

HUMANISTS OF THE YEAR

2015 Lawrence Krauss
2014 Barney Frank
2013 Dan Savage
2012 Gloria Steinem
2011 Rebecca Goldstein
2010 Bill Nye
2009 P.Z. Myers
2008 Pete Stark
2007 Joyce Carol Oates
2006 Steven Pinker
2005 Murray Gell-Mann
2004 Daniel C. Dennett
2003 Sherwin T. Wine
2002 Steven Weinberg
2001 Stephen Jay Gould
2000 William F. Schulz
1999 Edward O. Wilson
1998 Barbara Ehrenreich
1997 Alice Walker
1996 Richard Dawkins
1995 Ashley Montagu
1994 Mary Morain
1994 Lloyd Morain
1993 Richard D. Lamm
1992 Kurt Vonnegut
1991 Lester R. Brown
1991 Werner Fornos
1990 Ted Turner
1989 Gerald A. Larue
1988 Leo Pfeffer
1987 Margaret Atwood
1986 Faye Wattleton
1985 John Kenneth Galbraith
1984 Isaac Asimov
1983 Lester A. Kirkendall
1982 Helen Caldicott
1981 Carl Sagan
1980 Andrei Sakharov
1979 Edwin H. Wilson
1978 Margaret E. Kuhn
1977 Corliss Lamont
1976 Jonas Salk
1975 Betty Friedan
1975 Henry Morgenthaler
1974 Mary Calderone
1974 Joseph Fletcher
1973 Thomas Szasz
1972 B. F. Skinner
1971 Albert Ellis
1970 A. Philip Randolph
1969 R. Buckminster Fuller
1968 Benjamin Spock
1967 Abraham H. Maslow
1966 Erich Fromm
1965 Hudson Hoagland
1964 Carl Rogers
1963 Hermann J. Muller
1962 Sir Julian Huxley
1961 Linus Pauling
1960 Leo Szilard
1959 George Brock Chisholm
1958 Oscar Riddle
1957 Margaret Sanger
1956 C. Judson Herrick
1955 James P. Warbasse
1954 Arthur F. Bentley
1953 Anton J. Carlson

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Chairman
Senate Subcommittee on Crime and
Terrorism
290 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sheldon Whitehouse
Ranking Member
Senate Subcommittee on Crime and
Terrorism
350 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ted Poe
Chairman
House Subcommittee on Terrorism,
Nonproliferation, and Trade
2412 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

February 27, 2015

Dear Senators and Representatives,

As reported in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* today, a United States citizen from Atlanta, Georgia, on a trip to Bangladesh was murdered and his wife severely injured in a brutal attack meant to serve as revenge for blog posts he made promoting humanism, atheism, and skepticism towards Islam. The blogger, Avijit Roy, is not the first nontheistic blogger to be attacked or imprisoned for his views. However, as Mr. Roy was an American citizen and a constituent of Senators Isakson, Perdue, and Representative Price, the humanist community urges the relevant committees in both the House and Senate to hold hearings focusing on nonbelievers being persecuted globally by religious extremists for their views.

Ansar Bangla-7, an extremist religious group, has already claimed credit for Mr. Roy's death, which occurred after a group of assailants attacked Mr. Roy and his wife with machetes on a public street. This latest murder is the continuation of a series of hostile actions towards atheists in Bangladesh and around the world which attempt to silence nonbelievers through fear of a terrorist attack. The American Humanist Association strongly condemns such actions which seek to remove the basic human right to hold religious or non-religious views free from governmental oppression or societal discrimination.

Congress has a role to play in this ongoing tragedy, as it has the ability to influence governments of countries which are outwardly hostile towards nonbelievers or ones

The Honorable William Keating
Ranking Member
House Subcommittee on Terrorism,
Nonproliferation, and Trade
315 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Johnny Isakson
131 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Perdue
B40D Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Price
100 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515



that do not seek to protect the religious rights of all of their citizens, whether they are part of a minority religion or are nonreligious. By holding a hearing on this issue, Congress would signal to the world that international religious freedom is a top priority to the American people, and that the religious rights of all human beings, regardless of their specific views, are to be respected.

Please do not hesitate to contact our staff at (202) 238-9088 if you have questions about Mr. Roy's case or about other religious discrimination cases. We hope that Congress is able to take action on this important issue in defense of one of the foundational American principles: the freedom to believe and not believe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Roy Speckhardt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Roy Speckhardt
Executive Director