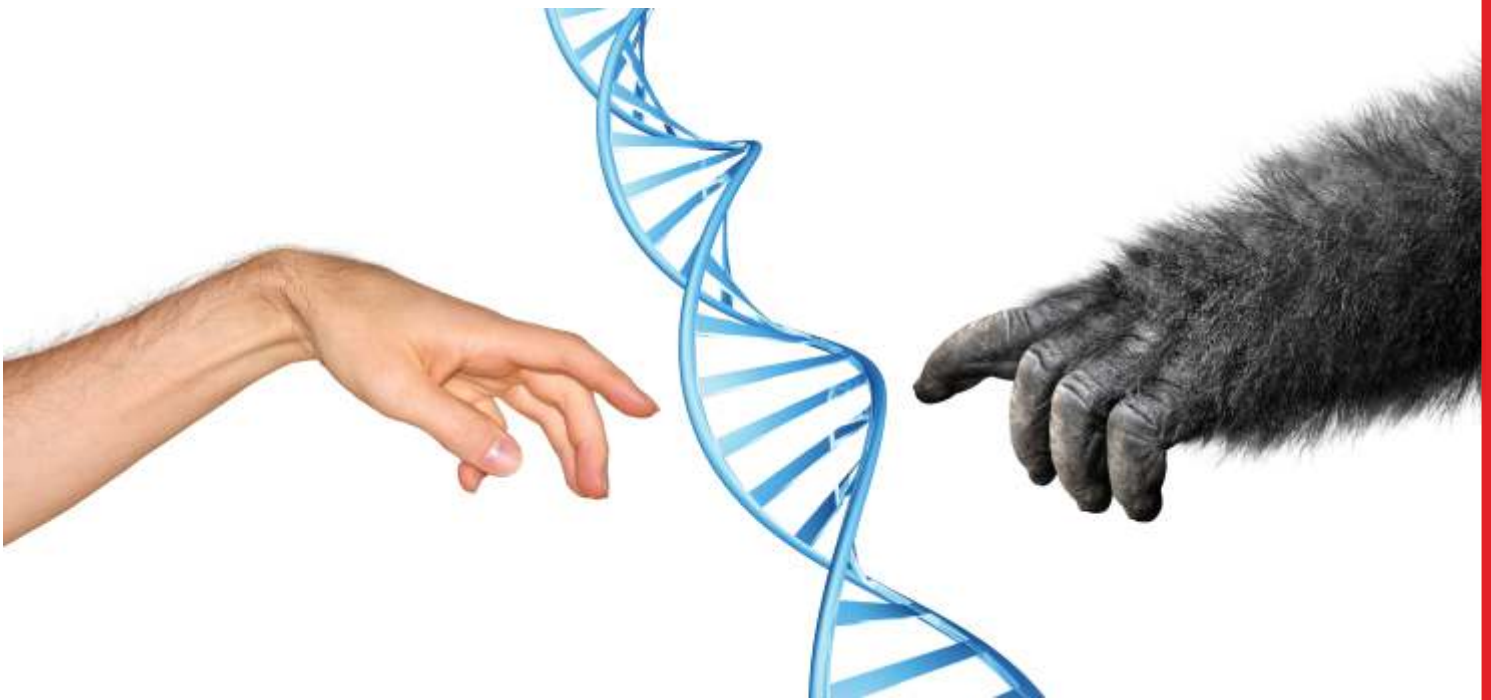


secularworld

A Positive Voice for Atheism

First Quarter: 2016



In this edition:

- * Resurrection of Insurgency and Terrorism in Sikhs
- * The Challenge of Atheism in Contemporary Zimbabwe
- * The Will of God: Pure Fiction
- * Secularism – a Challenge to Men
- * Bangladesh: the Killing Field

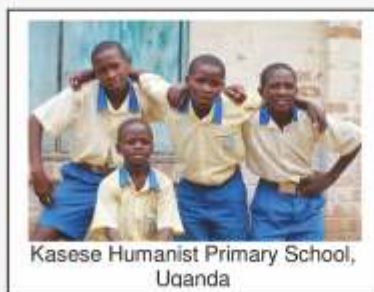


If Atheists Speak But No One Notices, Are We Making A Difference?

It's not enough to simply espouse a naturalist view based on science and reason. The **AAI Foundation**, an internal program of Atheist Alliance International, supports educational and community improvement projects - including through international exchanges - and advocates on behalf of atheists facing discrimination around the world, particularly in developing countries.

The AAI Foundation sponsors and supports a number of activities around the world:

Humanist Schools in Africa and Asia.



Kasese Humanist Primary School,
Uganda



Escuela Moderna Kerewan
Kindergarten, The Gambia



Cambodian Children's Trust
(Cambodia)

AAI has been an active sponsor of humanist and secular schools in countries where religious organizations control the majority of educational institutions. AAI and its partners provide a secular alternative to focus on critical thinking, science and reason in a naturalistic and nontheistic worldview. **Since 2009, these schools have served over 1,200 children.**

Legal assistance and family support for atheist discrimination and oppression.



Alexander Aan is an Indonesian man who was attacked by his neighbors, fired from his government job, and then arrested by the Indonesian police and convicted with a 3-year prison sentence for 'inciting religious hatred' after posting 'God does not exist' on his personal Facebook page. AAI covered Alexander's legal costs and provided family support while working with local human-rights groups to campaign for his release, for a change in Indonesian law and to fundraise to assist with his family's ongoing expenses while Alexander, the family breadwinner, languished in prison.

Relief assistance to countries and regions devastated by natural or man-made disasters.



2010 Haitian Earthquake

Since 2010, AAI has organized relief efforts with our affiliate groups and raised thousands of dollars for natural disasters that have befallen communities around the world. Per Robert Ingersoll: "Hands that help are better than hands that pray."



2013 Typhoon Haiyan

Overseas social work project sponsorships

Scholarships for the next generation of humanist leaders in indigent countries



The AAI Foundation exists to improve the quality of life for communities through the application of critical thinking, science and reason. It is through your support that this important work continues.

www.AtheistAlliance.org/Activities/AAI-Foundation

secularworld

A Positive Voice For Global Atheism

First Quarter : 2016

In this issue...

Letter from the President by Christine M. Shellska	2
Letter from the Editor by Rustam Singh	6
Leaving Sikhs High and Dry for the Resurrection of Insurgency and Terrorism by Rustam Singh	8
The Challenge of Atheism in Contemporary Zimbabwe by Leo Igwe	14
The Will of God: Pure Fiction by David Rand	16
Secularism – A Challenge to Men by Elida Radig	22
Bangladesh: the Killing Field by Mohsin Siddique	24



ATHEIST
ALLIANCE
INTERNATIONAL

FOR A SECULAR WORLD

Letter from the President

CHRISTINE M. SHELLSKA

Welcome to this edition of *Secular World* magazine. We are currently putting together a year-end fundraiser, which gave me pause to contemplate the successes AAI has enjoyed in 2015. Among the highlights include exercising our UN Special Consultative status by attending four meetings in New York and Geneva. At the 53rd Session of the Commission for Social Development, we presented an oral statement condemning blasphemy laws, female genital mutilation, and inequality of LGBTQ youth, and we advocated for secular education and health care. With the help of some of our organizational members and partners, we helped individuals accused of blasphemy and apostasy who face cruel and inhumane punishment, torture, and/or the threat of death, to seek asylum, two of whom did so successfully. We have campaigned, both independently and in partnership, to advocate for the rights of those accused of blasphemy and apostasy, by engaging the UNHCR and national government bodies, like Canada's Office of Religious Freedom, as well as the newly-elected Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau.

In conjunction with the Humanist Association for Equity, Leadership and Accountability (HALEA), we launched the "Stand Up for Reason" project to challenge superstitious beliefs in "witchcraft" in Uganda, and when HALEA's offices were vandalized, we contributed \$1,000 to help them replace over \$12,000 of stolen office equipment. We continued to support the Kasese Humanist Primary School in Uganda, and we awarded a scholarship to Grace Kakyro, a 19-year-old HIV-positive single mother of two based in the Kagugube slum in Kampala, Uganda.

We also continued to host AtheistCensus.com (if you haven't yet participated, please take a moment to do so), and we supported and/or attended conferences and events



in Canada, England, Germany, the Philippines, Poland, and the US. The latest one I attended was the Alberta Secular Conference, hosted by President Karen Lumley Kerr and the Society of Edmonton Atheists (SEA), held in Red Deer, Canada. The line-up included several of our local talent, including Nate Phelps (who co-organized the event), as well as international speakers, including Ali Rizvi, Shelley Segal, and keynote Matt Dillahunty. Board Members attending included Gail Miller, our Treasurer, and Sam Khangyi, *Secular World* Representative. Together, we delivered a 15-minute talk, outlining AAI's projects, focusing on our work defending atheist and secular asylum-seekers, and challenging blasphemy and apostasy laws globally. This was an excellent, well-attended, informative conference, and planning is already underway for another to be held next year. Thank you to everyone who dropped by our table to learn more about AAI, or just to say hello – and to those who became members, donated, purchased items, and/or participated in our silent auction (generously supported with donations of signed books by Richard Dawkins and Lawrence Krauss, and unique pieces by local artisan N. A. Niles of CuervoCuero Crafts), thank you for supporting our

work. We hope to see you again at the 2016 conference!

AAI has been working toward our mission of challenging and confronting religious faith, strengthening global atheism by promoting the growth and interaction of atheist/free thought organisations around the world, and undertaking international educational and advocacy projects. We rely on the tireless efforts of our Board of Directors, our staff (Social Media Coordinator Ahura and Editor Rustam Singh), and our many volunteers, and I extend my heartfelt gratitude for their commitment to AAI in 2015. We also rely on our membership and donors to fund our activities. Thank you for your kind support, and I hope you will consider contributing generously to our year-end fundraiser if you are in a position to do so. Together, we can realize AAI's vision of creating a secular world where public policy, scientific inquiry and education are not influenced by religious beliefs, but based upon sound reasoning, rationality and evidence.

Our efforts are more important than ever. The rise of religious fundamentalism continues to increase as we witness acts of terrorism around the globe. A recent *New York Times* article identifies 55 Islamic State "inspired and coordinated" terrorist attacks worldwide committed in 2015 alone. The most recent (at the time of writing) was on December 2, when 14 were killed at a facility providing services to disabled people in San Bernardino, California by an Islamic-inspired couple. And headlines raged when, on November 13, in Paris, France, a coordinated attack on the Stade de France, several bars and restaurants, and the Bataclan concert hall, left 130 dead and hundreds injured. Only days ago, the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) released *The Freedom of Thought Report 2015*, stating that their "findings show that the overwhelming majority of countries fail to respect the rights of humanists, atheist and the non-religious" (p. 12), and that over the past year, "the trajectory from rhetoric, to callous violence and harsh injustice, is painfully clear. In several states there has been a slide into extrajudicial violence by non-state actors, and we record several states handing down an increasing number of more severe penalties, including imprisonment for crimes such as 'insult to religion,' and death for 'apostasy'" (Bob Churchill, Editor, pg. 17).

I wanted to end the year on a happier note, by congratulating Raif Badawi, his wife Ensaf Haidar, and their children for the November 28 announcement by Swiss Secretary of Foreign Affairs Yves Rossier that Raif was to receive a royal pardon from king Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud, but then I learned that Raif has been on a hunger strike

KASESE HUMANIST PRIMARY SCHOOL

- A Project of the AAI Foundation -



<http://kasesehumanistschool.webs.com/>

Located in rural East Uganda, the Kasese School has been supported by AAI since 2008 and has provided a secular education based in science and reason for over 3,000 students.

90% of the schooling in Uganda is provided by religious organizations. The Kasese Humanist Primary School is unique in providing a Humanist education.

Your support allows us to underwrite the costs of schooling for rural students, including books, teachers, meals, and dorm rooms!



Thank you again for your ongoing support!



**ATHEIST
ALLIANCE
INTERNATIONAL**
FOR A SECULAR WORLD

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

since December 10, having been transferred to an isolated prison. According to RaifBadawi.org, "The prison administration has transferred Raif to the notorious 'Shabbat Central', located in a deserted and isolated area – around 87 km from Jeddah City. This prison is designed for prisoners whose verdicts have been confirmed with a final Adjudication. The Saudi government has repeatedly declared that Raif's case is under review and is yet to be decided by the Supreme Court."

These frightening and alarming events remind us that AAI's work is only beginning, and we need your help to ensure it continues. To those AAI members who receive *Secular World* magazine in a plain envelope for fear of being exposed as a blasphemer or an apostate, who ask that those of us who enjoy freedom of speech continue to adamantly advocate on their behalf, or who broaden our understanding of closed societies through their own works or by translating the works of others, I hope you take some small comfort in knowing you have allies, including AAI, its individual and organizational members, and our partners.

I wish to extend my deepest hopes to Raif Badawi, Ensaf Haidar, and their children, Terad, Najwa and Miriam, for a

pardon and Raif's immediate release from Saudi Arabia, to the safety of Canada and to the love of his family. And I wish to express my sincerest condolences to the families and loved ones of the many victims of terrorist acts committed in 2015. We stand in solidarity with you.

Whether you are celebrating Newtonmas, erecting a Festivus pole, or drinking white wine in the sun, I wish and yours a safe and happy holiday season filled with peace and love, and all the best in 2016.

References:

Yourish, K., Watkins, D., and Giratikanon, T. (last updated on December 7, 2015). Recent attacks demonstrate Islamic State's ability to both inspire and coordinate terror. The New York Times. Retrieved from www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/06/17/world/middle-east/map-isis-attacks-around-the-world.html? r=0. International Humanist and Ethical Union (2015). The freedom of thought report. Retrieved from <http://iheu.org/freedom-of-thought-report-2015/>. BBC News (December 9, 2015). Paris attacks: What happened on the night. Retrieved from www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34818994. Raif Badawi's website: www.raifbadawi.org ▲

secularworld

EDITOR

Rustam Singh (India)

DESIGN AND LAYOUT

Rustam Singh (India)

General Questions or Comments
SecularWorld@atheistalliance.org

Article Submissions & Advertising
secularworld@atheistalliance.org
atheistalliance.org/secular-world/submission-guidelines
atheistalliance.org/secular-world/advertising-rates

Atheist Alliance International Board OFFICERS

Christine M. Shellska (Canada), President
Gail Miller, Treasurer
John Hamill, Secretary
Stuart Bechman, Membership Director
Andrew Rawlings, Volunteer Coordinator
Szemir "Sam" Khangyi, Secular World Liaison
René Hartmann, Web/ SM

OTHER DIRECTORS

Carlos Alfredo Diaz
Richard Honess
Elida Radig
Karl Karnadi
Kato Mukasa
Dr. Tess Termulo

© 2016 Secular World Magazine. All rights reserved. Neither this publication nor any part of it may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means mechanical, electronic, recording, photocopying, or any other method currently available or to be developed in the future, without the prior permission of Atheist Alliance International.

Become a Supporting Member of Atheist Alliance International

Supporting AAI means promoting naturalism science and reason while challenging and confronting religious privilege and discrimination against atheists and religious minorities around the world.

AAI's projects include **funding new groups** and **conferences**, **school** and **social service projects**, bringing attention to **religious discrimination**, as well as **legal** and **asylum support** for those targeted by religious bigots.

AAI operates entirely through the support of our members. Even more, if you live in the US, your donation to AAI is fully tax-deductible.

AAI members are also invited to directly participate in projects supported by AAI around the world, whether it be teaching or assisting a primary school class, participating in a speaking tour on atheism & humanism, or working with one of our affiliate groups to improve the local quality of life.

Your monthly contribution helps AAI sustain and expand our programs. Join our team and know that you are making a difference in challenging religion and expanding freethought around the world!

All members receive members-only access to the AAI website | Freethought Audio Library e-version of *Secular World* magazine(printed copy at additional charge) | *Imagine!* quarterly newsletter

Monthly memberships include a printed copy of *Secular World* magazine

Thanks for your support! Together, we'll create a sane and rational world!



FOR A SECULAR WORLD



atheistalliance.org

Letter from the Editor

RUSTAM SINGH

Constitutionally speaking, India is a religiously neutral democratic nation, and the largest one on the planet at that. By rights guaranteed in the law book, expressing dissent to popular religious, cultural and political discourse is not only allowed, but should also be celebrated as the freedom fighters that laid down their lives to see a future of the nation rise to what it theoretically is today exercised against the British. However, saffronization today (the mainstream implementation of right-wing Hindu nationalists) has reached such visible levels that the mere mention of events as they are, completely without bias, attracts the wrath of strong supporters of nationalism.

Even an alarmingly high number of scientists, filmmakers and literary scholars, some of the best talents the nation has, returning their national awards as a form of peaceful protest, did not stand as a call for the ruling party in power to amend the growing fear in the minds of the masses. As history demonstrates, mob lynchings, shootings and the mysterious deaths of rationalists happen in broad day light under similar circumstances and no one ever gets caught, such rationalist Dr. Narendra Dabholkar in August 2013, Govind Pansare in February 2015 for his views on prompting inter-caste marriages and against irrational rituals promoted by religion or M M Kalburgi vice chancellor of Kannada University in August 2015 for his outspoken views against idol worship in Hinduism.



Those that put a stone over their hearts in returning their national awards, which they spend years and in some cases decades to earn, faced an even bigger backlash by supporters of the ruling party in power. Allegations of their protests being actually just support for the opposition were very common, but apologists got creative this time and accused them to be agents of Pakistan, comparing their inaction when similar tragedies occurred against Hindus and made personalized attacks demanding them to move out to an Islamic nation – forgetting India is not a religious nation by the constitution and never has been one. I believe comparing tragedies not just demoralizes all those affected, but also makes us insensitive to their plight. Take for example the actions of Facebook installing filters of the attacks in France: many apologists complained why similar action was never taken for Syria or Gaza. Those that returned their awards were compared to other racist or anti-



REPRESENTING ATHEISTS INTERNATIONALLY

AAI has consultative status with the United Nations Human Rights Council and the Council of Europe's Commission on Human Rights— and will soon hold similar status with the African Commission on Human and People's Rights!

www.AtheistAlliance.org



secular moves by previous governments, and questioned why they didn't start a similar movement when the previous political party was in power. Body counts of victims of Boko Haram in Africa were compared in the media giving more coverage to attacks on western nations with lesser casualties. While in most cases such claims are valid and make a fair point, let us not compare sadness, for then it will have no end. Striving for an all-inclusive society, even taking baby steps to do so, should be encouraged rather than just compared and criticized for their lack of attention to other socio-religious problems.

Those of us that are privileged enough to be in a nation that allows us to freely criticize the popular opinion and the barbarity in other nations, communities or religions should feel morally obligated to utilize their right to do so. While for the rest of us, including me, that are prohibited legally or socially and risk losing their lives to merely using their universal right of free speech and expression look up for support and encouragement from those that dared to do so, even from a virtual name living thousands of miles away. We follow a dream of a world where such criticism gets atleast some attention, if not equally as much as complete trash talk by religious cults on dedicated TV channels or entire pages in mainstream newspapers written just to remind the population how helpless they are without the spiritual support of an all-powerful God. In Punjab, India, my hometown, recently the police have said to be tracking social networking websites for any criticism of the current state of discontent followed by frequent protests. This is shocking because any third party observer can easily see that a death row criminal who takes pride in assisting to blow up the ex-Chief Minister of a state should by all logical sense not become head of the clergy to Sikhs. However, if the voices of humanists, rationalists or even those believers that do not support such a move are gagged, history marks such actions as having full public support, which is frightening as well as incorrect.

In this edition of the Secular World magazine, we've shared the impact of fundamentalism getting mainstream approval in Sikhism, the challenge of atheism in Zimbabwe, a talk on how God is not the source of morality in humans because atheists can have much greater morals, how decades of religion make secularism a patriarchal challenge for men and the current scenario of alleged state supported killings of atheists in Bangladesh.

Like always, I look forward in hearing your feedback to provide more relevant articles in future editions.

Thank you.▲

BECOME A SUPPORTING MEMBER OF ATHEIST ALLIANCE INTERNATIONAL!

Supporting AAI means promoting naturalism, science and reason while challenging and confronting religious privilege and discrimination against atheists and religious minorities around the world.

AAI's projects include funding new groups and conferences, school and social service projects, bringing attention to religious discrimination, as well as legal and asylum support for those targeted by religious bigots.

AAI operates entirely through the support of our members. Even more, if you live in the US, your donation to AAI is fully tax-deductible.

AAI members are also invited to directly participate in projects supported by AAI around the world, whether it be teaching or assisting a primary school class, participating in a speaking tour on atheism & humanism, or working with one of our affiliate groups to improve the local quality of life.

Your monthly contribution helps AAI sustain and expand our programs. Join our team and know that you are making a difference in challenging religion and expanding freethought around the world!



ATHEIST
ALLIANCE
INTERNATIONAL

Leaving Sikhs High and Dry for the Resurrection of Insurgency and Terrorism

RUSTAM SINGH

Few Sikhs across the globe, especially so in India, would say that they weren't directly affected by the militancy in India during 1984. Decades later, as the wounds begin healing, there appears to be a rise of insurgency in Punjab, a movement that could destabilize not just the political secularism of the state but also tarnish the image of Sikhs for the world to behold.

Unless you work at airport security and insist on pulling me out of line for a "random" extended security check, it would be easy to recognize my family's religion from my surname and not confuse it for Islam. I of course long ago abandoned the faith and am a proud atheist, but as an ex-Sikh and having spent more than a decade blindly following the tenets in absolute conviction, I hope I am granted some form of immunity from my radical readers when I comment on the horror that has besieged the community recently.

But first, we must give the devil the fair share of his due. If we exclude cults altogether, Sikhism is India's most recent religion, having been founded in the 15th century. It took almost a full decade for the formal religious practices to become established,

which were altered and modified during the birth and life of the ten founding fathers. Given the timeline of the religion, backed with historical third party accounts, aligning religious dates with secular history as well, (ignoring the stories of beheaded men fighting with their skulls in their hands or boulders being stopped by the palm of a hand and other common sense defying miracles), the religion was logically adopted on theoretical principles which made sense during that era. The fundamentals of the religion were not only fiercely in opposition to the social evils that were accepted as the norm during those times, but also violently rejected through centuries of bloodshed, persecution and selective discrimination. The caste system that had plagued the subcontinent was aggressively preached against, Sati (an ancient social practice for the wife of a departed husband to be burnt alive on the pyre of her husband) was condemned, untouchability was combated by the early Gurus introducing community kitchens where the socially outcast, destitute, homeless and poor sat at par with the royalty and the noble class being served fresh free food made by volunteers in a humble setting with no special privileges given to anyone for his/her wealth or social background. Rejecting female infanticide, veiling of women, circumcision of men, idol worship, fear of supernatural spirits and ghosts in all their creative forms were all essentially very taboo concepts but were still opposed by



Propaganda posters like this calling for the independent Sikh State of Khalistan are common in foreign nations (Victoria Square, Birmingham)

Source: www.flickr.com/photos/ell-r-brown/15685363215/in/photostream/

Sikhism. Of course, like every religion, regardless of its original concepts, the voices of the fundamentalists gradually and steadily grew to impose their conservative viewpoints on their holy book's translations and interpretations, which created an imaginary and punishing moral code worlds away from what the first founding Guru had established

Modern Sikhism has not just failed in its foundational first principle (equality for all), but also transformed into militaristic and terrorist forms. Today caste system still exists, but in different forms, low castes have been established and stigmatized against socially, economically and politically, but are also hidden from the public eye. Sati may be almost entirely relegated to history today. But forced marriages of women – even those born to the highest Sikh clerics and richest families - still occur, as do so-called “honor killings” for those daughters who dare to defy their family's demands. Even the community kitchen, traditionally called the langar, provides a difference in the quality and choice of food options across Gurudwaras and VIP privilege in queues always kicks in, given that donations vary from rural to urban societies and that humans ultimately look after an alleged God's work. Female infanticide is hushed and women are told to dress conservatively, and headscarves have replaced veils in the conservative women. Idol worship is now replaced by photographic, artistic creations and catchy slogans and pictures of the Gurus instead of following a crystal clear line from the holy book to not do so and only worship the holy book itself, not its authors or protagonist characters. Irrationality and superstitions are almost religiously followed, and not just in rural households but for a significantly large chunk of the urban believers as well. Discrimination, non-scientific temperament and prejudices are today veiled and have metamorphosed forms without being completely eliminated. Ironically, prohibiting these vices was the primary differentiating factor of Sikhism from all other religions during the time of its formation. The advantages of being (probably) India's most modern mainstream religion have failed to live up to the hopes, ideals and promises of its founders.

Let's take a look historically and try to pin-point where things exactly went wrong. After centuries long bloody battles with Muslim rulers, the post-independence Sikhs faced a new form of enemy. Still trying to reconnect different cultures and traditions in the newly established democratic nation, Hindi was declared the national language in the state of Punjab, and therefore given a higher priority in all matters political and bureaucratic, including educational institutions. In December 1953, the States Reorganisation Commission, after two years of research, recommended

establishing 16 states in India. In Punjab, the leading political party at the time, Shiromani Akali Dal, thought to cash in on the sentiments of the disconnected population to insist on establishing a Punjabi speaking state, or a “Punjabi Suba”. The government was aware of the statistics: a majority of the Punjabi speaking population were Sikhs, while the majority of Hindus in the province spoke Hindi. The resulting division would in fact lead to a religious divide, but the leaders stressed the move to be solely based on the need to preserve the Punjabi language. The leaders fuelled the masses' protests for their own political reasons with demonstrations lasting for years until September 1966 when the central government accepted the demand via the Punjab Reorganization Act and separated out the state of Haryana from the southern part of Punjab that spoke Hindi with a Harayanvi dialect. The Pahari dialect majority were shifted to form Himachal Pradesh, and in the middle, Chandigarh would eventually become a Union territory struggling to maintain its secular and politically and religiously neutral status while fending off attempts to be included as a part of both Haryana and Punjab. The act also created a conflict over water – Punjab had to share the three major rivers running through its land with the newly formed states, and many Sikhs felt this was unfair to the agricultural state. In 1973, the Akali Dal political party proposed a document titled the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, which essentially aimed to preserve Sikhism and form a distinct Sikh identity in the state, baptizing Sikhs on a massive scale and giving rise to newer employment opportunities.

Then came the Green Revolution, transforming both the physical and cultural landscape in Punjab. Greater yields in agriculture meant more money flowing in, but the revolutionary practices in agriculture also meant the occupational difference between Hindus and Sikhs were heightened even more. Most Sikhs were rural farmers while Hindus were involved in urban retail and manufacturing. With mechanized agricultural techniques now involving significantly lesser manpower, unemployment soared and gave rise to a burgeoning population that could not be absorbed into the industrial revolution because of the high risk status Punjab experienced from its shared border with Pakistan. The land plots started decreasing in size from one generation to another, and those that weren't tempted into the prospect of selling their solid assets for liquid cash in hand were left witnessing their counterparts live a luxurious lifestyle while they remained idle, jobless, and in the prime of their youth. The semi-porous border also brought Punjab into the Golden Crescent of the opium. The rich soil, favourable climate, political instability, Pakistan's proxy war against India and Taliban funded opium began leaking into Punjab, and the dirt cheap prices made sure the jobless

youth quickly became addicts. According to some surveys, a whopping 70% of the population today is hooked to at least one drug in the state. A once holy community that literally translates to the word “pure” in Punjabi, is now shooting intravenous heroin or its cheaper adulterant called smack, abusing prescription medicines so strong they were originally manufactured to revive cattle, or chugging alcohol at alarming levels to the point of self-destruction. The potent cocktail of unemployment and cheap drugs gave an intoxicative stupor of isolation and despair. This gave rise to scapegoating and eventually led to extremists seeking to religiously instigate and divide the population.

Enter Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale in the 1970's, a cult leader and usually a name today reserved as a litmus test of Sikh's moderate or radical views. As the leader of the Damdami Taksal (a Sikh religious group), Bhindranwale rose to popularity visiting village after village as a missionary asking people to live according to the “true” rules and tenets of Sikhism, especially youth, giving up the vices of drugs and alcohol and not cutting their hair (as is prohibited in Sikhism). This was until the Anandpur Sahib Resolution document, forgotten during the period of economic turmoil was again in the memory of people in the early 1980's with the launch of Dharam Yudh Morcha. A massive protest witnessed tens of thousands of Sikhs reaching the streets to protest promoting the document. Bhinderawale was not supported by the political party Akali Dal at this point, but with his presence in the protest, he gained mainstream political support on top of the high populist support he

already enjoyed. Thousands of Sikhs who viewed the resolution as an insult to national sovereignty were arrested and hundreds killed in the brutal crackdown by the central government. This crackdown made Sikhs feel more isolated from the central government, and rising crime and terrorist activities in the state were met with stricter scrutiny and harassment by the police force – spinning the cycle of hatred and alienation further. Among the prominent leaders assassinated during this time was Nirankari baba, a religious head, and the editor of a widely circulated paper in which he had campaigned against Punjabi being adopted as a medium of instruction in Hindu schools, for which Bhinderawale was arrested for almost 25 days. The release for lack of evidence immediately made Bhinderawale a hero among the youth.

I'll skip the detailed political reasons for the protests that followed, but skimming through the details, different groups followed different forms of protests in the following months. Some adopted massive campaigns of civil disobedience, while Bhinderawale armed himself with an open-carry revolver and encouraged his followers to do the same. In December 1983, finding himself under threat with a lot of close associates being arrested, Bhinderawale used his connections to shift his base to Harmandir Sahib, or the Golden Temple, the holiest Sikh shrine in Amritsar and fortified the temple complex with heavy machine guns and sophisticated self-loading rifles. This move was widely known even to the locals as well as the police, but having established themselves as being above the law, the police



Posters in Richmond, Virginia, USA, promoting Sikh extremism
Source: www.flickr.com/photos/regnatarajan/7952767158/in/photolist-d7L1B9-Bn56mC

refused to take any action. On June 3 1984, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi initiated Operation Blue Star, which involved the army bringing anti-tank machine guns, heavily armoured vehicles and actual tanks storming into the holiest shrine for Sikhs, shooting everyone on sight and resulting in an almost 24 hour long gun battle. The Gurudwara was heavily damaged, and Bhinderawale was killed along with hundreds if not thousands of innocent Sikhs praying peacefully. Water and electricity supplies to a large radius around the area were cut off, the press was gagged and the army enforced a local curfew. This move would later trigger the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her own two Sikh bodyguards in October 1984, leading to the infamous anti-Sikh riots. Thousands of Sikhs were isolated from their communities, doused in kerosene and burned alive in the streets, women were raped. Armed mobs targeted Sikhs who were easily recognized by their distinctive turbans and full beards, hacked them to death and burned down their establishments. Many Sikhs suspected state involvement, which was later supported by several foreign investigation agencies. Political leaders were accused of providing arms and ammunition, kerosene, and even cash rewards for every Sikh slaughtered, calling "blood for blood". No political leader suspected of encouraging and aiding the mobs has been arrested or brought to trial, let alone sentenced for their involvement. However, by any liberal or conservative definition of the term, Bhinderawale was not just a heavily armed terrorist, but a selfish human being in general. Had he truly been the saviour he claimed to be of the Sikh faith, he would have proudly battled legally and peacefully and continued his struggle from prison. He would not have taken the cowardly decision to take shelter in the holy Golden Temple, where his presence made sure the army had to inflict irreparable wounds on the entire community.

It would later take decades of strong shoot-on-sight orders and several falsified encounters by the police to completely

suppress state terrorism, but the scars of 1984 left an indelible mark in every Sikh's life. Several Sikhs that settled abroad, particularly in Canada now protected by their new host country's liberal laws, openly promoted the concept of forming an independent Sikh state, Khalistan, a move which continues to simmer even to date. In 1985, Air India Flight 182 en route to Canada was blown up mid-flight by Sikh extremists, causing one of the biggest aviation tragedies before 9/11. Dozens of high profile police officers were assassinated in the following years in India as well.

For the most visible part, Sikh extremists were either killed, arrested, or too scared to be vocal or represent their extremist views in the 1990's. The move for Khalistan had mostly been confined to bumper stickers on cars, revolutionary songs, the older generations' word of mouth and viral videos on the Internet. That was until 1995, when the peaceful city of Chandigarh witnessed the assassination of Beant Singh, the then chief Minister of Punjab along with 17 others, from suicide bombers of known Khalistani associations, citing reasons of gross human rights violations perpetuated by the chief minister during the crackdown of the 1980's. Two other backup bombers, Jagtar Singh Hawara and Balwant Singh Rajoana, were arrested on the spot, showed no remorse during the years of their trial. Both individuals are now on death row but rose to ranks of heroes by all mainstream Sikh establishments for their cowardly act.

Political tensions have recently risen again in Punjab, with a few pages of the holy book Guru Granth Sahib being torn and angry mobs storming the streets calling for a curfew and execution of the alleged blasphemous convicts. In the protests that followed, two unarmed youth were killed among the police and dozens were injured, but the priority of the masses seem to be confined only to the blasphemous act and not on the police brutality. Again cashing in on the situation, on 10th November 2015, radical leaders of the Akalai Dal and United Akali Dal called for a Sarbat Khalsa

Know of atheist discrimination? Oppression against nontheists? Atheist Alliance International

The Freedom of Thought Report

A Global Report on Discrimination Against Humanists, Atheists and the Nonreligious



www.FreeThoughtReport.com

meeting, a religious gathering of all Sikhs. Historically, all Sarbat Khalsa meetings were held at the Akal Takhat, or The Throne of the Immortal, and the highest political institution of the Sikhs. The Akal Takhat is physically a building inside the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the holiest place for Sikhs, where the Gurus demanded all spiritual and temporal concerns should be acted upon, and the very same building that was partially destroyed in Operation Bluestar. Different scholars believe only the Akal Takht can call for a Sarbat Khalsa meeting, but others believe a majority of Sikhs can do so.

This Sarbat Khala meeting, attended by thousands of people, passed 13 resolutions challenging the power of the Akal Takht and the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, a statutory body comprising of elected representatives of the Sikhs concerned primarily with the management of sacred Sikh shrines under its control within the territorial limits of Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and the Union territory of Chandigarh. But it also announced a frightening move – appointing Jagtar Singh Hawara as a Jathedhar of Akal Takht, or the leader of the clergy of the highest power in Sikhs. So presently, a death row criminal, two time convicted murderer, a criminal that escaped from maximum security prison via digging a hundred feet long tunnel while still on death row, is the leader of all Sikh clergy. Naturally, political leaders have protested the move that seriously jeopardizes their political stronghold. However the political and social ramifications of this move extend much further.

To a lot of radicals and fundamentalists, Hawara is rising to the status of Bhinderawale as the new face that'll "save the Sikh culture and religion" through any means necessary. The government responded with threats against anyone supporting the move on social media to be tracked down and face legal troubles. There are hunger strikes and massive petitions filed demand to the release of these individuals, which again, by any definition of the word, are essentially terrorists. This isn't America, so guns have never offered any solution to our problems here. A nation founded on peaceful demonstrations can only solve its problems by advocating defiance, but peacefully, for the authorities as well as public support, using logic, which both Rajoana and Hawara have miserably failed to demonstrate.

It is vital for moderate Sikhs and unbiased reporters to counter such violence acts via peaceful means and remind the population that Sikhs and the state of Punjab remain within the sovereign and legal jurisdiction of the nation. A chain of politically motivated events could once again resurrect violent means for a radical cause, which again

AAI LEGAL / SUPPORT FUND

- A Project of the AAI Foundation -

There are places in the world where being "out" as an atheist – or, for that matter, even expressing open doubt about the dominant religious



Alexander Aan, Indonesia

faith – makes you a target of violence and incarceration.

AAI receives pleas from atheists and skeptics every month seeking protection and asylum assistance and who have few other



Raef Badawi, Egypt

places to turn. While we collect information and report on these cases to international human rights groups, AAI also extends



Ghazi Beji, Tunisia

help as it can through its affiliate groups. Our legal support fund provides legal assistance to those



Rimsha Masih, Pakistan

arrested and asylum support to those seeking to find safer sanctuary.

The demand for such services far exceeds our resources and



Hilath Rasheed Kaashidho

rely solely on contributions from our supporters. Please consider contributing to the AAI Legal / Support Fund, a project of the AAI Foundation, to continue to provide help to those in need.



ATHEIST ALLIANCE INTERNATIONAL

FOR A SECULAR WORLD

starts the vicious cycle of destruction, alienation and call for arms in the state. Instead, perhaps if the radicals were truly as actively interested to preserve the purity of Sikh traditions, culture and religion, state funded rehabilitation clinics, education and crackdown on easy distribution of narcotics could help much more than shooting down leaders. Rather than launching a 'war on drugs' that harasses and imprisons helpless consumers, or calling for prayers and isolating and stigmatizing the victims of drug abuse, heroin and prescription medicines should be targeted as the enemy and addressed using scientifically proven methods of detoxing and preventing drug relapse. Addiction should be treated just like any other disease, and its victims treated as patients, not criminals.

If the crisis continues, another generation of youth will be lost, not just to police brutality or state funded violence, but to crippling clouds of joblessness and hard drugs. State prisons are overcrowded with petty drug consumers leaving

law enforcement little time, energy and resources to counter gang violence, crimes against women and moral preachers forcing their way of life rather than encouraging individual human rights. Petty distractions of blasphemy cannot be the catalysts of motivating another series of corrupted governments being voted again in power. With the Sikh community settling in all corners of the globe, the political instability in Punjab is a pressing matter for the community regardless of their place of residence. If the community wishes to preserve its claimed status as selfless humanitarians, these internal conflicts must be pursued with peaceful means and moderates who oppose such extremist views should be more vocal of their discontent.

Only time will tell which path the Sikh community chooses with a terrorist as their moral head of clergy, either leading to a state of being high and dry fuelled by imaginary isolation and extremism, or once again the land of productivity, prosperity, fortune and good health. ▲



More propaganda posters showing Sikh extremists who were killed in retaliation for their barbaric acts, used to ignite religious passion and motivate others to support their cause for an independent state

Source: <http://tinyurl.com/hek35xa>

The Challenge of Atheism in Contemporary Zimbabwe

LEO IGWE

*(Reprinted with permission from:
www.zambianeye.com/archives/39583)*

The saying, 'There are no atheists in foxholes' is used in arguing against atheism. The line of reasoning is that in situations of fear, danger or stress, people profess some belief in God or in some higher being. So this expression is employed to discredit the atheistic position and to question the authenticity and integrity of the godless life stance. But let's face it; uncertainty, despair and hopelessness drive people to seek imaginary help and imaginary intervention from imaginary beings.

However this is not always the case. Many godless people maintain their disbelief in god no matter the dire situation which they may find themselves; they stand their ground and refuse to budge even in the face of extreme fear and stress. In situations of war or conflict, many atheists do not see the need to convert, to hanker after the supernatural or to profess belief in a higher power as a way of coping with the difficult or dangerous life situation.

Given the prevailing economic conditions, Zimbabwe can be compared to a foxhole. According to [a BBC report](#), the country's economy is in deep crisis. Poverty and unemployment are pervasive. The country has witnessed rampant inflation, severe food and fuel shortages. The collapse of the economy has been attributed to the forced seizure of white-owned commercial farms by the Mugabe regime. Everyday life is literally a battle.

But the question is: are there atheists in this country? The answer is: Yes. Atheists exist in Zimbabwe and in fact they have started organizing, mobilizing and connecting with each other, thanks to the internet. The growing network of

atheists in the country is a clear testimony that atheism has a place in the lives of people whether they live under comfortable or stressful conditions; whether they live in a conflict situation or they lead a peaceful and secured life. Recently, I was in contact with two Zimbabwean atheist activists, Dan and Jane, and they explained the challenge of being an atheist in contemporary Zimbabwe. Dan lives in the capital city, Harare. He had a religious upbringing but has been identifying as an atheist for the past three years:

"I was raised religious but I was always the curious type, always willing to question and as I grew up and learnt more, it became increasingly difficult for me to take religion seriously. It was only after I encountered online sceptic and rationalist communities that I started to fully self-identify as an atheist."

The advent of the internet has indeed been empowering to non-theists particularly in expediting them to leave the closet. The flow of information and knowledge has been liberating for atheists in Africa because it has furnished them with ideas to nurture their doubts. The internet has provided atheists in the region with a platform to meet and interact with people of like mind. Though the virtual community has been helpful, atheists still face challenges because they have to relate with real people – friends and family members – in their immediate physical environments.

Dan explains the social cost of identifying openly as an atheist in Zimbabwe, "The main challenge is that identifying openly as an atheist complicates all manners of relationships. It's not exactly fun to have to take a measured approach to every conversation you participate in. There is definitely a lack of understanding of what atheism is. For most people not being religious has never occurred to them as an option. Yes there are other atheists in Zimbabwe, I've only ever physically met two but I know over ten others from the web. I actually co-run the Zimbabwean Atheist facebook page which had 95 likes the last time I checked. But it still helps to have some space to meet up even if it is virtual. As far as I can tell, most of them are in the closet, as am I. I doubt that it is physically dangerous to publicly identify as an atheist in Zimbabwe. I certainly haven't heard or seen anything to lead me to believe this. However there are bound to be serious social costs attached to that sort of thing. Zimbabweans are very religious and with the economy performing as badly as it is they have become even more religious. It's certainly not hard to imagine a person losing friends and family because they admitted to being an atheist. It is problematic enough being a young person without adding your rejection of the religion to the mix. I am privileged to have a number of friends who understand even

when they are mostly Christian themselves but at the present moment I don't even dream about disclosing this to family members. The future of Atheism in Zimbabwe is particularly not easy to predict. I suspect there is a long difficult road ahead of us. The best we can probably hope for in the short term is increased knowledge of what atheism is in the broader society. There would be less shock and fear if it were known that there is an alternative to religion"

But spreading the knowledge that there is an alternative to religion has to contend with the indoctrination by faith groups that no such alternative exists and either one believes in god or the person is damned. Jane, who also lives in Harare, was brought up as a Christian but became an atheist when she was 17. She became an atheist through reading the Bible. "The Bible itself deconverted me", she stated. This 'painful' process of deconversion and abandoning of the Christian faith happened because while reading the Bible, she noticed "many things which were contradictory and utter nonsense". Also she loves science and found scientific claims more persuasive than religious or Biblical doctrines.

Like Dan, Jane notes the social cost of going open with her atheism in contemporary Zimbabwe, "Well, being an atheist here is quite a rare thing. I'm open about it to everyone but my family members just to avoid the drama. I think it's more a matter of the judgement you'll get rather than being in danger. To be very honest most people are religious and no one that I know has had problems because the person is an atheist. Atheism is perceived as a bad thing of course."

She maintains that atheism is not a topic that is openly talked about in the country and she thinks the muted discourse of atheism is due to the prevailing economic situation, "The economic crisis definitely gets the churches full. Zimbabweans love 'miracles'. As an atheist in this country I feel like my opinion is unwanted and unimportant

but in all honesty I have bigger things to focus on! So, I barely care. I live and let live."

Throughout the region, atheists often feel quite helpless in the face of the overwhelming influence of religious faiths particularly the dominant effects of Christianity and Islam. Religion and politics mix so atheists are socially and politically squeezed out. Many people think that there is no future for atheism in the region and that going open and public with one's disbelief in God or Allah is a needless risk. So, many atheists in Africa remain in the closet or continue to pay lip service to religion. But religious posturing is delaying the emergence of vibrant atheism in the region. It is doing a huge damage to the cause of atheist awakening in Africa.

It is important to state that many countries in the western world once faced similar economic challenges which are driving Zimbabweans today, and many others across Africa to churches, mosques and spiritual homes. But atheists in these countries did not resign to their religious or theistic fate. They dared and expressed openly their doubts and really demonstrated in creed and in deed that there were atheists in foxholes. History tells us that their campaigns paid off and contributed to the cause of renaissance and enlightenment in the western world.

So atheists in Zimbabwe should not despair or relent in their campaign for an open, secular and freethinking society. They should not think that their views are of no significance to their country and its future. Instead they should strive to keep the flame of atheism, skepticism and secularism burning despite the odds against them.

And as atheists in Zimbabwe try to make their voices heard and they try to organize and mobilize in furtherance of secular values, atheist groups and activists in other parts of the world should reach out to them and show support and solidarity.▲



Leo Igwe is a Junior Research Fellow at the Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies, at the University of Bayreuth in Germany. He holds a Master's Degree in Philosophy. The topic of his ongoing doctoral research is: Negotiating Witchcraft Accusation: A Case Study of the Dagomba in Northern Ghana. His research interests include witchcraft and magic, non-religiosity, atheism and unbelief in Africa.

The Will of God: Pure Fiction

DAVID RAND

(Talk presented at the "Interfaith Symposium", organized by the Ahmadiyya Muslim community, Lindsay, Ontario, 2015-11-21. Reprinted with permission from: www.atheology.ca/special/2015-11-21-lindsay-symposium)

The theme of today's Symposium is phrased as a question, "God: Fact or Fiction?" I can answer that immediately. Of course "god" is a fiction. I am an atheist. I do not believe in the existence of any god or gods because I see no evidence whatsoever for such illusions. Yes, god is nothing but fiction in which some people choose to believe. But not me. It is the obligation of those who say god exists to prove their extraordinary assertion. No proof of non-existence is required. Furthermore, belief in god is based on faith, and religious faith is an irrational conviction, asserted without proof. If there were any proof of the existence of god, then faith would not be necessary. My work is done. I could end my talk right here. But I have much more to say.

Now many of you here today apparently believe in the existence of some kind of god, and I am probably not going to convince you otherwise in a talk lasting some twenty minutes. I have decided therefore, to approach the topic in an indirect way. I want to talk not so much about the reality or unreality of "god" but rather about the so-called "will" of

god. In other words, I want to discuss the issue of morality. In particular I want to discuss the differences, if any, between the morality of those who believe in god and the morality of those who do not. That is, theistic morality versus atheistic morality.

You see, people who believe seriously in the existence of a god, especially those who are monotheists, that is, who believe in a single omnipotent god, creator and ruler of the universe, base their morality on what they believe their god wants, that is to say, on the will of that god. Thus, knowing what god wants—assuming that he, she or it exists—is key to knowing how to behave. Philosophers have an expression for this: they call it "divine command theory," the theory that an action is morally good if and only if it is commanded by god. To be a good person is to follow god's commands.

So, theistic morality consists in obeying god's will, in doing what we think god wants. Atheistic morality, on the other hand, must have some other basis, because atheists do not believe in god. This has generally led to an odious prejudice against atheists, based on the idea that atheists have NO morality because—it is claimed—the only valid basis of morality is obedience to god. This prejudice is called "atheophobia" and it is completely false. It is simply not true that atheists are not as moral as religious believers.

In fact, there is strong evidence to suggest that atheists are at least as moral as everyone else and possibly even more moral than those who believe in god. A recent scientific article comparing children of religious and non-religious parents concluded that the non-religious are at least as altruistic and tolerant, and possibly more, so than the religious. Studies by Gregory S. Paul and sociologist Phil Zuckerman have shown a strong negative correlation between religiosity and societal health. That is, societies which are more secular are healthier as measured by crime



Symposium Speakers

rates, STD rates, poverty and other measures.

Let us take a closer look at so-called “divine command theory,” the idea that morality is what god commands. Some two and a half millenia ago, ancient Greek philosophers already pointed out a serious flaw with this idea. Of course the ancient Greeks had many gods, they were polytheistic, but whether you believe in one god or many, the flaw is the same. In the dialogue “Euthyphro,” Plato reports that Socrates asks a religious person a very simple but disturbing question: Is the good good because the gods say so, or is it good in and of itself? The answer, if any, is of little consequence because just the question alone says a lot. If the good is only good because the gods say it is, then goodness, i.e. morality, is just a caprice, that is, whatever the gods order. If the gods order you to murder or steal or lie, then that action becomes moral, by definition. This is hardly a desirable situation. On the other hand, if the good is good in and of itself, this implies that there exists some standard of goodness, some measure of morality, which is independent of the gods: in other words, the gods become irrelevant to the question of morality. The gods are no longer required.

Thus, Socrates' insightful question leads us to conclude that basing our morals on the will of god or gods means either that morality is arbitrary, or it has nothing to do with divinity.

There are other serious problems with the idea that morality means following god's will. Obviously that idea is tenable only if (1) one is first convinced of the existence of “god.” Then (2) one must establish that that “god” indeed has a “will,” that is, he, she or it can in fact want something. And finally, even if one is convinced of both the existence of “god” and the existence of god's will, (3) one must still have some way to access knowledge of that will, some way of knowing what god wants. All three of these issues pose serious problems.

First of all, there is no evidence for (1) the existence of god. The classic arguments for god (ontological, cosmological, teleological, and so on) traditionally put forward by various theologians have all been refuted countless times. The only argument which had any semblance of plausibility—the design argument, that we need a designer to explain complexity—was challenged even before Darwin and is now utterly discredited. We now know that evolution explains the complexity of biological diversity. No designer is required.

Furthermore, even without the explanation which evolution provides, the design hypothesis merely moves the problem to a new location. If a designer created our universe, then who or what created the designer? We would need a designer of the designer! The problem is not solved; rather it

AAI STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP FUND

- A Project of the AAI Foundation -



As part of our work in defending and protecting atheists, AAI has also established a student scholarship fund to help the disfranchised build new lives as well as to promote rationalism and science in their own communities.



The AAI Foundation awards student scholarships to atheists in impoverished or disadvantaged countries to seek education and training outside of their country: Some in order to start a life in a new country, others to allow them to return to their homeland to educate the next generation.



Please consider contributing to the AAI Student Scholarship Fund, a project of the AAI Foundation, to continue to provide help to those in need.



ATHEIST
ALLIANCE
INTERNATIONAL

FOR A SECULAR WORLD

made more complicated! This leads to an infinite regression with no solution.

Every scientific advance, no matter how minor, increases our understanding of the world and constitutes yet another nail in the coffin of the god-hypothesis, because that hypothesis is only a gap-filler, and the gaps in our knowledge are getting smaller. Hypothesis (1) must be rejected.

But even if (1) were established, (2) concerning the “will” of god presents a different but equally serious problem. The god of each monotheism, such as Judaism, Christianity or Islam (listing them in historical order), is generally considered to be all-knowing, all-powerful, infinitely good, eternal, present everywhere and the creator of everything. How can an infinitely omniscient and omnipotent agent have any wants? Given that god knows what will happen, anywhere and everywhere, and given that he/she/it has the ability to do absolutely anything, any “desire” would be fulfilled instantly—no, way before the current instant: it would be accomplished at the beginning of time (assuming that time has a beginning), because god knows the future completely.

The very idea of a “want” implies dissatisfaction with an existing situation, and that could not possibly happen. How can a perfect god be dissatisfied with anything which he/she/it created? Thus, the concept of willing anything is incompatible with the qualities which are normally attributed to god. Furthermore, why would such a being even care about those minuscule little creatures we call humans—us!—located on a speck of dust we call Earth located in an unremarkable galaxy in an enormous universe? After all, our solar system is only one of hundreds of billions in our galaxy. Our galaxy the Milky Way is only one of some 100,000 galaxies in our local super cluster of galaxies. And our local super cluster, named Laniakea, is only one of millions in the observable universe. I think the ruler of the universe might be too busy to care about what you ate for lunch.

As if that were not bad enough, point (3) is similarly

intractable. Even if we simply assume that god exists and has a will, how can we know what god wants? What is the line of communication, the source of information? In the three major monotheisms, that source is provided by revelation as implemented in writings which believers consider to be holy scriptures. I am sorry, but as a source of information, revelation is about as reliable as dreams. Someone's claim that god has revealed a message to them tells us nothing about anything other than the mental state of the person making the claim. As for scriptures, they were written thousands of years ago—some a little more recently—by human beings, they are replete with contradictions (even within a single religious tradition) and are essentially pious legends of greater or lesser literary value. They give us a glimpse of the history, practices and culture of some ancient societies, but little beyond that. We certainly have no credible guarantee that their authors have any reliable knowledge to impart to us about the will of god.

Summing up, in order to ascertain the will of god we have a three-step process—the existence of god, the existence of god's will, and knowledge of god's will—each step presenting insurmountable difficulties. The bottom line is this: nobody has a clue what god wants. I, an atheist, know as much about the will of god as does any pope, imam, rabbi, priest or pastor, and I know absolutely nothing about the will of god. Which is exactly what everyone else knows, regardless of what they claim. No one knows.

Since the will of god is unknowable, theistic morality is utterly arbitrary. Anyone can simply state whatever ideas come into his or her head—for example, “God forbids eating red fruits on Tuesdays” or “I must wear this tin-foil hat at all times or God will be angry with me”—and those ideas are as dependable a reflection of the will of god as the tenets of any religion. The famous statement “Without God, everything is permitted,” attributed to a character in a Dostoyevsky novel, turns out to be backwards. In reality, if morality is based on god, then anything can be permitted—or forbidden—arbitrarily and with no way of resolving disagreements, because there is no way to test any



Audience

assertion about what god wants and no way to decide among competing assertions.

This leads us to the problem of religious authority. The arbitrariness of theistic morality makes it dangerous. Religious authorities may sometimes promote positive behaviour, but that does not solve the problem. If believers treat others in a friendly manner because they have been told that is what god commands, then they are just as capable of behaving with hostility if someone convinces them that god commands so—or if they lose their faith.

Anyone in a position of authority who pretends to have knowledge of the will of god and to speak for god, and succeeds in convincing others of this, can easily manipulate and exploit those others. This makes religious authorities very dangerous, and the credulous who believe them very vulnerable.

Summing up, we see that divine command theory based on the will of god is full of holes. Theistic morality is completely vacuous. Even if one insists on believing in god, we have no reliable way of knowing what he, she or it wants or if indeed he/she/it wants anything. So we are on our own. The verdict is in: we cannot rely on “god.”

And this is where atheistic morality comes in. We atheists take as our starting point the verdict that I just stated: that we human beings are alone, with no “god” to guide or

command us. Well not completely alone. We share a small and beautiful planet with many other animal species. I say other, because we humans are animals too, a little more evolved than most, and with a capacity for rational reasoning that others lack. So if we do not get our morals from “god,” where do we get them?

We get them from evolution. Human beings are social animals. Social interactions and mutually beneficial relationships are a winning survival strategy used by humans as well as many other species. We live in societies where we depend very much on each other for survival. Hermits—people who isolate themselves completely from others—may exist, but they are very rare. We need each other for our physical survival. We need each other for our physical, mental and emotional health. To be totally deprived of interaction with other human beings is one of the worst possible punishments. As social animals we have evolved ways to cooperate—in finding or growing food, in building and maintaining shelter, in caring for each other, in raising our young, in dealing with sickness and hardship and in countless other activities.

Morality evolves. Compassion, altruism, trust, friendship, sharing, cooperation, kindness, deference, all the well known virtues are part of our catalogue of possible behaviours and have evolved out of necessity, because they help us to survive, in society, with our fellow humans.

If your group became a nonprofit...

How much
more good could
you do?

Become a chapter of the American Humanist
Association for free & share the benefits!

americanhumanist.org

202.238.9088

grassroots@americanhumanist.org

110 LOCAL CHAPTERS STRONG & GROWING

501C3 STATUS

GRANT
OPPORTUNITIES

INCREASED
VISIBILITY

FREE
LITERATURE

ORGANIZATIONAL/
ADMIN SUPPORT

AND MUCH MORE

AMERICAN
HUMANIST
ASSOCIATION

Negative behaviours have also evolved, because they too are sometimes necessary: hostility, antipathy, mistrust and so on are sometimes necessary for defence and security.

Our evolution is first and foremost biological. And our species is not the only one. There are many other social species besides us. You can probably think of many examples of altruistic behaviour by non-human animals, for example dogs cooperating with each other or with humans, birds nurturing their chicks, chimpanzees grooming each other. On Youtube you can find any number of striking videos highlighting animal behaviour which looks remarkably human to us: dogs trying to make friends with cats, sometimes even successfully, a bear helping a drowning bird, an ostrich doing a sort of happy dance when it succeeds in finding a ball a human has just thrown, a cat who communicates with its deaf master by imitating his hand gestures. Of course we can find plenty of examples of destructive and hostile behaviour among animals too, just as we find it among humans.

Some people seem to get upset by this sort of comparison with other animals, by the recognition that we, homo sapiens, constitute an animal species ourselves. I disagree completely. I think that our belonging to the animal kingdom—the fact that we and all other animals have common ancestors if we go back far enough, often very far back—to be an incredibly rich heritage connects us with other animals in a very real way. Their behaviour often appears somewhat human to us because we are animals too. They are our distant cousins.

Our evolution is also cultural, and cultural evolution is much more rapid than biological evolution. It may take millions of years for a new species to evolve from a previous one. But a new cultural norm may evolve in a much briefer time—in millennia, or

STAND UP FOR REASON CAMPAIGN

In Uganda, hundreds of children are marked as "witches" each year by Christian evangelists who market their exorcism services to local villages that have suffered misfortune or loss.

These children are abandoned, attacked, and maimed or even killed by their friends and family. Those who are fortunate to survive are rendered orphans who are forced to beg and steal to survive.

HELP US STAND UP FOR REASON IN UGANDA.

[AtheistAlliance.org/SUFR](https://www.AtheistAlliance.org/SUFR)

centuries or even decades—and very different cultural norms may evolve in different communities of the same species. Yet despite that diversity, there are common moral principles that we all recognize, regardless of our background, regardless of our religion or lack of religion.

We atheists base our morality on the virtues with which we are all familiar, which are part of our common evolved heritage. We atheists view those virtues through the lens of real-world considerations. We know that we only have this one life to live, so we value it supremely. We know that we will not get another chance, no second life after death, no heaven to reward us or hell to punish us. Happiness and enjoyment are to be sought here and now, in this life.

Among the finest expressions of atheist morality are the various human rights codes which have evolved in recent human history. They are not perfect, they are not all identical, they continue to evolve, but the best of them have much in common: a desire for equality of opportunity among humans, a desire for gender equality, for freedom of conscience and expression, for an end to racial discrimination, homophobia and other social ills, and so on.

Religions themselves are products of cultural evolution, which is why there is such a wide diversity of religions. Indeed, there would be even more if some did not have the dubious habit of eradicating their competitors whenever possible. Many previously existing religions have been totally or greatly erased from history by the conquering steamroller of intolerant monotheisms such as Christianity and Islam.

Let us return to discussing those two religions. In particular let's take a look at the so-called "holy" books. What kinds of moral prescriptions do these books contain?

The bible contains a wide variety of moral commands. For example, Luke 6:31 instructs us to “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” This wise counsel is the famous Golden Rule and can be found in many traditions, including non-religious ones. On the other hand, Luke 14:26 states that “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.” This certainly does not sound like great advice. In Matthew 5:17, Jesus states, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them.” This apparently means that any prescription in the law in the Old Testament must continue to be obeyed, and that includes some pretty nasty things, such as the death penalty for apostasy, calls for genocide against certain peoples and a ban on clothing containing interwoven wool and linen.

This small sampling of biblical rules illustrates that any reasonable person could not possibly obey everything in the bible. They might indeed choose to follow the Golden Rule, but probably not the others. Indeed, only a fanatical fundamentalist totally devoid of reason or scruples would even consider the death penalty for apostasy, that is, for changing one's religion. In other words, it is necessary to pick and choose among the prescriptions one can find in the bible. Thus, the bible is not a reference for morality. We must use some other criteria, independent of the bible, in order to decide which prescriptions to follow and which to ignore.

Let us turn now to the quran. Surah 2 verse 256 is famous and includes the phrase that “there is no compulsion in religion.” This certainly sounds like a wise statement indicating respect for freedom of conscience. On the other hand, surah 3 verse 56 condemns non-believers, “As to those who reject faith, I will punish them with terrible agony in this world and in the Hereafter, nor will they have anyone to help.” As for the rights of women, Surah 2 verse 282 states, “call to witness from among your men two witnesses; but if there are not two men, then one man and two

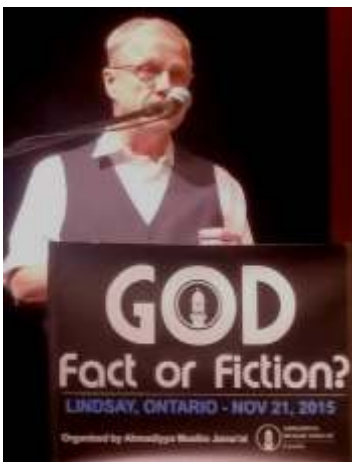
women,” thus indicating that the testimony of a woman is worth only half the testimony of a man.

Again, this sampling is very small, but we find in the quran both respect for and rejection of freedom of religion. And we find gender inequality. So once again, no reasonable person who respects human rights could possibly accept a literal interpretation of everything in the quran. As with the bible it is necessary to be selective. Thus, the quran is not a reference for morality. We must use some other moral criteria, independent of the quran.

And this is the point I wish to stress that just as Socrates' insightful question about the nature of goodness showed that we must locate our moral compass somewhere other than in the gods if we want to avoid arbitrariness, a reading of the so-called sacred scriptures of Christianity and Islam leads us to the same conclusion: we must look elsewhere for consistent moral principles. Fortunately, that is what modern religious believers do in practice.

Only the most backward and dangerous fundamentalists and extremists would accept the entire bible or the entire quran as the literal absolute word of god and expression of his will. In fact, scriptural literalism is undoubtedly one of the worst possible strategies for building moral systems. All reasonable believers know that, as moral guidebooks, scripture must be used metaphorically and selectively if it is to be used at all.

The moral principles that both atheists and modern believers use, principles which are independent of any god or gods, are those which we human beings have evolved over millions of years of biological evolution and thousands of years of cultural evolution. Principles of reason, honesty, respect for other human beings, fairness, equality before the law, gender equality, freedom of conscience and expression, critical inquiry, maximizing quality of life for all, respect for scientific rigour, and so on. These principles are our common heritage, shared by people of good will—of all faiths and of none. ▲



David Rand is president of the Montreal-based AAI-affiliate Atheist Freethinkers (LPA-AFT) and spokesperson for the International Association of Free Thought (IAFT). He has addressed freethought gatherings in Canada, Lebanon, Argentina, Chile and Poland. He was a speaker on the blasphemy panel - which discussed the need to repeal all blasphemy laws in all countries, including Canada - at the Non-Conference in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada in August 2015. David's writings have appeared in Humanist Perspectives, Free Inquiry, La Raison and other publications, as well as on several web sites.

Atheist Freethinkers participates in a local Quebec coalition which promotes secularism, supported the Charter of Secularism proposed by the Quebec government in 2013-2014, and opposes measures which would threaten freedom of conscience and expression, in particular the freedom to criticize religion. LPA-AFT is a bilingual organization has two major web sites: www.atheology.ca in English and www.atheologie.ca in French.

Secularism – A Challenge to Men

ELIDA RADIG

After reading the excellent book 'Realising Secularism' by ANZSA, (which is a collection of papers from conferences in Australia and New Zealand) and also many works presented by atheists and secularists around the world on the issue of secularism and after attending two conferences; one in Washington on 'Women and Secularism' and one in Dublin on 'Empowering Women Through Secularism', I have come to the conclusion that secularism is a challenge for males.

How will males in secular governments accommodate empowered women while still accepting patriarchy and male privileges given to them mainly by religions? Central to these privileges is the male opinion that their judgement and wisdom alone is what is important to world affairs.

The reason that in many cases women's perspective is not solicited is because men see themselves as the one in charge. Not only do they hold and control the resources and positions, but similarly these areas enable them to elect themselves as 'experts' in all areas.

How will males in secular governments have the ability to see past the insidious nature of aggressiveness, territorialism and the perception that the world is ordered from male orientation only?

I consulted with Lev Lafayette, President of the Victorian Secular Lobby, in the issue of secularism and patriarchy and his answer was:

“Strictly speaking a secular system can be just as patriarchal as a Theocratic one, just in the same way that it does not have requirement to be democratic or respect individual rights. But by the same token, most religions have a historical domination of men in positions of political power as a sacred division. As a result, the potential for the abolition of patriarchy can be part of secularism.”

The assertion that the abolition of patriarchy can be a part of secularism is a very promising one for those women who search for equality, but as Denise Thompson in 'Feminism and the problem of power' says:

“The feminist concern is not with whether the sexes are



Existing to improve the quality of life for the impoverished and disadvantaged around the world, on a basis of science and reason.

“If Atheists Speak But No One Notices, Are We Making a Difference?”

The AAI Foundation sponsors good works and volunteerism to promote nontheism, science and reason around the world.

Religious privilege and superstition are strongest in countries where the populace struggle for daily survival and where education is reserved for the privileged. The AAI Foundation works to counter such forces through the sponsoring of quality-of-life projects including health care, public infrastructure, and education.

The AAI Foundation also provides opportunities for our members to participate in cultural exchanges volunteer with AAI projects around the world. AAI Members can spend anywhere from two weeks to a year with a local AAI affiliate to improve local conditions or even just to see a new country and experience a new culture.

Learn more about the **AAI Foundation** and our current projects, and how you can get involved, at:

<http://www.atheistalliance.org>



ATHEIST
ALLIANCE
INTERNATIONAL

FOR A SECULAR WORLD

'the same' or 'different' because such a concern says nothing about male supremacy. To say that women and men are 'different' (or 'the same') makes no inroads into the phallocratic reality which loads the 'differences'. Hierarchically, this tolerates 'sameness' only as long as it is male and which retains the male as the 'human' norm."

In continuation with my research I consulted with Stuart Bechman, a Director on the Board of Atheist Alliance International, and he said:

"Religion institutionalizes sexism into our society. Secularism (or 'Democracy', where no institution is held above all of the people) is an important tool for the de-institutionalizing and dismantling sexism and pushing it back into the private sphere".

I am getting the message; secularism has the potential for the abolition of patriarchy and also is an important tool to push sexism into the private sphere; where do these two premises leave women?

'The Personal is Political' was and still is the phrase rallying feminists around the world. 'The Personal is Political' is the realization of how unjust the situation was and still is for women in the private and public sphere. Also is the awareness among feminists that the patriarchal structure, which demands that people are forced into particular roles which are often as restricted for males as they are for females. It is the issue of the 'male privileges'.

Secularists understand and accept that the desire of some people to break out of those traditional roles is as valid as the preference of others to remain within them.

Feminists know that patriarchy created divisions between women and men which were then used by certain males to enhance their own power, not only over women, but also over other males.

How do feminists know? Women's writing traced back 500 years voices the same fears, frustrations and sense of injustice, which feminists are voicing today.

The issue is well expressed by Denise Thompson, whom I have quoted before, when she said that, "It is a constant awareness and a continuing process of recognition of the multifarious forms of male domination, and requires a never ending series of decisions in order to counter the pervasiveness of male hegemony – never ending, that is, as long as male domination lasts."

And that brings me to the questions, are atheist, agnostic, free-thinker and humanist men any different to the rest? What is the experience of women in their public and private relationships with these males?

It is a bitter reality that the atheist movement, for example, is male dominated. Maybe by advertising that secularism empowers females is a way to attract women to the movement. When I hear atheists make comments such as violence against women is not an atheist issue, I question their knowledge of the origins of this violence.

Secularism or not, as long as societies accept violence, inadequacies and role division between the genders, little will change. The way to begin to dramatically reduce the number of relationships likely to become violent is to work on the subordination, isolation and devalued status of women in most societies and to challenge those privileges given to males by religions and cults.

Of course, I would like to think that atheists, free-thinkers and humanist males are living their lives with reason, evidences and justices but... are they?

Secularism should also empower men to be able to develop a society free of 'male privilege' endorsed by mythical powers and ancient stories of different male gods dictating 'sacred' books to a few selected males.

Thanks to Rosemary Watson, my excellent proof reader, the Melbourne Feminist Sisterhood Women's group for so openly and generously sharing their experiences and opinions with me and to Andrew Rawlings and Eric Palsis for being my males' sounding board. ▲



Elida Radig is a feminist and an atheist based in Victoria, Australia. She has 20 years' experience Broadcasting at 3RPP Radio on the 'Free Waves' program and 5 years on the 'Atheist Age' program and being involved in various community organizations. Elida worked for 30 years as CEO at the women's Shelter 'Jill House' and as Liason Officer with the Police Force and Family Court. She is a co-founder of the Progressive Atheists organization. Elida was appointed to the AAI Board in July 2013 and can be contacted at elidaradig@ozemail.com.au.

Bangladesh: the Killing Field

MOHSIN SIDDIQUE

(Reprinted with permission from <http://enblog.mukto-mona.com/2015/11/04/bangladesh-the-killing-field-2/>)

In the killing field that Bangladesh has become, brutal assassination of Faisal Arefin Dipan, and attempted murder of Ahmed Rashid Tutil, Ronom Dipam Basu and Tareq Rahim, as heart-breaking and depressing as it is, it is not surprising; and less so is the reaction of Dipan's father, who has, as reported by the media, refused to seek justice for his son's killing; (I understand Avijit's wife also made a similar statement). I do not know the man, but I think he probably actually understands. You see, his son's death has been preapproved by the highest authorities in the country, that is, by the same people who are supposed to bring to justice the killers of Dipan (and nearly killed the other three) this time, and more before. Every time a blogger is killed, the regime in power holds the bloggers responsible for their own death! What is it but condemning anyone who has ideas other than what the insecure, cravenly power hungry, morally bankrupt political leaders who have ruled this country for few decades now? What is it but an invitation to the savages – the so called Ansar Al Islam, a criminal enterprise that interprets religion as it pleases to serve their foreign financiers to brutally kill talented young people, because these ignoramus fanatics and the regime in power have no answer to the questions these young people raise? The latter is doing everything it can to appease the former while sacrificing the best of this country's new generation who have the courage of their conviction and insist on exercising their right to free speech, a universally guaranteed fundamental human right, and have not rented themselves out as mercenary thugs posing as students that the regime maintains.

The reason for the collusion of the regime with these killers is important to understand. Based on its refusal to reinstate the secular commitments of the country as was encoded in the original constitution, today's Awami League is not any different from the Jatya Party or the Bangladesh Nationalist Party in this regard: all are Islamist in various degrees. It is further supported by AL's well known attempts to form alliances with various Islamist parties; it also maintains a subordinate group that is hardly distinguishable from the Jamat-e-Islam. All indications are, if it could get away with it,

bloggers would be shut out, but it does not have the guts to prosecute the bloggers if they are not in violation of the constitution. Fundamentalist criminal interpretations of religion are being used in some twisted machinations, the motive of which is only visible in the public expression of what the regime is trying to achieve: to keep its hold on political power, permanently if possible. But there might be another goal to the plot as well: perhaps because legally denying freedom of expression by a trial might make it difficult for the Prime Minister to get the Nobel Peace Prize, as one of her close confidantes, another sycophant, and obviously, a member of the PM's cabinet, recently announced to be the main objective. That, and making Bangladesh a 'middle income country'! One wonders where the confidence the regime exudes comes from. Perhaps the support of the agents of RAW and the FBI, making sure the world (and perhaps the Nobel Prize Selection Committee) remains persuaded that Bangladesh continues to be known as a 'moderate' Muslim country? Surely the killing of people who foolishly think Bangladesh is a democracy and therefore they have the right to exercise their freedom of speech can't be that important to the regime and its protectors whose geo-political ambition conveniently intersects with that of the ruling class in Bangladesh.

Blaming the bloggers for their actions helps to hide another more insidious truth. Religious fundamentalism, sanctioned by the regime, is pervasive in the country, and with remittance from the Middle East, Hijab Culture, deliberately promoted, has become just as widespread and is slowly corroding away whatever shreds of liberalism the country once had. The regime and the classes it represents have shielded themselves from being exposed to the influence of modernity: a gift of the bourgeois democratic revolution in the west, the influence of which wafted to these parts on the wings of colonialism and played an important role in introducing notions of all that is potential under democracy. Its influence on the culture remains limited, however. Anecdotal information suggests wide spread sympathy among the middle class for the self-appointed enforcers of Islam and very little for the critic of the irrational, the absurd, the exaggerated claimants and the unquestioned authority of secret criminal enterprise to decide who is to be executed next. The ability of these organized criminal enterprises to carry out their 'program' by publishing a list of their next victims, is proof of a failed government. If not the, implication that the regime at least indirectly approves of and considers it necessary to purge the bloggers because of the fear of their potential influence, is frighteningly unavoidable.

What is important to note is that the enablers of these killers occupy some social place, i.e., they exist among other people; and, surely, some one knows them. Even if they are

not direct supporters, they must be aware of what these people are preparing to do. Should these people also be held accountable for being accomplices in the crimes of the assassins for not coming out and warning people of the potential impending danger?

What is necessary to rescue the society from the plague of fundamentalist attempts to impose theocracy on the country is for the citizens who still carry in them the spirit of liberation to take up arms against these forces of regression, and eliminate them at their roots. But that is not easy, because of the head-start they had in growing those roots, by their presence in every village (and city) mosque, where the indoctrination in obscurantism starts. It starts in the form of teaching children to read religious texts without understanding, and never allowing questioning, for fear that they might rebel against things they might find do not reconcile with all the other virtues they are taught by the society, say for example, tolerance of diversity. This is institutionalized in the madrasas, especially in the qoumi variety, which seems to have the singular goal of subverting democracy. It is astonishing that the society sees no danger in the extent of proliferation of religious 'educational' institutions in the country beyond any social control, encouraged by the autocratic military regimes, and vigorously supported by the two major political parties. Yet, there are ample indications that some of these are in fact training facilities where the ignorant young are turned into killers, trained psychologically and tactically to turn into murderers without a soul and kill in the most brutal way possible without a shred of remorse.


What is to be done? At least two sets of problems confront the people of Bangladesh. First is the regime in power. By sheer force of arrogance and complete disregard of norms that are presumed in a democracy, it blatantly manipulated the election, under a leader surrounded by a cabinet that is a collection of sycophants, who tells her what she wants to hear. It seems all she cares about is staying in power, and according to some speculation, being able to hand it over to the crown prince. As the protector of the interests of the native bourgeoisie practising a version of capitalism comparable to the brutality of the Ansar Al Islam, it is able to consolidate its hold. But it exists on the assumption of popular support, and hence people have the ultimate authority, if they choose to exert it, to decide who is best capable of dealing with the dangerously anarchic situation.

To do so, it is necessary to be free from the opiate-like dependency on false choices between the two established parties, both beholden to the same dominating socio-economic class, and with proven affinity for a religious state. To counter this currently dominating trend, the progressive forces currently splinted by petty differences coming together as a single movement is the only hope for escaping the fate set by theocrats intent on dragging the country several centuries backwards.

Unfortunately, for dealing with Ansar Al Islam, the options are limited – and complicated by the uniqueness of those who are carrying out the killing operations – because of the success of the ruling class in keeping its opposition (not the nearly dismantled official opposition party), the left formations – disorganized and weak. The regime has enslaved most of the potential critics by trapping them in the snarl of largess it can supply to keep them straight and narrow.

What makes the task of eliminating the fundamentalists course in the country so difficult is that these people, and more so their foot soldiers, live in a reality they have concocted that has no relation to the one most of us live in. You simply cannot have a rational discussion with them – ISIS, Taliban, Ansar Al Islam, etc. – for they live in a place which most people would consider an asylum for the insane. Even the few religious leaders who have raised even the feeblest voices against the unreality of their goals and the crimes against humanity perpetrated by these demented religious fanatics, have not done well.

There is the problem: how do you peacefully and rationally resolve the problem among people who live in entirely opposite realities? Yet, without resistance and direct actions to eliminate the cancer, how would humanity survive? Do we not owe it to these heroes of our time who have sacrificed their lives in defense of freedom that we all deserve? Is it not essential that the coalition of the sane, the democratic, the progressives, set aside petty differences and respond to the onslaught and purposefully decide to do whatever is necessary before they kill our next friend and comrade in struggle?

As a first step, can we organize a million young bloggers to step up and practice freedom of speech, and begin their self-paced training in becoming the citizens of a modern progressive democracy? Will the assassins of Dipan and all others before him kill a million bloggers? 

AAI Associate/Affiliate Members

Afghanistan

Afghanistan Atheists
Organization
www.facebook.com/pages/AfghansAtheists-Organization/290988360929383

Australia

Atheist Foundation of Australia
www.atheistfoundation.org.au
Progressive Atheists
www.progressiveatheists.org
Sydney Atheists Incorporated
www.SydneyAtheists.org

Brazil

Secular Humanist League of Brazil
www.ligahumanista.org

Canada

Libres penseurs athées
www.lpa.atheisme.ca
www.AFT.atheisme.ca

Croatia

Center for Civil Courage
www.CivilCourage.hr

Denmark

Ateistisk Selskab (Danish Atheist Society)
www.ateist.dk

Finland

Suomen Ateistyhdistys
www.dlc.fi/~etkirja/Atheist.htm

Germany

Internationaler Bund der Konfessionslosen und Atheisten
www.ibka.org

Greece

Atheist Union of Greece
www.atheia.gr

Indonesia

Indonesian Atheists

www.indonesianatheists.wordpress.com

Ireland

Atheist Ireland
www.atheist.ie

Iraq

Atheist Alliance of Iraq
www.facebook.com/groups/AAI.IRAQ

Israel

Hofesh – Freedom from Religion NPO
www.Hofesh.org.il/English/Index.html

Lebanon

Freethought Lebanon
www.freethoughtlebanon.net

Netherlands

Atheistisch Verbond (Atheist Union)
www.atheistischverbond.nl

Norway

The Heathen Society
www.hedning.no

Philippines

Philippine Atheists & Agnostics Society Inc (PATAS)
www.patas.co
Humanist Alliance Philippines International
www.hapihumanist.org

Poland

Front Ateistyczny
www.facebook.com/Front-Ateistyczny-497449670424725

Puerto Rico

Secular Humanists of Puerto Rico
www.humanistaspr.org

Russia

Sect of Atheists (Секта Атеистов)
www.vk.com/sect_of_atheists

South Africa

Free Society Institute
www.fsi.org.za

Spain

Iniciativa Atea
www.iniciativaatea.org

Turkey

Ateizm Derneği
www.facebook.com/ateizmdernegieski

Uganda

Humanist Association for Leadership, Equity & Accountability (HALEA)
www.haleauganda.org

United Kingdom

Atheism UK
www.atheismuk.com

United States of America

Atheist Alliance of America
www.atheistallianceamerica.org
Council of ex-Muslims of North America
www.exmna.org
Freedom From Religion Foundation
www.ffrf.org
Secular Humanist Society of New York
www.shsny.org