



United Nations Human Rights Council, 23rd Session (27 May – 14 June 2013)

Item 4 General Debate

Monday 3 June 2013

Speaker: BHA and IHEU representative, Roy Brown

The Bloggers of Bangladesh

Mr President,

Bloggers in Bangladesh opposed to Islamist groups such as Jamat I Islam are being targeted with calls for their deaths for “insulting Islam”. The Islamist parties have provided the government with a list of 84 so called “atheist bloggers”. Several have already been arrested and a government official has promised to pursue all of those listed.¹

But even if some of these bloggers are atheists, so what? They have the absolute right to express their opinions. For the government to cave in to the Islamist’s demands is a total denial of the State’s obligations under international law. What kind of religious freedom is it, Mr President, that says, you are one of use whether you like it or not, and if you leave you must be killed?

In another case, in November last year, Mr Sattar Bahesti, an Iranian blogger critical of the regime died after torture in Evin Prison in Tehran four days after being arrested.

What is it about religion, Mr President, that so many believers feel the need to kill those who don’t share their faith? And I am not only speaking about violence extremist but about the six states who prescribe the death penalty for apostasy – all of them member states of the OIC.

We call upon:

- The government of Bangladesh to immediately release the bloggers,
- The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to immediately cease all harassment, torture, and murder of bloggers,
- And we call upon all members of the OIC to recognize their responsibilities under international law to respect freedom of opinion, expression, and religion.

Thank you, Sir.

¹ http://seenews.india.com/news/south-asia/bangladesh-court-approves-blasphemy-trial-against-bloggers_852430.html