



UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON
INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

January 25, 2016

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

On behalf of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), I write to urge that our government provide humanitarian parole for a limited number of Bangladeshi writers at imminent risk of assassination by extremist groups.

We share the concerns raised in a letter sent to you last month from PEN America Center, and co-signed by several other prominent human rights organizations, about the acute threat that Bangladeshi bloggers and publishers faced in 2015 and continue to face. In 2015, four Bangladeshis, Washiqur Rahman Babu, Ananta Bijoy Das, Niloy Chatterjee, and Faisal Arefin Dipan, and Bangladeshi-American Avijit Roy, were assassinated because of their writings, including expressing their secular beliefs that amounted to blasphemy in the eyes of the religious extremists who killed them. Additionally, numerous other individuals have been placed on “hit-lists,” which are widely available on the Internet. The five murders, along with the hit lists, underscore that several individuals remain in imminent danger.

USCIRF respectfully urges you to use your good offices to help secure humanitarian parole for a select number of bloggers who remain in imminent danger in Bangladesh.

We thank you and stand ready to assist in any way.

Sincerely,



Robert P. George
Chairman

Cc. The Honorable Nisha Desai Biswal, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs
The Honorable Jeh Johnson, Secretary of Homeland Security
The Honorable Tom Malinowski, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor
The Honorable Rob Berschinski, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
The Honorable David Saperstein, Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom

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