

Progressive Atheists Inc.

Est. 10 Jan 2010 Reg: A0054119U Member of AAI

"Your participation is PA's future"



June 2015

... we seek to go beyond divisive racial, religious, tribal, and sectarian constructs, and instead, contribute to a universal humanity.

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MEMBERSHIP

Term 2015: 1 July 2014 – 30 June 2015

***** ONLY \$20 Annually *****

Purchase Membership Online:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/product-category/membership/>

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Twitter: twitter.com/ProgAtheistsInc

Progressive Atheist Inc. | Headlines

Report: Norway's Blasphemy Laws

Norway has scrapped its longstanding blasphemy law, meaning it is now legal to mock the beliefs of others, in a direct response to January's brutal attack on the French satirical magazine **Charlie Hebdo**. The law "underpins a perception that religious expressions and symbols are entitled to a special protection". "This is very unfortunate signal to send, and it is time that society clearly stands up for freedom of speech," the two wrote in their proposal.

<http://www.thelocal.no/20150507/norway-scrap-blasphemy-law-after-hebdo-attacks>

Update: Schools, Scripture, Banning of Books and Sexual Orthodoxy

Some books used in Special Religious Education (SRE) in NSW have been summarily banned by the Department of Education and Communities, apparently on the grounds that they conveyed classical Christian teaching about sexual morality. Read more here:

<https://lawandreligionaustralia.wordpress.com/2015/05/21/update-schools-scripture-banning-of-books-and-sexual-orthodoxy/>



Art involving crucifixes has been prosecuted in some European countries

Report: Bangladeshi Bloggers

Ananya Azad is no stranger to assassination attempts. The prominent Bangladeshi blogger's father, Humayun Azad, wrote a scathing critique of Islamist fundamentalism in 2003 entitled Pak Sar Jamin Sad Bad (Blessed Be the Sacred Land, the title of Pakistan's national anthem). A year after it was published, Humayan was seriously injured in a street attack by assailants wielding machetes.

Now, it is his son's turn to fear the outside world. Ananya followed in his father's footsteps to become a writer critical of intolerance and religious fundamentalism, a career that has landed him on a hitlist containing the names of 84 atheist bloggers.

Those murdered or injured to date:

12 May, science writer Ananta Bijoy Das became the third person named on that list to be murdered in the street this year. Avijit Roy, an American citizen of Bangladeshi origin – was murdered in a machete attack in Dhaka on 26 February. Members of the group, Ansarullah Bangla Team, have already been charged with the 2013 murder of blogger Ahmed Rajib Haider. In 2013, atheist blogger Asif Mohiuddin was stabbed in the street by religious extremists. A month later, he was arrested and held in prison for making derogatory remarks about religion and his blog was banned.



Bangladeshi secular activists take part in a torchlit protest in Dhaka after the murder of the blogger Avijit Roy in February. Photograph: Munir Uz Zaman/AFP

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/28/bangladeshi-blogger-ananya-azad-named-hitlist>

Report: Islamic Enlightenment is the only way forward

Palmyra is an extremely ancient human settlement, dating back to the eighth millennium BCE (BC). It has featured as a trading post and caravan watering hole on the ancient high roads of trade between the Levant and Asia since the third millennium BCE (BC).

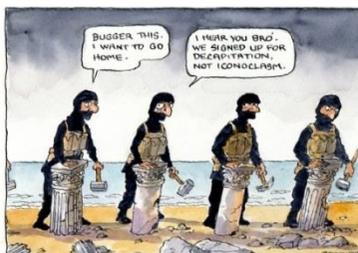
The marauding forces of ISIS are close to descending on the ruins of ancient Palmyra, one of the archaeological jewels of Syria. There is no reason to believe they will spare it their destructive iconoclasm should they take it. They have – like the Taliban in Afghanistan – shown a manic wilfulness in destroying the treasures of a complex past.

The prospect should, more than ever, concentrate our minds regarding what ISIS embodies and how to address the dangers that it poses to the Middle East and the world at large.

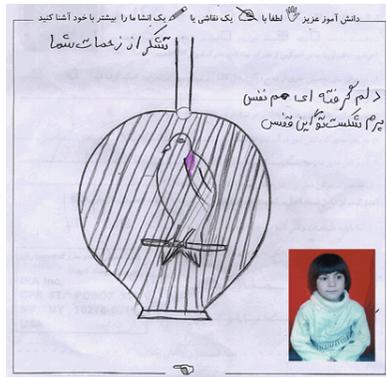
We should, also, work for and support Enlightenment values in the Islamic world. But that is a tall order and will face massive resistance. It will require a sustained war of ideas over the status of Muhammad and the Koran, as well as the reactionary, misogynist practices in much of the Muslim world.

It will be a long war, whatever happens to Palmyra; but for the sake of the Muslim world and the world at large it must be won – and Palmyra remembered. The cost of avoiding these issues has already become too high. The costs of giving up would be incalculable.

<http://www.theage.com.au/comment/islamic-enlightenment-is-the-only-way-forward-20150520-gh4nq5.html>



Report: Iranian Refugee Case Could Test Religious Freedom Laws, experts say



<http://irainc.org/>

A group of Iranian asylum seekers whose claims for protection have been rejected are appealing against the decision in the Federal Court, in what constitutional experts say could test Australia's protection of religious freedom.

The ABC understands the seven asylum seekers have all converted from Islam to Christianity and fear persecution if they return to Iran.

Human rights lawyer David Manne, who heads the Refugee and Immigration Law Society said in Iran, said apostasy - which is defined as the deliberate abandonment of Islam by a Muslim - is punishable by death.

"The evidence is crystal clear that [such] conversions to Christianity can result in serious human rights abuses, including execution," he said.

"Although the criminal code doesn't proscribe apostasy, they draw upon Islamic law to impose it.

"It's considered to be an offence against sharia law, which is punishable by death."

READ MORE: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-05-28/iranian-refugee-case-could-test-religious-freedom-laws/6504950>

Campaign: Salvation Army White Shield Appeal

THE WHITE SHIELD APPEAL HAPPENS EVERY YEAR BECAUSE HOPE ISN'T PART OF EVERYBODY'S STORY. NOT FOR THOSE HURT BY THE SALVATION ARMY ... AS THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE HAVE BEEN. AND I'M PASSIONATE ABOUT CHANGING THAT.

Please, demand justice. Demand change.

Aletha Blayse



The White Shield Appeal campaign started in May, 2014. On the weekend of the 24th and the 25th of May 2014, the Salvation Army sent a tribe of doorknockers around Australia asking for Australians' money to do its "good works." For international readers, in Australia, the Salvation Army calls its main, mid-year fundraising effort the 'Red Shield Appeal'.

I was upset that, over the years, most Australians (and indeed most people around the world) have given gladly to the Salvation Army, thinking the Salvation Army to be a trustworthy organisation. I wanted to remind people of the darker side of the Salvation Army known to those who have suffered at its hands (and have not seen justice or experienced healing!).

Social change is hard. Getting organisations like the Salvation Army to sit up and take notice of the public's disgust at its treatment of its victims is hard. But it's not impossible. Not if enough people get involved.

But they only survive with support and patronage. Without that, they fall.

But I do have faith that with pressure, from enough people, they will have to change. And for a business, which is really what the Salvation Army is, only a boycott – and a big one – will do the trick.

SEE HOW AT: <http://whiteshieldappeal.org/>

The Progressive Atheists' organisation and some of its members are actively involved in global campaigns to help and free the victims.

There is a lot more that we can do but we need your help.

Want to assist with this campaign? Email Progressive Atheists at campaigns@progressiveatheists.org

To make a donation for a banner to be used outside the Saudi Embassy, please donate on the Progressive Atheists website:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/products/donations/raif-badawi-campaign/>

Notice: Membership Renewals are due for Term 2016 (1 July 2015 - 30 June 2016)

Dear Members,

Thank you for your continued support, we very much value your continued membership of Progressive Atheists Inc. We are again coming up to the 1st July and renewal of membership is due. Our membership fee is \$20 with a \$10 concession amount for those on a low income.

The membership fees are used to maintain the Progressive Atheists website and to pay for basic running costs of Progressive Atheists.

You can renew your membership on the website via paypal, which also includes the ability to pay by visa card. Or you can renew your membership in person at the Open meeting on the 4th Saturday or at an atheist meetup with a committee member.

<http://progressiveatheists.org/product-category/membership/>

If you have any questions or difficulties with renewing your membership please contact our membership officer Phillipa Toia via email: membership@progressiveatheists.org

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Progressive Atheists Inc. Open Meeting

Saturday, 23rd June 2015, 12 pm - 4 pm at Clover & Rye

Progressive Atheists Purpose Statement:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/about-us/purpose-statement/>

Melbourne Atheists MeetUp Group | Event Calendar

Keep in touch with atheists around Melbourne via the Melbourne MeetUp:

<http://www.meetup.com/Melbourne-Atheists/events/calendar/>

Membership Term 2015 | 1 July 2014 - 30 June 2015

Progressive Atheists Membership is \$20 per annum / \$10 concession.

JOIN US | Purchase New Membership Online:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/about-us/membership/application/>

For other methods to renew and join please see our website:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/about-us/membership/>

Email our Membership Officer:

membership@progressiveatheists.org

OR ASK the person who gave you this bulletin

Progressive Atheists Inc. 'Proudly Atheist' T-shirts & Badges

T-shirts ONLY \$15 for members!

Badges \$2.50 each ~ 2 designs / 3 colours

Order your t-shirt or badge on our website:

<http://progressiveatheists.org/products-for-sale/>

Sales Rep. Elida Radig: sales@progressiveatheists.org