



# THE SOUNDING MEGAPHONE

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## THE MEGAPHONE MAGAZINE ISSUE 4

All over the world horrific religious persecution is carried out under the pretence of “Blasphemy Laws” and “Anti-Conversion Laws.” Many politicians have turned a blind eye to this injustice in order to maintain foreign economic interests. At The Megaphone Magazine we believe that blasphemy laws and anti-conversion laws are inherently evil and should be strongly resisted and opposed. We will also discuss the situation in Afghanistan. God bless you.

### Shawn Stevens

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#### Note to readers:

The purpose of this magazine is more than to simply supply articles of social interest to the public. It is to encourage readers to become involved in changing their communities through social activism. One way readers can potentially do this is by writing their concerns in letter format and mailing them to their local member of Parliament, prime minister and other MPs. We have done this ourselves and have included in each issue at least one letter that we have written to the government. We give our permission for you to either quote it in part or in whole or to write your own letter, using its information, word, et cetera, as the base for your own letter. In fact, if you would like to simply copy and paste the letter and mail it off then we invite you to find it on our website [freedomandsocialorder.com](http://freedomandsocialorder.com) under “Correspondence.” God bless you as you get involved in changing your community, province and country for good.

You understand that by reading this magazine, you might be exposed to content that you regard to be offensive or objectionable and that you read this magazine at your own risk. We do not intend to offend anyone, however, what is offensive to one person may not be offensive to another. It is difficult, if not impossible, to speak on controversial topics in a clear way without offending someone. We ask that viewers would receive the contents of this magazine and website in the spirit in which they are given, that is, to speak the truth on sensitive issues in a loving way that does not compromise our conscientious convictions. Freedom of speech is a provision of The Canadian Charter of Rights And Freedoms (Section 2). We want to express in the clearest language possible that all statements made in this issue are meant to be taken not in malice towards any identifiable people group but, rather, as discussion on issues of public interest, for public benefit, in good faith. Our views on the issues contained here are also consistent with our faith beliefs which are contained in our statement of faith which can be viewed on our website [freedomandsocialorder.com](http://freedomandsocialorder.com). Whether you agree or disagree with what we have stated here, we bless you and invite your feedback.

## WHY BLASPHEMY AND ANTI-CONVERSION LAWS ARE WRONG

Blasphemy laws and anti-conversion laws are common in the constitutions and/or legal systems of many Muslim nations. Blasphemy laws are laws which prosecute individuals for making disparaging remarks against Mohammed or the Koran. Anti-conversion laws are laws which prohibit a person from changing from one religion to another. There are many cases of such prosecution being directed towards religious minorities, such as Christians. Is it the responsibility or right of governments and courts to punish speech that in some way may be deemed as blasphemy? Such a question strikes at the issue of personal conscience. A person's personal conscience challenges them to know what they believe and, also, to know what they do not believe, and to take a stand for these convictions. Such a stand is often met with opposition and many times met with violence. When legal or governmental authorities are delivering such opposition and violence towards people for expressing their conscientious convictions, they are likely overstepping the boundaries of what their authority should legitimately be. Then men and women with screaming inner consciences have choices to make. They could declare their feelings or hold them in. They could speak what they believe or they could dismiss what they believe. At the end of life, they will feel shame or peace for what they stood for and, surely, one will feel greater satisfaction for standing for moral or for spiritual convictions than the person who rarely, or never, stood for anything. Most of us will not shrink back from stating a conviction as long as the consequences for doing so are minor. When the stakes for declaring personal beliefs are high, then a person reaches a crossroads of

conscience. History is filled with martyrs who have been censored, rejected and burned at the stake. However, modern times also have their martyrs and their stories are no less dramatic. Men and women who stand by their consciences feel that intensity inwardly if they dare to put forward their beliefs in the public world. 1 One famous quote on conscience was that of Martin Luther who declared:

*I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted, and my conscience is held captive by the word of God; and as it is neither safe nor right to act against conscience, I cannot and will not retract anything. Here I stand; I cannot otherwise; God help me. Amen. 2*

Like Luther in his day, many today have been pressured to abandon spiritual convictions, ironically, by religious and civil authorities. They found human religious authorities interjecting themselves between God and man. The decision to resist such an interjection never comes easily. Convictions are often trampled upon in defence of custom, tradition and prejudice. Those who hold their convictions precious enough not to allow them to be changed or silenced, in many cases, become trampled upon themselves. Yet, the belief that it is neither safe nor right to act against conscience has led many men and women to take courageous stands, regardless of the consequences. In doing so, is the making of heroes and martyrs. There have always been those who have swum against the tide of their surrounding culture simply because of pride or stubbornness. However, when humble intent on following God and one's conscience is the reason for contradicting surrounding culture, what can be said? When humble men and women are willing to suffer false accusation, incarceration, isolation and even physical mistreatment, it may be because they are holding on to

something worth both living and dying for. 3

Blasphemy laws and anti-conversion laws stand in the way of conscience and suppress the free expression of faith. Blasphemy laws rob people of their humanity by making them subservient to beliefs that contradict their values. Blasphemy laws are dehumanizing. Blasphemy laws and anti-conversion laws have been used to justify horrific punishment and even death penalties. Many courageous souls have stood against Islamic legal abuse and have spoken against blasphemy laws and anti-conversion laws. They have chosen not to shrink back. They have come to the crossroads of conscience and have chosen to follow conscience, no matter the cost. They have concluded that it is no longer safe nor right to act against conscience. May we, who have the freedom of speech and conscience, use our freedom to stand up for those who are struggling to be free.

Shawn Stevens

## ENDNOTES :

1. Raymond Franz, *Crisis of Conscience*, 3rd Ed. (Atlanta: Commentary Press, 1999), pg 1.
2. Martin Luther, quoted in Raymond Franz, *Crisis of Conscience*, 3rd Ed. (Atlanta: Commentary Press, 1999), pg 2.
3. Raymond Franz, *Ibid.*

## REFERENCES :

Franz, Raymond. *Crisis of Conscience*. 3rd Ed. Atlanta: Commentary Press, 1999.

Dear Mr. MP:

I am a Canadian citizen who wants to see Canada maintain a strong national anti-drug strategy which brings in stricter sentencing for drug offenders. Drug crime, and illegal drug consumption in our country, has been one of Canada's most serious problems.

As you are aware, there is quite a movement within Canada to legalize cannabis, the plant from which marijuana is made. I would like to voice my concerns as to why the legalization of cannabis would be detrimental to Canadians. The legalization of this drug would be detrimental to Canadians because, firstly, it is unhealthy. The short-term effects of marijuana include memory-loss problems, distortion of perception, motor coordination problems, increased heart rate, anxiety, etc. The long-term effects of marijuana use include proneness to cancer, suppression of the immune system, growth disorders, destruction of the lung fibres and lesions and mental health issues. Marijuana can cause and/or exacerbate anxiety, depression,

suicidal tendency and schizophrenia. Marijuana smoke has 50% to 70% more cancer causing substances than tobacco smoke. Also, high doses of marijuana can produce psychotic reactions in users.

Secondly, the legalization of cannabis would be detrimental to Canadians because this drug is addictive. Users, both new and long-term, both young and old, become addicted to marijuana and many find it hard to quit using. Many lack the will to quit using it once addicted to the substance. Withdrawal effects include irritability, sleeplessness, decreased appetite, anxiety and drug craving.

It is my sincere wish that further steps would be taken in the funding of drug law enforcement, and in educating the public on the harmful effects of illegal drug consumption. It is my sincere hope that cannabis and marijuana will always be illegal in our country.

Sincerely,

Shawn and Ramona Stevens

Afghanistan has seen much bloodshed and suffering throughout its history and notably in the recent years of war. Now that the war in Afghanistan is "technically" over, suffering and bloodshed continues. Join with us as we

investigate the history, and present state of Afghanistan and as we consider Canada's involvement in this country. Join with us in calling for human rights reform in this troubled land.

**Shawn Stevens**

## **AFGHANISTAN - HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE**

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is a nation in South-Central Asia. Devastated by decades of war, the countryside was bombed and still is believed to contain many landmines and other undetonated artillery. The ongoing conflict has destroyed much of the infrastructure, and the rebuilding of public buildings has been concentrated on . Extensive mineral deposits and gas offer potential lucrative exports. Afghanistan has had a drug economy with one-third of the nation's GDP coming from the production of opium. Investment of extensive foreign aid and millions of former refugees coming back has generated an influx of funds. The conflict with armed opposition groups including the Taliban, continues to stunt growth and recovery. The population exceeds 29 million and the official languages are Pashtu (used by 50%) and Dari (Afghan Persian, used by 70%). No comprehensive census or careful ethnic survey has been conducted for decades. Afghan refugees are ~2 million in Iran, ~2 million in Pakistan and smaller numbers throughout the world. Up to 4.5 million have come back to Afghanistan since 2001 when an International Security Assistance

Force was created to help the Karzai administration. Today the government is led by President Ashraf Ghani & Abdullah Abdullah. Afghans perceive lack of security and poverty to be their greatest dilemmas. While there is limited freedom to practice other religions the growth of Christianity is vigorously opposed. Shi'a Muslims comprise 20% of the population. A mere 15,000 claim to be Christian, and most of these being resident foreigners (foreign military not included). There are 48,000 mosques and no church buildings. The Church is for the most part entirely underground. 1

The situation in Afghanistan is difficult for Christians, who suffer both at the hands of Afghanistan's government and the Taliban insurgency. One Christian to suffer persecution has been Shoab Assadullah. Assadullah was arrested on October 21, 2010, after he gave a Bible to another man. Assadullah is a convert from Islam to Christian faith. On January 3, 2011, he was told by a judge that he had one week to renounce Jesus Christ or he would face up to twenty years in jail or, possibly, the death sentence. Assadullah has maintained his faith. 2 He has also bravely declared that he was not afraid to die. Because of international pressure, he has now been released and has found asylum in a foreign country.

Along with Assadullah's case two other similar cases have ended favorably. Abdul Rahman and Said Musa are both converts from Islam to Christianity. Both were arrested, Rahman in 2006, and Musa in 2010. They received mistreatment but, after international pressure, both were released. Musa, in prison, endured beatings as well as sexual abuse.

As well as Afghanistan's court system opposing individuals, such as Rahman and Musa, Afghanistan's government has



**opposed Christian organizations.** On May 31, 2010, Afghanistan suspended the work of two Christian relief organizations. The relief organizations were believed to have been converting Afghans to Christianity. Some photographs were released that apparently show Afghans being baptized by westerners in a private meeting and this was shown in video form on television. The television station Noorin said that there was no evidence linking the Christian relief organization to these photographs. A spokesman for the Afghan Ministry of Economy told the New York Times that there was no evidence against the Christian relief organization. According to the Associated Press, the deputy secretary of the Afghan parliament has requested the execution of the Afghans who were baptized as Christians. The deputy has said; "Those Afghans that appeared on this video film should be executed in public. The house should order the attorney general and the National Department of Security to arrest these Afghans and execute them."<sup>3</sup>

As well as being persecuted by the government and the courts in Afghanistan, Christians are also persecuted by the Taliban. On August 5, 2010, ten Christians who were a part of a Christian aid team were killed in northern Afghanistan. They had spent three weeks providing medical assistance to villages. The team included doctors, nurses and technicians.

Pray for the Christians in Afghanistan, that they would be able to forgive their persecutors. It is challenging for any of us to forgive the smallest acts of injustice perpetrated upon us. How much more challenging would it be to forgive horrific human rights atrocities perpetrated upon oneself or one's family. Yet, Jesus Christ forgave even to this extent. We read of as He was being

crucified; "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots." (Luke 23.34 KJV). To follow Jesus in this kind of forgiveness is the greatest witness that a Christian can show to an unbelieving world. Forgiveness can be given and, still, with it call for human rights reforms.

Canada has been heavily involved in the United Nations mandated and NATO- led operations in Afghanistan. Canadian forces have aided Afghan national security forces in establishing some law and order in the region. They have also contributed to health, education and economic growth in Afghanistan. They have contributed humanitarian assistance and work together with Afghan and Pakistani authorities towards improving border security. Canada has been generous. Canada has committed for 2017 an extra \$227 million in development assistance and \$330 million to help support the Afghan National Security Forces.<sup>4</sup> Much good has been accomplished, however, Canada needs to use the influence that it has in Afghanistan to press harder for religious freedom. Most specifically, reforms need to be made to the Afghan legal system so that Christians are not prosecuted for simply following their faith. Christian believers must be given the freedom to follow Jesus Christ whether or not they were, at one time, Muslims. It is time for Afghan Christians to be treated as human beings and receive respite from the ill-treatment and the threat of overt persecution that they daily face.

Call for Canada to use diplomatic pressure to secure changes in Afghan law which will increase religious freedom.

Shawn Stevens

## ENDNOTES :

1. Donna Siemens. zionchristianministry.com International Page.
2. AFGHANISTAN : AWAITING COURT DECISION (Posted Feb. 10,2011). persecution.com.
3. [www.emconference.ca/index.cfm?i=11528&nid-51896](http://www.emconference.ca/index.cfm?i=11528&nid-51896)
4. <http://www.international.gc.ca/afghanistan/index.aspx?lang=eng>

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Operation World, Jason Mandryk. Colorado Springs: Biblica Publishing, 2010

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[www.emconference.ca/index.cfm?i=11528&nid-51896](http://www.emconference.ca/index.cfm?i=11528&nid-51896)

Scripture taken from the King James Version.

## AFGHANISTAN – RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IS OPPOSED

In our article, “Afghanistan : Human Rights Abuse,” we discussed the deplorable situation in that country in regards to the religious persecution of

Christians. We mentioned the cases of Abdul Rahman and Said Musa, both who were converts from Islam to Christianity. Both were arrested, abused and, as a result of international pressure, released. We also discussed the story of Shoab Assadullah who was arrested on October 21, 2010, after he gave a Bible to another man. Assadullah is also a convert from Islam to Christian faith. He was told by a judge that if he did not renounce Christ, he would be sentenced to twenty years in prison or, possibly, to the death penalty. He has been offered freedom in exchange for a recantation of his faith. However, Assadullah has maintained the profession of his Christian faith. He was later freed.

In addition to Afghans being persecuted for converting to Christian faith, Christian Afghans are also persecuted for their speech under blasphemy laws. Afghanistan is an Islamic state ruled by Sharia law. Authorities there are allowed to punish speech deemed to be religious blasphemy by their courts and may assign the death penalty for this reason to any male of sound mind, over eighteen years of age, and to any female of sound mind over fifteen years of age.

1

Canada has had a big role in supporting Afghanistan. Canada has worked together with the Afghan National Security Forces and assisted with basic services including education, health and the promotion of economic growth. Canada has provided humanitarian assistance and has helped build some Afghan national institutions. Canada has been involved in building and repairing fifty schools in Kandahar province and has contributed to the rehabilitation of the Dahla Dam. Canada has been involved in the training of fifty thousand Afghan troops. In addition to this, the Canadian military police and the Canadian civilian police have assisted in the training of over 2,800 police officers

since 2008. Canada has also provided funding for the construction of police stations, police equipment and the paying of some police salaries. It would be ironic if Canadian-trained police arrested Afghan Christians on blasphemy charges and imprison them in Canadian-funded Afghan prisons. Canadians do not want their tax dollars to support an Afghan legal system which overtly persecutes Christians, and other religious minorities, for their faith. Canadians want their government to take strong diplomatic measures to see changes to Afghanistan's legal system. Most specifically, Canadians want Afghanistan to end blasphemy laws and blasphemy-law prosecution. Canadians do not want to fund the legal prosecution of religious minorities in Afghanistan.

Shawn Stevens

## ENDNOTES :

1.  
([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blasphemy\\_law\\_in\\_Afghanistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blasphemy_law_in_Afghanistan))

URI:  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Text\\_of\\_Creative\\_Commons\\_Attribution-ShareAlike\\_3.0\\_Unported\\_License](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Text_of_Creative_Commons_Attribution-ShareAlike_3.0_Unported_License)

## REFERENCES :

<http://canada.gc.ca>

By referring to this website I am not claiming that the Canadian Government endorses this magazine.

<sup>^</sup> [abcde "2008 Report on International Religious Freedom - Afghanistan"](#).

United States Department of State. 19 September 2008. Retrieved 2 July 2009.

<sup>^</sup> [abc Wright, Abi; Kristin Jones \(11 October 2005\). "Afghanistan: Editor goes on trial for blasphemy". Centre for Independent Journalism, Malaysia. Retrieved 2 September 2009.](#)

<sup>^</sup> [ab Wafa, Abdul Waheed; Carlotta Gall and Taimoor Shah \(11 March 2009\). "Afghan Court Backs Prison Term for Blasphemy". The New York Times. Retrieved 12 July 2009.](#)

<sup>^</sup> [Mineeia, Zainab \(21 October 2008\). "Afghanistan: Journalist Serving 20 Years for "Blasphemy"". IPS \(Inter Press Service\). Retrieved 2 July 2009.](#)

<sup>^</sup> [Wiseman, Paul \(31 January 2008\). "Afghan student's death sentence hits nerve". USA Today. Retrieved 13 July 2009.](#)

<sup>^</sup> [Sengupta, Kim \(7 September 2009\). "Free at last: Student in hiding after Karzai's intervention". The Independent. Retrieved 8 September 2009.](#)

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blasphemy\\_law\\_in\\_Afghanistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blasphemy_law_in_Afghanistan))

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

I am a Canadian citizen concerned about human rights abuses in Afghanistan. The situation in Afghanistan is difficult for Christians who suffer from Afghanistan's government and the Taliban insurgency.

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October 21, 2010, after he gave a Bible to another man. Assadullah is a convert from Islam to Christian faith. On January 3, 2011, he was told by a judge that he had one week to renounce Jesus Christ or he would face up to twenty years in jail or, possibly, the death sentence. Because of international pressure, he has been released and has found asylum in a friendly nation.

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Shawn and Ramona Stevens

cc: M. P. John Baird

## REFERENCES

AFGHANISTAN : AWAITING COURT DECISION (Posted Feb. 10,2011) persecution.com.

"Afghanistan a Voice to be Heard." www.emconference.ca.

## Tags

[Response from John Baird, Minister of Foreign Affairs](#)