



Annual Report

2015

IHEU is the global representative body of the humanist movement, uniting a diversity of non-religious organisations and individuals.

We want everyone to live a life of dignity in a world where universal human rights are respected and protected, and where states uphold secularism.

We work to build, support and represent the global humanist movement, defending human rights, particularly those of non-religious people, and promoting humanist values world-wide.



IHEU Annual Report 2015

President's Introduction

Welcome to this new look Annual Report of the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU).

2015 was a difficult and dangerous year to be a humanist in many parts of the world. The year started with the attack on the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris in January, and ended with the massacre in that same city at the Bataclan theatre in November.

In Bangladesh, four secular bloggers and a publisher were hacked to death for their views and their work. In Saudi Arabia, poet Ashraf Fayadh was sentenced to death for apostasy, while Raif Badawi was given the first 50 lashes of his sentence of 1,000 lashes and 10 years' imprisonment for "insulting Islam through electronic channels".

IHEU has spoken out on all these issues. We have used our presence and status at the United Nations, the Council of Europe and other bodies to raise the concerns and the profile of humanists in all parts of the world.

IHEU's Freedom of Thought Report 2015 highlighted and analysed the persecution suffered by the non-religious in every country of the world. The Report was highly praised by the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Heiner Bielefeldt, and he stressed the importance of this work continuing.

On a more positive note, humanism is growing in almost every part of the world, as people recognise and embrace our positive life stance. IHEU has supported humanist organizations to grow and to network with each other as part of a truly global movement.

This Annual Report gives details of the range of work undertaken by IHEU in 2015. There have been exciting developments, with the appointment of a new Chief Executive and a reinvigorated Executive Committee with exciting and ambitious plans for the future.

I would like to thank you for supporting IHEU. I hope that you find this Annual Report interesting, and that you share it with other people so that we can grow our networks and achieve even more in the years ahead.



Andrew Copson, IHEU President

Executive Committee

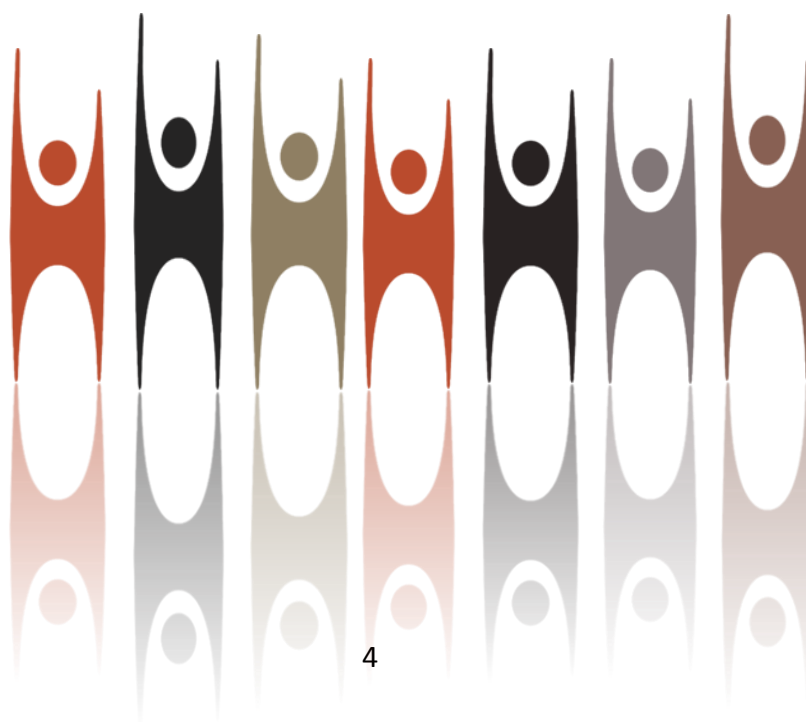
President:	Sonja Eggerickx	Belgium	until 30th May 2015
President:	Andrew Copson	UK	from 31st May 2015
First Vice President:	Andrew Copson	UK	until 31st May 2015
First Vice President:	Rein Zunderdorp	Netherlands	from 31st May 2015
Treasurer:	Roar Johnsen	Norway	
Vice Presidents:	Ron Solomon	USA	
	Susan Sackett	USA	
	Rein Zunderdorp	Netherlands	until 31st May 2015
	Anne-France Ketelaer	Belgium	from 30th May 2015

Staff

Chief Executive:	Carl Blackburn
Director of Communications:	Bob Churchill
Administrator:	Colin Divens
Director of Advocacy:	Elizabeth O'Casey

Heads of Delegations

United Nations (Geneva):	Elizabeth O'Casey
United Nations (New York):	Margaretha Jones
Council of Europe:	David Pollock
UNESCO:	Jean de Brueker



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Aim 1: Successful and sustainable Member Organizations in every part of the world

We provide funding, training, intellectual resources and other support to stimulate, encourage and foster new and emerging humanist and other relevant organizations. We concentrate our efforts in priority regions, but also operate opportunistically to support organizations as and where they arise.



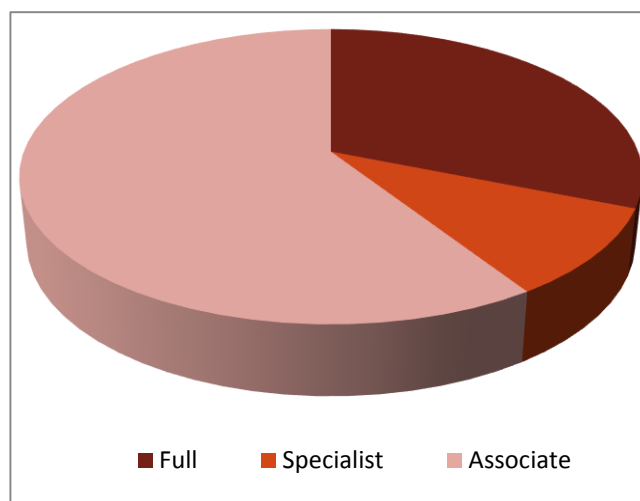
IHEU Member Organizations

At the end of 2015, IHEU's membership was:

Full Member Organizations:	32
Specialist Member Organizations:	10
Associate Member Organizations:	61

In addition, there were four organizations whose membership had been approved by the Executive Committee but was awaiting ratification by the General Assembly. These are:

- Norwegian Humanist Association, Finnmark County (Norway)
- Atheist and Agnostic Alliance (Pakistan)
- Humanist Society of Greater Phoenix (USA)
- Atheist Foundation of Australia (Australia)



The map on the facing page shows the worldwide distribution of IHEU Member Organizations.



IHEU Member Organizations in 2015, each bubble represents the number of Member Organizations in a given country.

Contact with Member Organizations

General communications

IHEU maintained regular communication with all our Member Organizations, keeping them informed of current news and events and supporting them with their campaigns and publicity. The nature of IHEU as a global organization meant that this was mainly done through email, telephone and the use of our website and social media such as Facebook.

Towards the end of the year, we regularised and enhanced this through the development of a new high quality members' monthly newsletter, which is emailed to contacts in every IHEU Member Organization. An adapted version of this newsletter is also emailed to all our individual supporters.

In addition, a regular briefing is sent by the new IHEU Chief Executive to the Chief Officers of all Member Organizations following each IHEU Executive Committee meeting. This keeps those Chief Officers up to date on policy and strategy discussions and involves them more fully in the future direction of IHEU.

Face-to-face

Resources limit our ability to visit as many of our Member Organizations as we would like. However, we took advantage of our General Assembly in the Philippines to meet members face to face, and the Executive Committee's planning meeting in New York in October also gave us the opportunity to meet members of the American Ethical Union and members of

Screen grab from the electronic IHEU Members Newsletter



IHEU's delegation at the United Nations in New York.

The new Chief Executive visited a number of Member Organizations in Norway, the USA, Belgium and the UK in order to gain a deeper understanding of their work, issues and aspirations, and to forge even closer working links.

Networking and support

The staff in the IHEU office have continued to be responsive to the needs of our Member Organizations, providing advice, contacts and logistical support. In addition, we involved Member Organizations in collating and analysing the information used to produce the Freedom of Thought Report 2015, and particularly in checking the accuracy of the information held for their country.

Various Member Organizations in countries with extant “blasphemy” laws were also involved as national or special partners in the International Coalition Against Blasphemy Laws.

IHEU facilitated the setting up of a twinning project between the Humanist Society Scotland and Malawi ASH. This is thriving, and we are looking at ways that the experience and learning of this project

can be shared, and supporting other Member Organizations to undertake similar work.

IHEU supported the BHA’s Voltaire Lecture, working with the lecturer Bonya Ahmed (the widow of murdered Bangladeshi blogger Avajit Roy, who was herself also attacked) in an advisory and editing capacity.

IHEU-Hivos Grants Programme

2015 was the final year of the 3 year IHEU-Hivos Humanist Networking and Development grant programme. 14 applications were received, and we funded 5 projects. A sixth project was funded over 2 years, from 2014-2015:

1. Speeding Global Alliance against Untouchability (SOCH Nepal, awarded €5,500)

A conference on untouchability had to be postponed due to the earthquake in April that killed more than 8,000 people in the country. This will now take place in May 2016 in Kathmandu.

2. Humanist Ethos Project (Uganda Humanist Schools Trust, awarded €6,500)

The project brought together managers and teachers from Isaac Newton, Mustard



Seed and Kasese humanist schools, to create a set of common values and principles, develop a staff code of conduct, establish principles and procedures for handling issues of morality and discipline, design a programme for humanist pastoral care and participatory activities so that students develop an appreciation of the humanist outlook, deliver an induction programme for staff, teachers and parent-teacher associations, and set out guidelines for future Humanist Schools in Uganda and beyond.

3. Maintaining Secularism as an Asset (SOCH Nepal, awarded €6,000)

Achieving secularism in Nepal has been a hard struggle, and it is still misunderstood and attacked. The project organised seminars on secularism for lawmakers, political and social leaders. It also ran a weekly TV show for 8 months, and published a book on secularism.

4. Quarterly public lectures and Seminars on Humanism (Lagos Humanists & Skeptics, awarded €4,000)

The project organised a successful seminar with over 100 attendees. The theme was “Benefits of Doubt: Why Questioning Pays” and included a range of speakers from different walks of life. This helped the organization become an officially registered Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) with the Corporate Affairs Commission in Nigeria and to establish a functioning office. The organization has now renamed itself the Humanist Assembly of Lagos.

5. Secondary school training, humanist & secularist education to school children & relevant book publication (Viveka Educational Society, awarded €6,000)

A secondary teacher training college had previously been established in 2007, with help from IHEU. This project provided training for 100 teacher-trainees from three states over three months at the



Organisers and attendees at Lagos humanist seminar

college. The training covered humanism and rationalism, the secularist way of life within society, how to inculcate rationalist attitudes in children, and how to cultivate human values during the early years of school children. The trained teachers prepared teaching aids to teach in five schools and about 1,500 children on different subjects for fifty days. This entire programme took place over five months. A study camp for the general public took place in April 2015, including discussions on anti-superstition campaigns. There were 150 participants from 17 districts of Andhra Pradesh.

We are very sad to report the sudden and unexpected death of Viveka Educational Society Secretary Ancha Bapa Rao, on 17 December 2015.

6. Developing Humanist Responses to Human Rights (Social Development Foundation, India, awarded €8,000 in 2014 and €8,000 in 2015)

The project undertook community mobilization work, with a focus on the removal of superstition and prejudices against Dalits and other marginalized communities. Two 3-day camps were organised, each involving over 40 young

people. These looked at Human Rights issues, gender disparity, superstition, patriarchy, caste discrimination and untouchability. Each ended with a Humanist Festival, recognising and celebrating the contribution of the humanist movement in India and worldwide. In addition, five training workshops have developed a spirit of enquiry amongst young people, and have included a Miracle Exposure Programme.



A speaker at the Humanist festival in Deoria, Uttar Pradesh

Aim 2: Member Organizations which are networked together as a co-ordinated global movement

We bring together organizations of all non-theistic traditions, and the individuals engaged in the work of those organizations, both in person and in online networks. We support organizations to learn from each other, take joint action and become involved in our work.

Conferences and events

Through its staff and Executive Committee members, IHEU has been able to have a presence and input to a number of conferences and events. These have included:

- Secular Leaders Summit in Houston, Texas, USA
- Sharia Law, Apostasy and Secularism day conference
- Raif Badawi meeting with Amnesty and the UK All-Party Parliamentary Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief
- Human Rights Without Frontiers 'blasphemy' report launch event in the House of Lords, UK
- Regional conference in Voss and Freedom of Thought Report discussion event in Oslo, Norway
- Launch of Heiner Bielefeldt's report on Freedom of Religion or Belief and children's rights at the United Nations in New York, USA

- Protest re Bangladesh bloggers in Whitechapel, UK
- European Bangladesh Forum day conference on "The rise of terrorism in the name of Islam: Bangladesh/South Asian context & the need for Global Resistance"

IHEU's Director of Communications has in addition been invited to a number of speaking engagements in order to promote IHEU's work within humanist organizations, and increase the knowledge and understanding of humanism outside the movement. This has included:

- Oxford University Amnesty International panel event on 'freedom of religion or belief'
- Bread and Roses YouTube Channel interview on 'blasphemy' campaign and Freedom of Thought work

- Presentation and workshop at IHEYO event in Bucharest
- Young Professionals in Foreign Policy panel event
- PATAS Conference (Philippines) on blasphemy laws
- " YES" to a Secular Constitution for Iraqi-Kurdistan panel event and meeting
- Geekfest London talk on the Freedom of Thought Report
- European Young Humanists Weekend in the Netherlands
- Norwegian Humanist Association regional conference in Voss and panel event in Oslo
- Freedom of Thought Report Launch at the European Parliament
- Various local group talks on IHEU and our work:
 - Imperial College Atheists
 - University of Southampton Atheist Society Reason Week
 - Hampstead Humanists
 - East Kent Humanists
 - Exeter Atheist Society
 - Satirising religion debate with Exeter Debating Society
 - North East Humanists
 - Plymouth Humanists

We are exploring ways of using media such as Youtube and Skype to be able to both participate in and broadcast more of these meetings throughout the world.



International Humanist and Ethical Youth Organization (IHEYO)

IHEYO is the youth section of IHEU. It helps humanists between the ages of 18 and 35 to learn, organise and stay connected through a range of events, activities and networks.

Humanist East European Conference, 24-26 April, Bucharest, Romania

This conference was organised by two large Romanian organizations with the support of the European Humanist

Federation (EHF) and IHEYO. The conference was a great success, with over 50 participants from 10 countries, and many humanists from the region. The conference was themed around empowering social media use, but also had important discussions on the problems and opportunities of humanism in Eastern Europe. IHEU delivered an interactive session on 'how to grow the humanist movement'.

Establishment of Americas Working Group during FES Conference, Washington DC, USA, 22 - 25 May

IHEYO launched the Americas Working Group at the Future of Ethical Societies conference (FES XII): "Ethics in Action: Do No Harm or Do More Good?". As well as being a good opportunity for networking, IHEYO facilitated a discussion on the structure and operation for the newly established working group. The Americas Working Group was subsequently formally established at the IHEYO General Assembly in Oslo in November. The group focuses on North, South and Central America, though currently IHEYO contacts are mostly based in the USA.

AHA Working Group meeting and capacity building during Asian Conference, "Unity in Diversity", Singapore, 20-21 June

Themes discussed were: Humanism and Dialogue in General; Finding the Heart of Humanism: Emotional Communication within your society and beyond; Humanism and Scientific Literacy:

Communicating the Wonder of the Natural World; and Humanism and Service to Others. IHEYO was able to support 9 young humanists from Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines and Malaysia with travel and accommodation grants. The conference consisted of a one-day seminar and one-day capacity training. An Asian Working Group meeting was also held and 19 people attended.

European Young Humanists Summer Weekend

The European Humanist Youth Days have been postponed to 2016. To overcome this gap, the organizing committee, in collaboration with the Dutch Humanist Association, organized the first Young Humanist Summer Weekend from August 7-10 in Esbeek, the Netherlands. Over 70 young humanists from 10 countries engaged in lectures and workshops that focused around 'inspiration and humanism'. IHEU's Director of Communications and Richy Thompson from the British Humanist Association were invited to give a "young professionals" view on working for humanist organizations.

Regional Conference East Africa, 'for a better Rwanda: Promoting Solidarity in East Africa', 26-28 August

This conference lasted two days and included several interactive activities and training sessions. There was a total of 19 participants (11 men and 8 women).

Global Campaign: Better Tomorrow, 8-15 November 2015

Better Tomorrow is a relatively new initiative that seeks to unify as many humanistic social initiatives as possible. By highlighting projects and telling the stories of the people behind them, IHEYO and its partners want to show that humanism is more than just a theoretical concept. The campaign had a promising start with more than 30 organizations taking part. The initiatives themselves were diverse: feeding programmes, education, blood

IHEU websites

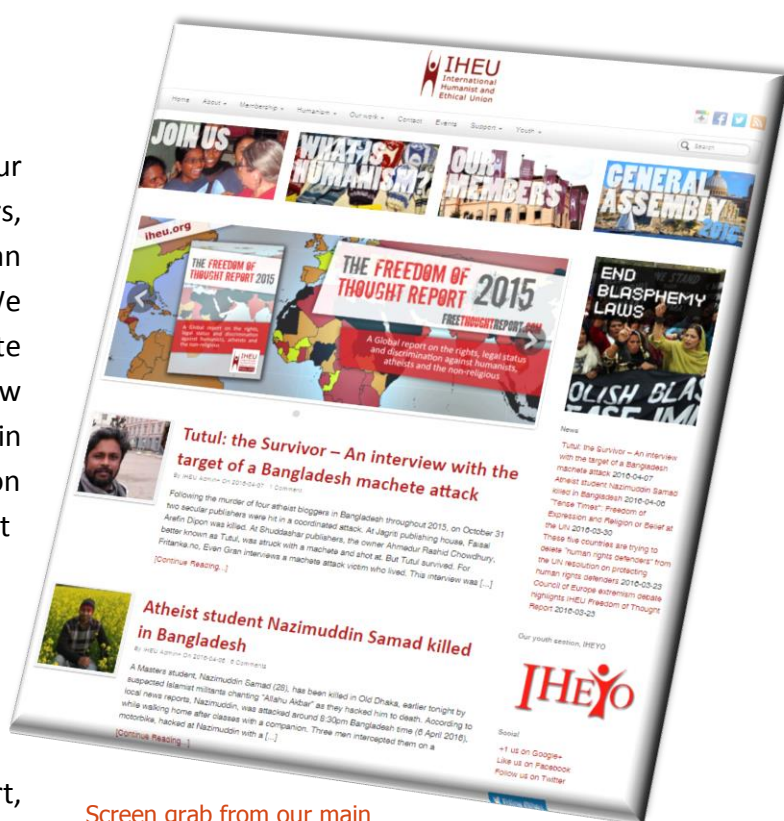
IHEU's main website <iheu.org> is our "shop window", where Members, supporters and members of the public can see what we believe and what we do. We have ensured that this is kept up to date with news and events, and details of how people can support us and get involved in our work. As an international organization we recognize that many people who visit our website do not speak English as a first language, and we make sure that the language we use is clear and accessible.

IHEU uses its website to also support, publicise and promote the work of our Member Organizations. It is our hope that visitors to our website will go on to contact their local humanist organization and get more actively involved. We are currently looking at ways that we may be able to measure and quantify this.

donations, cleaning up slums, etc, but the underlying basic philosophy was clear: a better tomorrow.

Launch of IHEYO newsletter

Following its General Assembly in Oslo, IHEYO launched its monthly newsletter. Mostly meant for keeping people up to date, it is also used for tackling issues of concern to our community, such as secularisation of education, domestic abuse and equal rights.



Screen grab from our main website at iheu.org

Analysis

83% of sessions on the website were new users in 2015. There were 287,563 pageviews, from 153,651 visitors. The proportion of visitors using mobile devices and tablets grew significantly (to totals of 36% and 10% respectively of total visits), highlighting the importance of the website's "responsive" design which makes it easily viewable and navigable on smaller screens.

of videos and webinars, that will make us still more accessible and effective.

Satellite websites

In addition to the main IHEU website, we also maintain a dedicated website for the IHEU Freedom of Thought Report <freethoughtreport.com> and the End Blasphemy Laws Campaign <end-blasphemy-laws.org>. These are designed to suit their varying needs and audiences. The Freedom of Thought Report site prominently displays the IHEU logo, as well as highlighting the support for the report from well-known figures and experts, and providing further resources for visitors who may have found the site either as persecuted individuals, campaigners, or lawmakers. The End Blasphemy Laws Campaign website highlights the map of countries with 'blasphemy' laws and links to pages of information on every country.

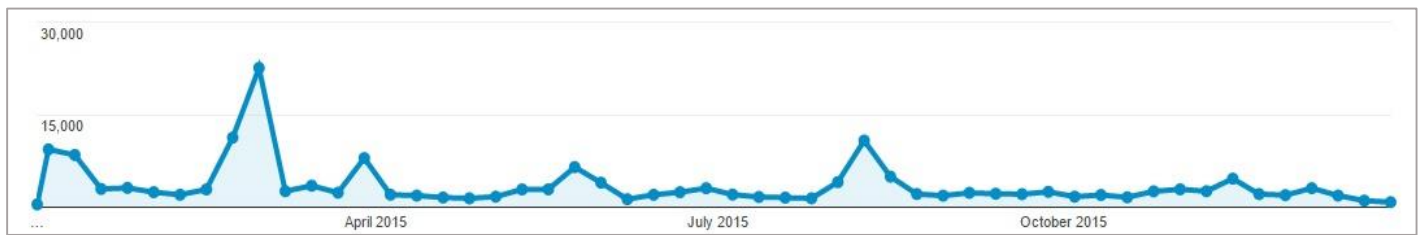


Development

We have also worked with our youth section, IHEYO, to integrate them more fully, whilst still retaining a distinctive identity.

We have made modifications to the website this year to make it more responsive and user-friendly. We are planning to continue this in 2016, and to explore other online tools, such as the use





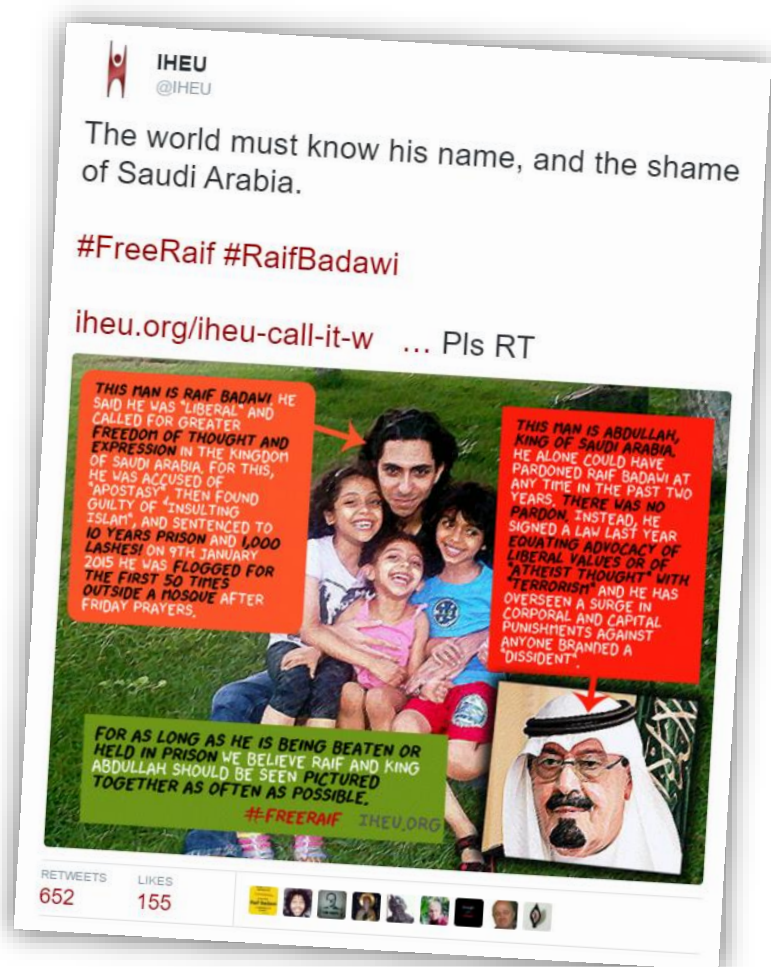
Web sessions by week for the year 2015 on iheu.org. The large traffic spikes include incoming Freedom of Thought Report media links in January, and moments where we produced prompt and informed coverage of the Bangladesh crisis as atrocities occurred.

Social Media

Most of our communication with Member Organizations is through email, which is the quickest and most efficient way to keep people informed of news and events and get their views on issues.

Social media, and in particular Facebook and Twitter, are a very effective way to inform the general public, and potential new members, about our work and our worldview. This is an important part of our communications strategy, and is our most significant source of referrals after search engines (e.g. Google) and direct traffic. 392% of visitors to iheu.org in 2015 arrived via social media. Wikipedia and The Guardian newspaper also appear amongst the top referrers.

We saw a 52% rise in our Twitter followers in 2015, from around 5,180 to 7,880 by the end of the year. Our top tweet of the year was seen 58,400 times, with 3,924 total engagements (clicks, re-



A popular tweet from @IHEU

tweets, etc). This 'infographic'-style media message represented a prompt response to the first (and we believe the only) lashing punishment carried out against Raif Badawi. The tweet linked to our news story on our website, and 753 people followed that link.

End Blasphemy Laws Campaign

Responding to terror

In direct response to the Charlie Hebdo massacre in January 2015, we brought forward discussions with the European Humanist Federation (EHF) about a joint campaign on blasphemy laws in Europe and around the world. We reached out to Member Organizations in countries with extant 'blasphemy-type' laws and involved an existing ad hoc coalition of humanist and secular organizations working on a similar idea.

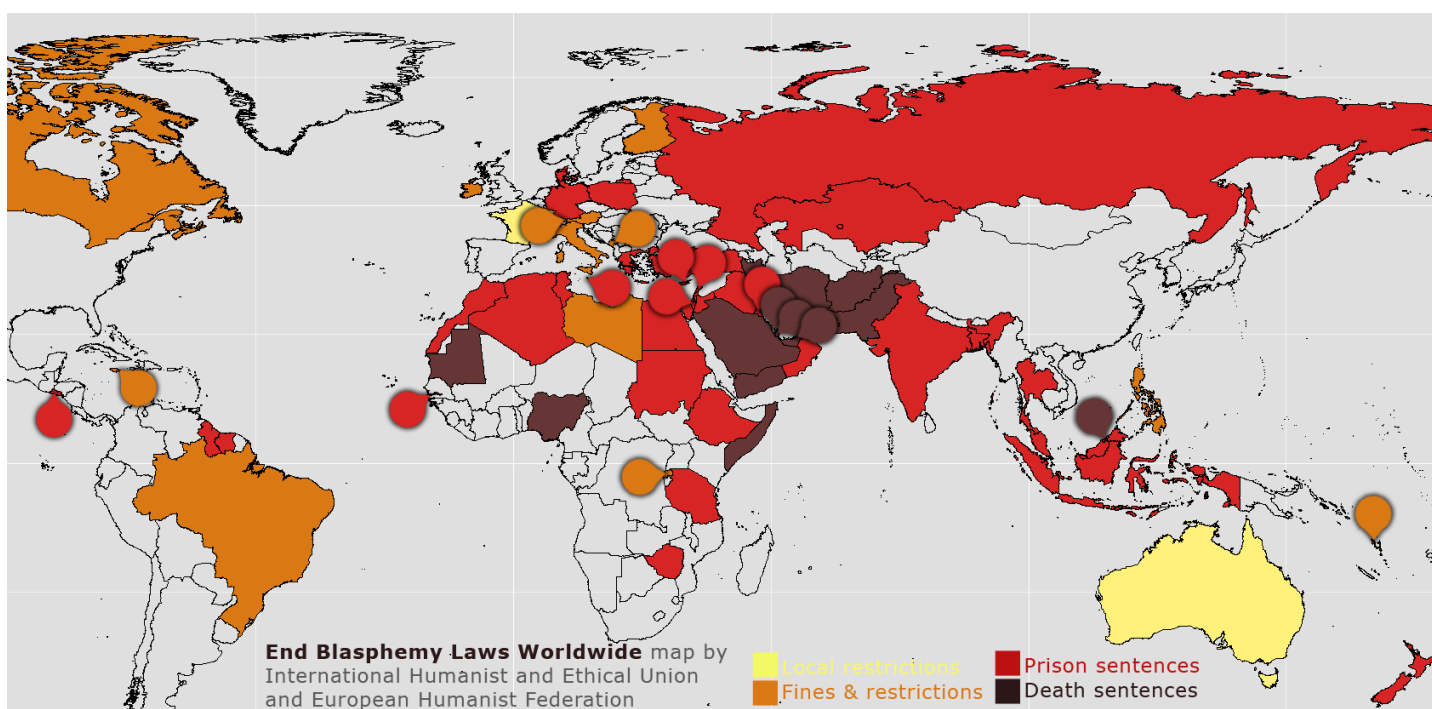
Founding a coalition

IHEU led this work, combining efforts and establishing the End Blasphemy Laws

Campaign and the International Coalition Against Blasphemy Laws. IHEU continues to be at the heart of this campaign, hosting the website end-blasphemy-laws.org and bringing partners together to co-ordinate ongoing advocacy efforts around free expression versus 'defamation of religion' internationally.

Founding a coalition

Important in its own right, this work has also been useful in providing new information and analysis for the Freedom of Thought Report, finding new audiences, and new allies both within and beyond the humanist movement.



Aim 3: International and regional government policies are shaped by our policy agenda

We maintain delegations at priority international institutions to represent the global movement and advance our policies. We work in co-operation wherever possible with other NGOs and mobilise our Member Organizations to lobby their governments in support of initiatives that advance our policies.

United Nations Human Rights Council, Geneva

28th Session: March 2015

IHEU contributions focused on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Freedom of Expression, and how these are deeply intertwined and mutually reinforcing. This engaged with much of what was discussed at the Council in the wake of Paris and Copenhagen and also chimed with one of the core messages this session - the "neighbourliness" of Articles 18 and 19. It provided a good platform to promote our End Blasphemy Laws Campaign and do

more awareness-raising on the issue.

IHEU submitted two written statements ahead of the 28th session:

- "Hate campaigns and violence against people with no religion by state and non-state actors"
- "Freedom of Assembly, Association and Expression in Mauritania: the plight of anti-slavery activists"

IHEU's team also delivered four oral



iheu.org/geneva/

statements, on:

- the importance of the relationship between Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Religion or Belief
- the right to speak freely and critically about religion and related topics
- the inconsistent and hypocritical ways some state leaders and officials profess support for the right to Freedom of Expression
- critiquing India's failure to address caste-based discrimination

News stories were written for all of these and other issues such as the Danish decision to retain its "blasphemy" law and IHEU's election to the Geneva NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief¹.

IHEU participated in a range of meetings on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Freedom of Expression, human rights in Iran, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. We also met with Heiner Bielefeldt, UN

¹ Stories from this session were:

iheu.org/restricting-free-speech-does-not-ward-off-violence-it-undermines-humanity/

iheu.org/at-un-iheu-raises-issue-of-hate-campaigns-against-those-with-no-religion/

iheu.org/denmark-announces-it-will-keep-its-blasphemy-law/

iheu.org/iheu-to-un-we-must-protect-the-people-who-promote-and-defend-the-right-to-free-expression/

iheu.org/iheu-calls-on-un-to-do-more-to-protect-mauritanian-anti-slavery-campaigners/

iheu.org/iheu-calls-for-end-to-empty-rhetoric-and-hypocrisy-on-issue-of-free-speech/

iheu.org/iheu-representative-elected-to-freedom-of-religion-or-belief-ngo-committee/

iheu.org/iheu-calls-out-india-at-un-on-caste-based-discrimination/

Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

Our Head of Delegation, Elizabeth O'Casey, was elected Vice-Chair on the Geneva NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief. This is the first time the IHEU has been formally involved with the Committee in Geneva, and the first time a group representing humanists has had any role in the Committee.

Overall, this session provided the opportunity to talk to Heiner Bielefeldt and his assistants, and to network with other groups, helping IHEU to consolidate our position as a known group within the community of NGOs at the UN in Geneva. We joined with other humanist delegations to lobby for amendments to the EU-sponsored resolution on Freedom of Religion or Belief, to gain explicit mention of non-religious individuals and communities (particularly in places where violence against religious groups is mentioned). This resolution has to be viewed alongside a resolution tabled by the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (OIC) aimed at "combatting intolerance".

Inter-Parliamentary Union work on Defamation

Following the Human Rights Council session, IHEU was involved in a lobbying effort, led by Article 19, against a proposed emergency resolution by Jordan at the Inter-Parliamentary Union on 'insult to religion' (another attempt to outlaw defamation of religions). The resolution was eventually withdrawn by Jordan.

Universal Periodic Review Process on Mauritania

IHEU prepared and submitted a report on Mauritania for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), the first time we have engaged with this process at the pre-sessional stage. This lengthy submission looked at a number of human rights issues, including Freedom of Religion or Belief, the rights of women, and Freedom of Association and Assembly.

Involvement with the UPR process gives IHEU more credibility and provides a useful tool for our Member Organizations to engage with the UN on the human rights situation in their respective countries.

Media Work

IHEU met with the Dutch TV company, HUMAN, to support them and facilitate an interview with Boris van Der Ham for a documentary they were making.

29th Session: June 2015

IHEU's intervention focused on the rights of women and LGBT rights (and the intersection with religious or 'cultural' or 'traditional' values). We also discussed freedom of expression, the plight of atheists in Egypt, and racism.

IHEU submitted a written statement ahead of the 29th session, highlighting the

case of atheist/humanist bloggers in Bangladesh².

IHEU's team also delivered eight oral statements, on:

- Child marriage
- Forced labour in the Gulf states
- Abortion and violence against women
- Culture, religion and tradition and human rights
- Free expression and LGBT rights
- Egypt's hate campaign against atheists
- The OIC and LGBT rights
- Racism in the USA.



The UN Human Rights Council, Geneva

We joined a statement on the protection of LGBT Human Rights defenders delivered by International lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex association (ILGA).

² The statement is available for download at: iheu.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/IHEU_WS_HRC29_Bangladesh.pdf

News stories were written for each oral statement delivered and each written submission.³

IHEU forged links with a number of new NGOs and individuals, including Amnesty International, Liberal International, International Network of Liberal Women, Gulf Center for Human Rights, CIVICUS, Association for Progressive Communications, Sentinel, FIDH, UPR Info, Democratic Party Thailand, and a Lebanese Government MP.

We met with the Chilean Ambassador and various members of the missions from Ireland, the United States, Norway, Switzerland, Russian Federation, and Uruguay.

³ These stories are:

iheu.org/iheu-highlights-role-of-child-marriage-in-blocking-girls-right-to-education/
iheu.org/international-community-needs-to-do-more-against-forced-labour-and-trafficking-in-gulf-states-urges-iheu/
iheu.org/end-violence-against-women-and-comply-with-your-duties-on-abortion-iheu-says-to-african-states-at-un/
iheu.org/culture-religion-and-tradition-do-not-justify-human-rights-abuse-says-iheu-at-un/
iheu.org/iheu-defends-importance-of-free-expression-for-lgbt-people/
iheu.org/iheu-calls-out-egypt-at-un-on-its-hate-campaign-against-atheists/
iheu.org/iheu-criticises-oic-countries-and-allies-for-their-position-on-lgbt-rights/
iheu.org/police-brutality-and-racism-in-american-criminal-justice-system-highlighted-by-iheu/
iheu.org/at-human-rights-council-iheu-raises-plight-of-bangladeshi-atheist-bloggers/

We participated in meetings covering issues such as the rights of the child, freedom of assembly and expression, LGBT human rights defenders, the rights of women in Iraq, violence against women, and a number of Informal meetings on resolutions.

IHEU concentrated on four resolutions this session:

- The right to freedom of expression, including in the form of art
- Accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women: eliminating domestic violence
- Elimination of discrimination against women
- Strengthening efforts to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage



Elizabeth O'Casey
IHEU's new Director of Advocacy

At the invitation of Liberal International, we joined a meeting with them and Gender Specialists at the International Labour Organisation (ILO), where issues such as slavery and trafficking were discussed, with a focus on the rights of women. Elizabeth also met with her colleagues on the NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief whilst in Geneva.

Human Rights Committee work (right to life)

In May, IHEU submitted a 7-page document to the UN Human Rights Committee on Article 6 (of the ICCPR) - “the right to life” (concentrating on abortion and suicide) and was invited to speak at the half-day discussion of the issue. This was in reaction to a take-over of the submissions by a strong lobby of pro-life groups. IHEU wrote a news story covering the meeting and joined a statement by the Center for Reproductive Rights.

30th Session: September 2015

IHEU submitted three written statements [A/HRC/30/NGO/129, .../39, and ...40] for the 30th session. These covered the issue of Sexual Reproductive and Health Rights in the Group of Latin American and Caribbean (GRULAC) states, the influence of the Church, Civil Society in Russia, and the Holy See and its obligations on the Rights of the Child. All three statements were followed up with oral statements in the Council.

We joined a statement by Amnesty and the International Service for Human Rights, arguing against the increasing undermining of NGOs in the UN context.

The team delivered five oral statements (and a joint one with the European Humanist Federation on the Holy See),

and news stories were prepared on each.⁴

IHEU networked with NGOs and UN individuals, and met with Heiner Bielefeldt’s assistant to discuss possible speaking events. We made contacts in the Missions of the Netherlands, the USA, Egypt, Qatar, Canada and Tunisia. This session represented progress in terms of contact with OIC countries particularly. IHEU attended, and often spoke at, meetings that covered freedom of speech in Asia, human rights in the Maldives and Bangladesh, human rights in Saudi Arabi and Iran, freedom of expression and the safety of journalists, LGBT rights and violence, and a number of informal meetings on resolutions.

Prior to the session, IHEU attended a meeting hosted by the UK Foreign Office to run over the key themes and resolutions of the September session, and we were able to raise the case of M’Kaitir in Mauritania. We also raised the issue with the States we had made contact with, and submitted a letter to the Council’s President on the issue.

⁴ These stories were:

[<iheu.org/human-rights-need-secularism-argues-the-iheu-at-the-un-2/>](http://iheu.org/human-rights-need-secularism-argues-the-iheu-at-the-un-2/)

[<iheu.org/iheu-calls-out-russia-at-un-on-its-treatment-of-civil-society/>](http://iheu.org/iheu-calls-out-russia-at-un-on-its-treatment-of-civil-society/)

[<iheu.org/on-global-day-of-action-for-access-to-safe-and-legal-abortion-iheu-calls-on-un-to-protect-srhr-of-all/>](http://iheu.org/on-global-day-of-action-for-access-to-safe-and-legal-abortion-iheu-calls-on-un-to-protect-srhr-of-all/)

[<iheu.org/criticism-of-islamic-tenets-not-the-same-as-islamophobia-argues-iheu/>](http://iheu.org/criticism-of-islamic-tenets-not-the-same-as-islamophobia-argues-iheu/)

[iheu.org/iheu-calls-for-strong-universalism-from-un-in-face-of-isis-brutality/>](http://iheu.org/iheu-calls-for-strong-universalism-from-un-in-face-of-isis-brutality/)

Elizabeth also wrote a blog on the session:

[<iheu.org/free-speech-a-muted-council-and-the-dubious-weapon-of-offence/>](http://iheu.org/free-speech-a-muted-council-and-the-dubious-weapon-of-offence/)

United Nations, New York

IHEU's Head of Delegation in Geneva, Elizabeth O'Casey, spent seven working days in New York in November in order to gain a better understanding of the UN headquarters there, and to improve communication and co-ordination between IHEU's New York and Geneva delegations. Elizabeth has been appointed Director of Advocacy for IHEU, and this improved co-ordination will be a key to success in 2016.



The UN in New York

IHEU's Head of Delegation at New York, Margaretha Jones, is a member of the Board of the Conference of NGOs (CoNGO) and is involved in campaigning for the rights of families, children and women's sexual and reproductive rights. John Wagner represents IHEU on the Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief (CoFORB) and the Committee on the Rights of Children (CRC). This involved participating in planning meetings and relevant briefings.

In 2015 we raised issues on blasphemy and apostasy laws, and related concerns around freedom of religion or belief.⁵

IHEU attended sessions on gender equality and religion, organised by CoFORB, an all-day meeting on the "Role of Religion & Faith-Based Organizations in International Affairs" and a side event at the 53rd Commission for Social Development, "Still Dreaming: Realizing Civil Rights as Human Rights", organised by the CRC. We also participated in meetings around the status of women, including a review of progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action⁶, 20 years after its adoption at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995⁷.

Ahead of the launch of the Freedom of Thought Report in December, the IHEU delegation in New York participated in a planning meeting at the CoFORB to promote the Report, and also argued successfully for Member Organizations to be permitted to circulate letters from groups for endorsement or signature.

⁵ The activities of these two committees can be found at: unforb.wordpress.com/2015/04/ <[facebook.com/NGOCommitteeOnChildrensRightsNewYork](https://www.facebook.com/NGOCommitteeOnChildrensRightsNewYork)>

⁶ <un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/beijingdeclaration.html>

⁷ <unwomen.org/en/csw/csw59-2015#sthash.Z6GNqIrH.dpuf>

Council of Europe, Strasbourg

IHEU's delegation, led by David Pollock, ensured an active presence at the INGO Conference and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).

INGO Conference

At the 26-29 January meeting, the Conference elected as president Anna Rurka (uncontested), a Polish social worker turned assistant professor of education at Nanterre University, Paris. She immediately took an interest in IHEU's "blasphemy" work including the End Blasphemy Law Campaign, and informed the new Chair of the Human Rights committee of it. There were reports from the Expert Council on INGO Law and from the Council expert and others on Roma issues, and a delegation was received from Morocco describing the remarkable constitutional and practical changes there towards an open democracy and a constitutional monarchy.

The 22-26 June meeting was notable for the address from Ambassador Astrid Helle (Permanent Representative of Norway to the COE and Chair of the Ministers' Deputies Rapporteur Group on Democracy, GR-DEM) and Robert Drzazga (Chargé d'Affaires and Deputy Permanent Representative of Poland to the COE) who both criticised INGOs for not playing their full part in the affairs of the Council of Europe. Anna Rurka as INGO president is intent on correcting this and has twice already consulted INGOs in order to produce submissions to Council bodies on key topics. Another session had a short

presentation by a group of four young French people, including an atheist, who were setting out on a world tour to promote interfaith dialogue and discover what is happening in the countries they visit. This is the second such tour sponsored by the French organisation Vivre Ensemble. IHEU obtained their itinerary and put them in contact with relevant IHEU and EHF Member Organizations.



The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)

When the PACE Equality and Non-Discrimination Committee met in Paris (December) to consider the draft resolution from Valeriu Ghilechi (Moldova) on "Tackling intolerance and discrimination in Europe with a special focus on Christianity" it accepted all the amendments put forward to sympathetic Assembly members by IHEU and the other members of the group of INGOs through which we act. Several last-minute

amendments were proposed, but only one was of any concern, and IHEU sent out a briefing against it. The resolution passed in an acceptable form and without serious opposition.

This did not prevent some religious press reports cherry-picking from the resolution the (justified) mentions of some Christians suffering discrimination and worse in parts of Europe, and emphasising the notion of reasonable accommodation without the qualifications in the text. The Christian Legal Centre (UK) suggested that they would use the resolution in a case they are taking to court. It is difficult to see any way of countering such selective quotation and misreporting. The pressure from many quarters for the superficially attractive but risky idea of ‘reasonable accommodation’ of religious beliefs is an increasing concern.

Defending abortion rights

IHEU worked with representatives of the European Parliamentary Forum for Population and Development and the IPPF European Network to oppose a petition against late-term abortion from the European Centre for Law and Justice. We sent an email briefing to our contact list of parliamentarians to counter the petition and later sought to attend a meeting to which the petition had been referred on procedural grounds. The Committee chose to discuss the petition *in camera* but we learned afterwards that they showed no sympathy for it.

“Secular extremism”

We also liaised over two reports prepared by PACE committees. A report on “Freedom of religion and living together in a democratic society” (Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media) precluded non-religious involvement and then proceeded to criticise “secularism”! IHEU wrote to the report’s rapporteur asking to be heard, given that religious representatives had been invited, and furthermore the evidence from the Roman Catholics was highly objectionable, denouncing “secular extremism” in Europe and “social projects that are incompatible with what was culturally recognised as universal only a few decades ago”: an oblique reference to LGBT rights. Excuses were given for our exclusion (the focus was on religion, not religion or belief...) and the report was suddenly published earlier than scheduled. While not outright illiberal, problems remain, in particular the report uses “secularism” prejudicially. IHEU is pursuing the matter.

Children’s rights

The Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination is preparing a report on “the protection of the rights of parents and children belonging to religious minorities”, for which the rapporteur is Valeriu Ghilechi (Moldova, EPP), the unofficial leader of the religious right in the Assembly. IHEU has submitted a paper to the Committee in an attempt to preempt any prejudicial overemphasis on parental rights at the expense of children.

Paris attacks

Our coverage of the *Charlie Hebdo* atrocity was well-received and we created a special version of the IHEU-brand Happy Human in solidarity.

After the later attacks that took place in Paris in November, IHEU wrote to President Hollande expressing the “deep-felt condolences” and solidarity of the worldwide humanist movement:

iheu.org/letter-to-president-hollande/

We received a reply thanking IHEU for its support, and pledging to “never give up” the tolerance, peace and freedom inherent in French values, “we will not let ourselves be intimidated by this horror. Far from shaking our resolve, these cowardly and despicable acts strengthen our determination to eradicate terrorism. In this particularly difficult period, the messages of friendship and solidarity that we receive from the entire planet... are a valuable aid in our fight against hatred and barbarism.”

Our call to “always promote humanity and hope, over hatred and fear” appeared to resonate with many.

iheu.org/statement-on-paris-attack-always-promote-humanity-and-hope-over-hatred-and-fear/.



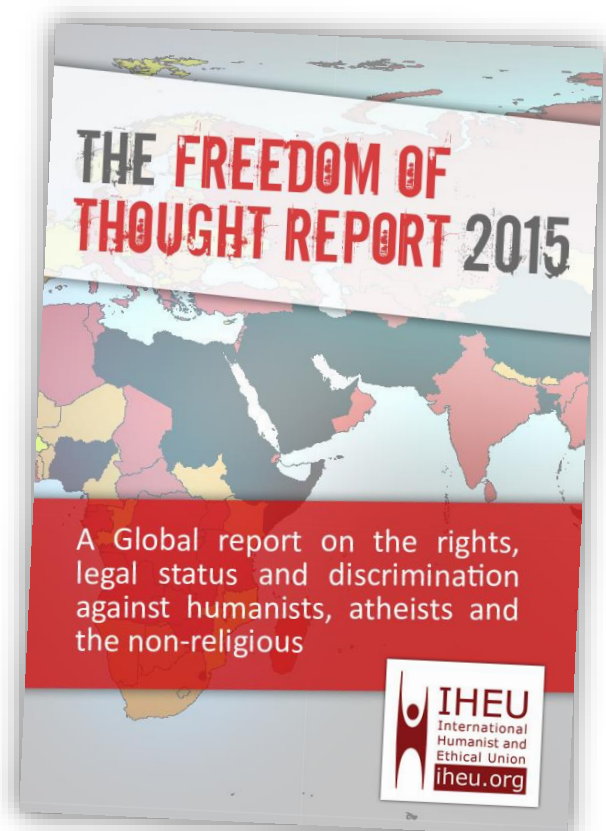
Freedom of Thought Report 2015

The Freedom of Thought Report is a major piece of work and is IHEU's flagship publication. It is the only annual survey looking at the rights and treatment of the non-religious in every country of the world. Led and co-ordinated by IHEU's Director of Communications, Bob Churchill, Member Organizations and volunteers researched and updated the information on individual countries. This was then edited and compiled by Bob into a coherent and consistent report which analyses the systemic, legal and other forms of discrimination suffered by non-religious people, and rates countries against a range of carefully graded measures.

This year the measures by which a country's rating is determined were expanded and strengthened, adding increased credibility to an already very well respected report. Heiner Bielefeldt, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, praised the Freedom of Thought Report 2015 as being of unique, robust and vital importance.

Worldwide involvement

Prior to its launch, all IHEU Member Organizations were sent publicity about the Freedom of Thought Report and a press pack to help them promote the Report and use it to lobby their own national politicians, and to get media coverage for themselves as well as IHEU. We followed this up with briefings and



reports of how others had used it. Although produced by IHEU, we see the Freedom of Thought Report as belonging to all our Member Organizations, and we hope that they feel ownership of it and use it to enhance and promote their own work.

Strategy

The Report has opened up the space for discussion of the non-religious as a distinct group that must be considered in the upholding of human rights and equality. Media articles on atheist discrimination that appear throughout each year often draw on the Report, and through this IHEU has become recognised as a respected and authoritative leader in the field. We are already working on making the Freedom of Thought Report even stronger and more easily available, allowing country-specific information to be downloaded and constantly updated.

Launch event

The main public launch of the Freedom of Thought Report 2015 took place at the European Parliament in Brussels, and was co-hosted by the European Parliamentary Intergroup on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Tolerance. This was a significant milestone for IHEU, being our first physical launch event for the Report and putting a new focus on non-religion by the Intergroup.

The panel included Heiner Bielefeldt who gave an “unambiguous welcome” to the report, and Dennis de Jong MEP (Netherlands), who co-chairs the Intergroup and was extremely impressed by the scope and professionalism of the Report. A full report from the launch is at: iheu.org/iheus-freedom-of-thought-report-2015-why-should-we-pamper-saudi-arabia-for-oil/.

The Freedom of Thought Report 2015 was simultaneously launched in the Netherlands by the Dutch Humanist Association and Washington DC by the American Humanist Association.



Dennis de Jong MEP talk to media at the launch



Professor Heiner Bielefeldt reading the Report



Bob Churchill, Dennis de Jong and Elizabeth O'Casey on the panel at the European Parliament



Bangladeshi blogger Siddhartha Dhar, Bob Churchill, Dennis de Jong, Elizabeth O'Casey, and Heiner Bielefeldt launch the IHEU Freedom of Thought Report 2015 in Brussels

Bangladesh

IHEU has closely followed and campaigned against the targeting of humanists in Bangladesh. Four writers/bloggers and one secular publisher were murdered in machete attacks throughout the year, including high profile and less well-known individuals.

The crisis continues to be a real and serious threat to many bloggers, writers and activists who are named on 'hit lists', and are at risk both directly and indirectly.

IHEU met with the European External Action Service to discuss Europe's response, and we were instrumental in bringing together a broad coalition of organisations already working on issues around persecution and relocation, including Amnesty International, ICORN, Shelter Cities, Forum Asia, and others, to keep track of the situation in Bangladesh and appropriately handle individual cases, pooling resources and expertise.

We co-ordinated a joint letter (in English and Bengali)⁸ to the Bangladeshi President and Prime Minister, which was signed by hundreds of Bangladeshi writers, academics and others, as well as international organisations promoting human rights, free expression and secularism. The letter noted serious failures of the authorities over many months, and called for protection, reform of the ICT Act (a *de facto* "blasphemy"

⁸ iheu.org/joint-open-letter-to-prime-minister-and-president-of-bangladesh/



Bangladeshi media reporting the IHEU-coordinated campaign action

law) and an end to the apparent impunity afforded to the Islamist extremist groups carrying out the atrocities. The joint statement was covered in the Bangladeshi media We also advised journalists travelling to Bangladesh or working on stories from elsewhere in the world.

We worked alongside several Member Organizations to which we have either referred or which were contacted directly by bloggers seeking asylum, and we raised the issue at the Human Rights Council and in media work, developing relations with a wide range of secular or sympathetic Bangladeshis in and out of the country.



Solidarity image produced by IHEU

Individual cases

Under the radar

There has been a long-term trend toward individuals claiming to be persecuted or at risk due to their lack of religious beliefs. Individuals contacted IHEU from a number of countries, including Afghanistan, Kuwait, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and United Arab Emirates. In some cases we advised individuals via phone, Skype, or email, offering referrals and support where possible and appropriate. Most significantly in 2015 was the number of contacts from Bangladesh, with many individuals fearing for their lives during the ongoing 'atheist blogger' crisis. Working with Member Organizations and others, we supported several bloggers to

escape immediate and serious danger. We wrote four letters of support in asylum applications (at least two of which have since been successfully granted asylum).

Human Rights Defence fund

IHEU received a request for support from individuals facing danger during the political crisis in Burundi on account of their humanist activities. We developed a rapid and sustainable plan, and used IHEU's Human Rights Defence Fund to relocate the two affected families to relative safety in Uganda. By using their stories (suitably anonymised for their protection) we will raise funds back into

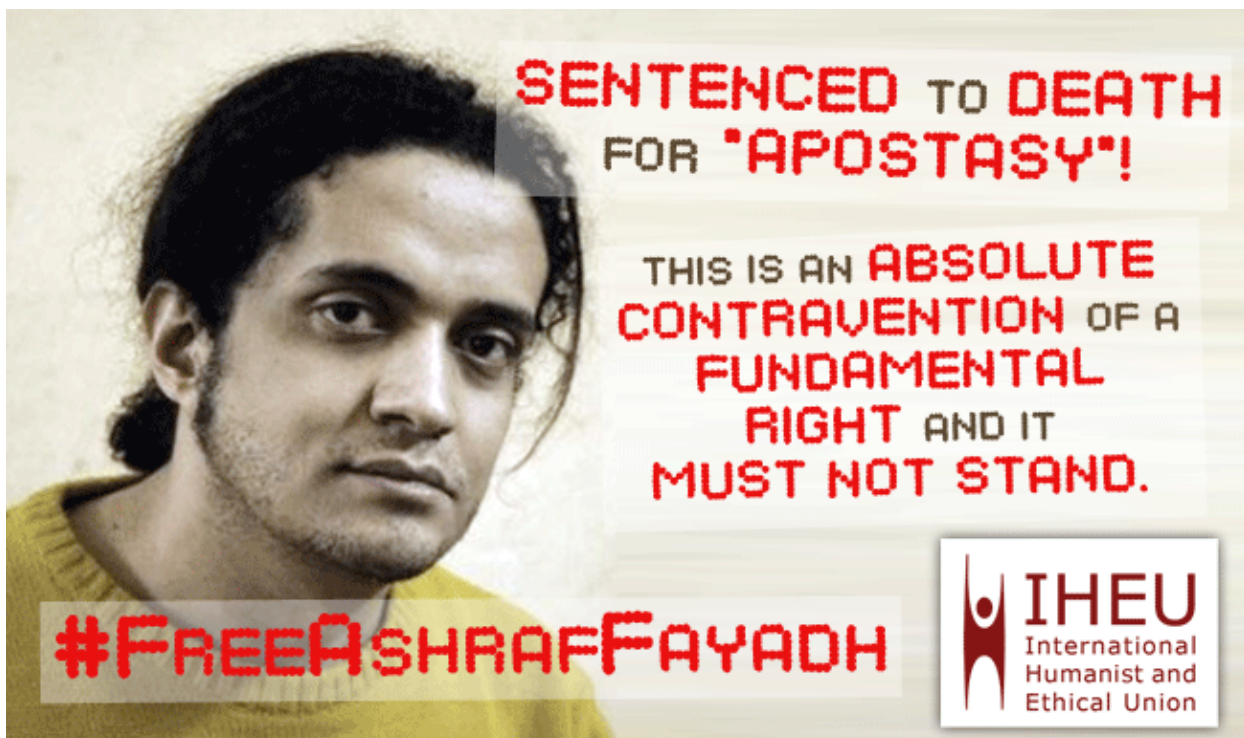
the Human Rights Defence Fund so that we will be able to help others facing similar situations in the future, and raise the plight of Humanists with international policy makers.



Human Rights Defence Fund

Campaigning for individuals

We highlighted and campaigned on a number of individual cases in 2015, including: Ashraf Fayadh (Saudi Arabia), who was accused of 'promoting atheism' in his poetry and sentenced to death for 'apostasy'; Raif Badawi (Saudi Arabia) whose case we have covered since he was first arrested in 2012, and who became far more prominent worldwide in January 2015 when his first 'lashing' sentence was carried out; and the less widely-publicised case of Mohamed Cheikh Ould M'kheitir (Mauritania) sentenced to death on 24 December 2014 for 'apostasy', having questioned the religious roots of ongoing slavery in the country.



IHEU social media image for Ashraf Fayadh campaign

Aim 4: Sufficient reputation, financial and human resources, and administrative effectiveness to achieve our goals

We work to achieve appropriate staffing levels, supported by committed volunteers and governed by an effective Executive Committee. We work to secure funding from multiple sources including individual donors, Member Organizations and grant-making bodies, and to enhance our reputation through targeted communications to selected audiences.

Staffing

This year the Executive Committee took the decision to augment its staff team by recruiting a Chief Executive Officer. Following an open and extensive process, Carl Blackburn was appointed and took up post on 1st October 2015.

This means there are now 3 full-time members of staff based in the London office: Carl Blackburn (Chief Executive); Colin Divens (Administrator), and Bob Churchill (Director of Communications).

In addition, we appointed Elizabeth O'Casey as part time Director of Advocacy, to head up our delegation to the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva and co-ordinate our other international delegations. Elizabeth took up post in January 2016 and is currently based in Brussels.

Staff roles and responsibilities had to change with the appointment of a Chief Executive. All staff have been very flexible and accommodating and have adapted well to the new staffing structure.



New IHEU Chief Executive, Carl Blackburn

All IHEU Human Resources policies, covering staff terms and conditions and entitlements, were updated and pulled together into a new IHEU Staff Handbook, which was agreed by the Executive Committee.

Database

IHEU uses the CiviCRM database to keep records of its members and supporters, and to ensure that the correct information is sent to them. There were some issues of inconsistency and duplication, so time was spent cleansing and normalizing the database. All member and supporter information is now up to date and accurate. Regular and systematic contact with our members will help us to maintain



Colin Divens, IHEU Administrator

this database as IHEU grows and develops further.

Triennial Review of Membership Fees

Under IHEU's Internal Rules, Membership Fees are calculated once every three years and remain valid until the year following the next calculation. The formula used for the calculation, which was agreed by members at an IHEU General Assembly, is fairly complicated and involves the size and type of income received by Member Organizations.

2015 was the final year of the previous

fees calculation, so the Triennial review was carried out by IHEU's Treasurer based on the information provided in Member Organizations' Annual Accounts. Because the calculation is only carried out once every three years, some Member Organizations that have grown in that time faced substantial increases in their membership fees to IHEU. In those cases, a phased increase has been agreed where appropriate.

Financial procedures

The sad and sudden death of IHEU's Finance Officer Lee Chester in August 2014 meant that interim measures had to be put in place, and various bank mandates and reporting procedures had to be changed. IHEU is extremely grateful for the considerable additional work that the Treasurer, Roar Johnsen, has put in to ensure that the finances of the

organization are properly managed and reported. The 2014 Financial Statements were successfully audited and approved, and all tax returns and reports made on time. Towards the end of the year IHEU appointed a new Finance Officer, Linden Sheffield, who is now maintaining the financial records and providing a monthly report and electronic back-up.

International Humanist Trust

The International Humanist Trust (IHT) is a registered charitable trust in the UK. The IHEU Executive Committee reviewed the membership of the IHT Board. The term of office for Andrew Copson and Jack Jeffery

ended in February, and the IHEU Executive Committee appointed Andrew Copson and David Pollock as IHT trustees for a three year term .

Individual supporters

IHEU's membership is based on humanist Membership Organizations from all parts of the world. However, we are also extremely grateful for the support that we receive from individuals who recognise the importance of the work that we do.

In 2015 we had 228 individual annual

supporters and 70 individual life supporters.

We have developed a new newsletter to keep individual supporters fully informed of our work, and to offer opportunities for them to be involved, for example as volunteers researching information for the Freedom of Thought Report.

Thank you

IHEU would like to extend our sincere thanks to all Member Organizations, individuals and other agencies that have supported our work throughout 2015. Your contributions and efforts have enabled us to massively increase the profile of humanism internationally, and to campaign against the persecution of the non-religious.

We have ambitious plans to massively increase the size and effectiveness of IHEU in 2016 and beyond, and we are looking forward to working with all our members to ensure that humanism continues to have a strong voice on the international stage.





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