations**

For the purposes of the Convention on the Elimination of Religious Discrimination, we ask you to focus on the intersectionality between religious and racial discrimination, particularly with regard to the impact on people moving to Ireland from other countries.

### **4.1 Patronage: multiple patronage and ethos leads to segregation and inequality**

The State should stop ceding control of almost all schools to private patron bodies, the vast majority of which have a self-interested religious prejudice while providing an essential public service.

#### **4.2 Access: the right to attend a local school without religious discrimination**

The right to discriminate in access on the ground of religion was removed for Catholic primary schools, but remains in place for minority faith schools. It is also in place for second level schools. All children should have access to their local school without religious discrimination.

#### **4.3 Curriculum: the right to a neutral education not a religious integrated curriculum**

Minorities should have the right to a neutral education, even in denominational schools, in the parts of the curriculum outside of the religious instruction classes from which they can opt out.

The right to opt out of religious instruction classes and worship in Irish schools must be vindicated in practice and not merely be a theoretical illusion.

Students who opt out of religious instruction classes (including classes that are called religious education classes) should be given an alternative timetabled subject.

#### **4.4 Teaching: the right of minorities to equal access to the teaching profession**

In order to get employment as a teacher in the majority of Primary schools, minorities should not be required to have the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies.

Minorities should not be obliged to actively support the Catholic ethos that is integrated into all subjects and the daily life of the school.

Section 37 of the Employment Equality Act no longer allows schools to discriminate against teachers on the grounds of sexuality, but they can and do still discriminate on the ground of religion. This should be further amended to rectify this.