

## SECULARISM, ITS A CIVIL METHODOLOGY

We call on people everywhere to stand with us to establish an international front against the religious-right and for secularism. We demand:

Secularism is not about religion or non-religion but about the way the state is structured. Secularism is not the presence or absence of religion.

Recognition that secularism is not violent opposition to religion but merely refusing to accept its truth claims in order to treat all religious and non-religious people the same. Secularism realises that to ignore religious revelations is refusing to accept them. Secularism cannot treat religion as anything other than just another organisation. That is the bottom line. It comes up against the doctrine of some religions that they are family communities of God or a magical or supernatural union of people. Religion often it based on the DENIAL that it is just a club.

Secularism calls for complete separation of religion from the state.

Recognition that secularism is a fundamental right - it is not a mere opinion or an option that it is okay to take up or not to.

Religion believes that civil disobedience to the state is sometimes acceptable on religious grounds thus it denies us the right of secularism.

Separation of religion from public policy, including the educational system, health care and scientific research.

Religion should have no privileges - for example, sex shops near churches should be allowed by the town councils because if grocery stores objected they would object in vain.

Abolition of religious laws in the family, civil and criminal codes.

An end to discrimination against and persecution of LGBT, religious minorities, women, freethinkers, ex-Muslims, and others.

Freedom of religion and atheism and freedom to criticise religions.

Religious belief as a private affair.

Equality between women and men, religious and non-religious, and citizenship rights for all.

This list came from free thought blogs with a few changes

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### Basics

Secularism is a government policy not to favour one religion - even the majority one - over another and not to favour religion over what is not religion (eg atheism, humanism etc). It is not inter-faith or inter-religion but inter-belief/non-belief.

Religion is remarkably easy to spot but very hard to define. Secularism may struggle to learn where religion begins and where religion ends. Some say it may need to try and know in order to take care that religion does not get privileges that non-religion doesn't have. Many argue that the state judging what is a religion and what isn't, opens the door for religious people to get favourable treatment under the law if the state regards them as comprising a real religion. Religions depend on theology and magic and superstition to determine who is a member for real and who is not. When members of one faith are recognised as a religion by the state and members of another are not, that is unfair and a violation of secularism. The solution is to forget about people's religious affiliation - simple. The state assessing what is a religion will drag the state into theology and superstition. Treat the bishop the same as the atheist beggar.

Secularism is not a religion. Some say that it denies that one can know what religious doctrines are true which they see as a religious truth-claim. But even if the secularist does believe a particular religion is true, it does not give him the right to

favour that religion in politics and discriminate against others. Secularism is definitely not a religion. It is a method.

Secularists believe that we should judge things as if there were no Gods or magical beings or magical powers for it is hard enough to implement laws that are beneficial without the added encumbrance of religious belief. The plan is to help equalise the rights of believers and non-believers and refuse to extend privileges to religion. When religion seeks the right to discriminate against people it is seeking undeserved religious privilege, not religious freedom though it pretends it is. Secularism is not just the removal of religious power from the state but also from power relations within the family, community and general society.

Secularism in certain countries may wish to keep religion from interfering with the government because the relevant religions have violent teachings or scriptures and many of their members easily resort to faith based violence. Some individual secularists believe religion is harmful to truth and human rights which is why it has to be ignored by the state if it wants the state to enforce religious laws. Some worry that secularism in general is refusing to confess that it fears religion.

Secularism is forced to recognise that not everybody's rights or perceived rights can be granted to them by the law. The law has to be selective for the greater good. Thus non-religious rights come first. If there is a choice between honouring a non-religious right and a religious one, honour the non-religious one. This is not unfair because religion is something you take on but don't have to. The notion that when different religions claim rights that contradict one another that the biggest religion should be given the rights as you cannot give them all the rights conflicts with secularism. Secularism is not directly anti-religious but it is anti-religious in its side effects. Though secularism aims to keep out of the affairs of religious institutions and orders religious institutions to keep out of public and state matters this balance is hard to create and sustain. If this happens it is better to err on the side of caution and favour secularism.

Secularism is based on the fact that the law should not criminalise victimless crimes (eg nobody should be fined for saying Jesus was just a flawed man like everybody else - Jesus may be dead and you cannot libel the dead).

Secularism is not based on the fact that there are many religions so we must be neutral for we cannot please them all. If inability to please everyone were what it is about, then we should simply say that secularism is about the fact that there are many different faiths and no two people believe exactly the same things. Secularism in fact that is true to itself will be neutral about religion EVEN IF THERE IS ONLY ONE RELIGION.

Secularism would still be with us and be the right stance even if there were only one religion. So secularism is intrinsically sceptical about religion. The law is teacher so when the law is secular it teaches secularism and opposes religion.

Religion and faith are not the same thing. Religion is outward allegiance while faith is private and only the person herself knows if she really believes. If the state starts enforcing laws along religious lines, the state is judging that those who demand this on the basis of their rights as religious persons are sincere. That is impossible most of the time. And what if people claim the right to murder on the basis that they allegedly sincerely believe God told them to? It is not for the state to assume or judge religious sincerity.

Only secularism can take care of rights - even it is not very good at it that it is not its fault. It would be worse otherwise. If the state may make stupid laws, then letting religion get involved will only make it worse. If the law is silly that is all the more reason for keeping religion out of it.

Religion is intrinsically opposed to real human rights. It only allows human rights in a religious context. In other words, the rights it gives and supports only look like rights. It tries to distort and oppose the one thing that can deliver on human rights: secularism. It is akin to saying that you don't believe in justice but people have a right to their food. It is the appearance of believing in rights. And it is a false appearance.