

ATHEIST
ALLIANCE
INTERNATIONAL

FOR A SECULAR WORLD



A Call for World Peace

Annual Report 2022 - 2023

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Atheist Alliance International celebrated its 31st anniversary in 2022, marking a remarkable milestone for a volunteer-run, non-profit organization. Our mission is to advocate for atheists globally, provide assistance to atheists facing threats, and promote awareness and understanding of atheism.

Review of Activity

This has been a mixed year.

We accepted new member groups, bringing us to a total of 74.

It has not been a good year for fundraising. However, we were able to secure a significant amount of financial aid for Atheist Support Network clients from major human rights organizations dedicated to supporting human rights defenders. There was no significant change in supporters' numbers from the previous year. Initiatives have been created to grow supporters numbers, and this will continue.

The relaunching of the Atheist Census Project is underway. The project has been designed not just for academic use, but also to help increase future donations and to help attract supporters.

Throughout the year, our podcast and social media channels continued to promote secular activists and organizations. Our social media channels in the month from September to October 2023 organically attracted twenty five thousand post engagements.

The AAI Advisory Council has been very supportive throughout the year, with regular meetings and crucial advice. Prominent atheists Dr. Steven Pinker, Randolph Richardson, and Norhaiyah Mahmood joined the Advisory Council this year.

AAI maintained its GuideStar Platinum rating for transparency.

We faced some criticisms for actions taken by the board more than four years ago. An Extraordinary General Meeting was held to address those criticisms. The EGM reviewed those criticisms carefully and adopted appropriate measures to correct any inappropriate actions.

The Extraordinary General Meeting

This meeting was held on January 15, 2023 and was attended by 41 member groups from across the world. The objective of the meeting was to address past errors, maintain transparency, and move AAI in a positive and unified direction.

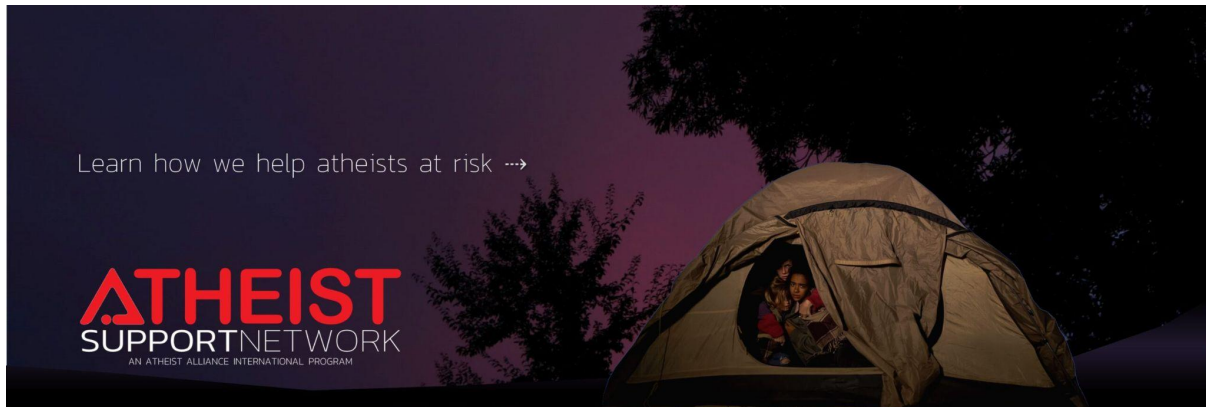
The following corrective measures have been adopted by the Assembly:

1. Amendment of Section 8 of the Bylaws to read:
"General Meeting" means any meeting of Members, called on an annual or extraordinary basis in accordance with the procedures set out in these Bylaws, for purposes which may include: approval of the minutes of the last General Meeting, receiving information from the Board in respect of the Alliance's operations, voting on properly received motions, adoption of the financial statement, and passing statements of Alliance policy. Members eligible to participate in General Meetings may do so in person or through any electronic means approved for that purpose by the Board.
2. Amendment of Section 58 of the Bylaws to read:
At each Annual General Meeting, the Board shall prepare a report for attendees, setting out the main activities of the Alliance since the last Annual General Meeting and proposed activities for the coming year. The presented documents shall be made accessible to Members.

The report shall include a report on the elections held before the General Assembly for the Board of Directors, including participants in this election, number of votes cast and votes received. Financials will be provided.

3. Amendment of Section 59 of the bylaws to read:
Board Directors and Members in Good Standing may propose motions for discussion at a General Meeting. Motions must not involve contravention of the Bylaws and must be submitted to the Secretary at least four weeks prior to the date of the meeting. Motions shall be voted on by Board Directors and Members and be passed by a Simple Majority. The Board may use its discretion on how to act on motions that require significant human or financial resources.

Atheist Support Network (ASN)



ASN made significant strides, though demand constantly outstrips available resources. We supported numerous blasphemy cases, including triumphs in Bangladesh. New cases emerged, particularly in Bangladesh, highlighting the growing need for our assistance.

Navigating the complex legal battles surrounding blasphemy is a time-consuming process, often taking years to conclude. AAI has been steadfast in supporting numerous cases, including notable individuals like Yahia Sharif Aminu, Mubarak Bala, Limon Fakir, Joydeb Chandra, Asad Noor, and Sagar Barua, from previous years.

AAI supported blasphemy case triumphs in Bangladesh



In October 2020, **Mohammed Alam**, a secular activist from Bangladesh's Panchagar district, faced severe threats after being accused of defaming both Muslim and Hindu faiths on social media. Despite the danger to his life, law enforcement authorities arrested him under Bangladesh's Digital Security Act 2018, a version of the blasphemy law. Alam spent eleven months in jail without a trial.

AAI, alongside its partners in Bangladesh, actively supported Alam throughout his ordeal. Assistance extended to his family and legal defense. Thankfully, on November 30, 2022, the court acquitted Alam of all charges, marking a significant victory against unjust accusations.

A List of New AAI Supported Blasphemy Battles 2022 - 2023

This year, we have witnessed a significant surge in blasphemy cases, with the highest increase reported in Bangladesh. For the safety of the victims, we are using initials or pseudonyms in some of the cases.

Jhumon Das: Jhumon Das faced a double ordeal, being jailed twice on charges of blasphemy. His village was targeted by hundreds of Islamic fundamentalists, aiming to harm him. When they couldn't locate him, they resorted to vandalizing and looting the entire village. Das was charged under blasphemy laws on two occasions.

Current Status: Bail secured, facing two ongoing blasphemy trials.

Hasan Mehedi: Arrested on blasphemy charges under sections 295 A, 153, 153 A, and 500 of the Bangladeshi penal code, Hasan endured ten months of unjust imprisonment.

Current Status: Bail secured, trial ongoing.

Ahsan Habib: Accused of blasphemy, Ahsan spent two months in jail.

Current Status: Bail secured, trial ongoing.

Jibon Wahid: A 24-year-old Chemistry student, Jibon was attacked by a fundamentalist mob for his social media writings. After enduring torture and wrongful imprisonment, he attempted to return home but was attacked again, facing additional blasphemy charges without cause.

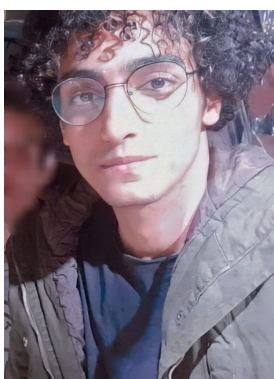
Current Status: Bail secured, facing two ongoing blasphemy trials.

Ekramul Haque: Accused under Digital Security Act 2018, Ekramul faced threats and unlawful imprisonment without trial. He also received death threats from extremists for allegedly defaming Islam.

Current Status: Bail secured, trial ongoing.

Apollo Sun (Pseudonym): A 21-year-old activist from Libya, Apollo used the online Clubhouse application for advocacy. His entire team was exposed and arrested, leading to Apollo's conviction for blasphemy. He endured severe torture during his one-year imprisonment.

Current Status: Released from jail, at risk of serious harm, urgently needs relocation to a safe country.



Abdur Rahman was 23 years old when he was charged with blasphemy for social media activism. He was sentenced to jail for five years by an Egyptian court for defamation of the Islamic faith. Current status: In jail, appeal lodged, ongoing financial support to sustain him while he is in prison.

Rushthum Mujtaba: Detained by Maldives' police for criticizing the Islamic faith on social media, Rushthum was held in prison beyond the stipulated sentence period.

Current Status: Convicted but released from jail.

Mithun Dey: Unlawfully held for over five months without trial under Digital Security Act 2018 in Bangladesh, Mithun faces potential prison sentencing, heavy fines, and death threats from extremists.

Current Status: Bail secured, trial ongoing.

Their stories reflect the urgent need for global solidarity against religious intolerance and persecution. We continue to advocate for their rights and safety, standing firm against injustice.

Asylum Support, Relocation to Safety



Samaneh Khani, an Iranian activist and member of the "Iranian Atheists and Agnostics," an AAI member organization, faced a dire situation when Iranian authorities raided her home, forcing her to flee. With AAI's support, she now resides safely in the Netherlands.

N Rustami, an Afghan women's rights activist, encountered threats from the Taliban due to her activism. AAI facilitated her relocation to a relatively safe country, where she recently underwent surgery for a uterus tumor, with AAI covering the modest medical expenses.

Shovon Kanti Dhar, a prominent Bangladeshi blogger, faced attacks from Islamic fundamentalists. AAI assisted him in finding refuge in Europe, ensuring his safety amid mounting threats.

Yeasir Arafat, a well-known Bangladeshi atheist activist, survived two terrorist attacks. With AAI's aid, he now resides safely in Europe, away from the danger he faced in his homeland.

Shahid Bin Kasem, known for his satirical posts about religion, was charged with blasphemy in Bangladesh. AAI supported him, helping secure UNHCR protection and ensuring his safety, despite the arrest of his family members.

Forhad Hossain, another activist accused of blasphemy, spent nearly two years in prison. AAI facilitated his relocation to a safer country, providing ongoing support to help him rebuild his life.

Ali Reza Asadian, an Iranian activist and member of AAI affiliate “Wise Human”, was targeted by the regime and found safety in Europe with AAI’s assistance, enabling him to continue his advocacy work without fear.

Kato Mukasa, a Ugandan human rights defender, author, former director of AAI and Humanist International, and founder of AAI member organization HALEA Uganda, faced persecution for his work supporting marginalized communities. AAI aided him as he sought safety in Europe, providing various forms of support during his challenging times.

Muhammad Afzal, a Pakistani atheist activist, faced threats from both Islamic groups and Pakistani authorities. AAI is actively involved in helping him secure a safe haven in Europe, away from the persecution he faced in his home country.

Shahriar Dipu, a Bangladeshi author, endured legal battles and imprisonment for his writings deemed offensive to Islam. AAI supported him in reaching safety after his bail was revoked, ensuring his protection from unjust persecution.

Joydeb Chandra Shil, accused of blasphemy, suffered severe torture during his imprisonment. AAI supported him in relocating to a neighboring country, where he now resides with a student visa, free from the persecution he faced.

Limon Fakir, another individual supported by AAI, spent nearly two years in prison for blasphemy. With AAI’s assistance, he was relocated to a neighboring country, awaiting further relocation to a safer place.

Fareed S, a courageous Afghan secular activist, was a prime target for his beliefs. AAI tirelessly advocated for his relocation, collaborating with other organizations to ensure his safety and that of his family. Now, they have found a secure home in North America, away from the threats they faced in Afghanistan.

Hein Htet Kyaw, is the spokesperson for Burmese Atheists, an AAI member organization. He has been targeted by the Myanmar Military Junta and the Buddhist extremist group Ma Ba Tha members because of his pro-democratic activism. Hein is receiving all the support required in his plight to safety.

Mohammed Akhlaqi, a vocal atheist and supporter of AAI, originates from Afghanistan. Due to his criticism of the Islamic faith on social media, he faced serious threats from the Taliban. Currently, he is in the process of establishing a new life in the European Union.

AAI continues to stand firmly with these individuals, offering vital support and solidarity as they rebuild their lives and continue their advocacy for freedom of thought and expression.

Atheist Refugee Assistance Program, Turkey



The Atheist Refugee Assistance Program (ARAP) is an initiative launched by Ateizm Derneği (AD).

In Turkey, a country that shelters a significant number of refugees globally, language barriers and societal norms present challenges for non-believers seeking suitable accommodation, roommates, and employment opportunities in a predominantly Muslim society. Openly identifying as a freethinking, secular individual often poses risks, including the potential loss of housing or employment. There are also Turkish immigration officers who perform under a pro-Islamic administration and have a strong prejudice against atheist asylum seekers. Recognizing the difficulties faced by non-believing refugees, AD saw the need to create a network to address these issues and offer support. In collaboration with Atheist Alliance International (AAI), the Center for Inquiry (CFI), and ExMuslims of North America (EXMNA), a fund was established to provide essential legal aid and assistance to atheist asylum seekers and refugees currently residing in Turkey. This fund supports the salaries of two ARAP Case Managers, a General Manager, an Outreach Manager, and two Researchers who cater to the common needs of refugees, including legal assistance, finding suitable accommodations, and securing employment opportunities. This team performs under the Program Coordinator, who is the Director of the International Relations of AD. ARAP Case Managers are selected from current and former UNCHR/Turkish immigration officers who are fluent in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and English.

The Atheist Refugee Assistance Program is specifically designed to assist refugees who have fled religious persecution in their home countries and are seeking to build a new life in Turkey. But it is not easy. Discrimination against nonreligious people also exists in Turkey, almost as much as in the countries these people are fleeing. Most of the time, due to fear from their admins and superiors, the local immigration officers tend to refuse to process atheist asylum seeker application submissions. Sometimes an atheist-asylum-seeking-applicant needs to try 10+ different immigration offices in different cities, just to submit the initial asylum application. Our team specializes in pointing them to the right immigration offices in the country where the asylum seeker can submit their application. To be eligible for the program, applicants must be existing or future asylum seekers or refugees who have clearly stated their non-believer status in their immigration

documents. In order to be accepted to the program, there is a “thorough vetting process” where the applicant will need to provide supporting evidence for his/her claims.

Within the past 12 months, ARAP has provided:

- Accommodation solutions to 5 cases
- Employment solutions to 9 cases
- Legal Aid to 10 cases
- Letters of Support/Reference to 17 cases
- Guidance Services to 34 cases
- Workshops 9

Since 2020 ARAP has provided:

- Accommodation solutions to 20 cases
- Employment solutions to 19 cases
- Legal Aid to 40 cases
- Letters of Support/Reference to 59 cases
- Guidance Services to 74 cases
- Workshops 13

Atheist Refugee Center (safehouse) is a first-of-its-kind project to be initiated as soon as ARAP reaches a total of 9 partners and/or secures additional funding (approx. annual cost of the safehouse is 12,000 USD)

The safehouse will be operated and supervised by the General Manager/Case Managers.

- A private single detached house will be rented by the Ateizm Dernegi International Foundation.
- Premises will be rented in a city where the local immigration office has the highest atheist asylum application submission acceptance rate in Turkey.
- The location of the premises will not be public.
- There will be 4-5 bedrooms in the private house.
- 2 bunk beds per room, so each room can accommodate up to 4 individuals. 15+ beds in total.
- Refugees can stay up to 90 days until there is a long-term accommodation solution

Campaigns

Humanist Schools in Africa



Kasese Humanist School in Uganda was established in 2011 by the Kasese United Humanist Association. Situated in the western region of Uganda, this school is rooted in humanist principles and a focus on science. It welcomes both boys and girls aged 3 to 14. In the current year, Atheist Alliance International continued its support for the school, contributing funds that aided in the acquisition of textbooks and school supplies, the refurbishment of school facilities, and the payment of teacher salaries.

“We have managed to make more school furniture to equip our Classrooms and since the year began, we have so far added 35 classroom desks. We have managed to put aside funds to help keep our gardens in shape and productive by buying farm implements and fertilizers, and paying for tractors to farm the extensive fields for pupils’ food at school. Other funds have been earmarked for buying scholastic items for our needy children including the Kasese Humanist orphans whom we take care of,” Bwambale Robert, the Director of the school reported.

Eagles View Humanist School is located in Buwenge-Kayiira, Uganda. The school proudly identifies itself as secular and embraces humanist values.

The landowners where the school was originally located were not in favor of extending the lease. The school managed to lease a new piece of land, but it needed funds to rebuild the school. We were able to organize fundraising events to offer the school a helping hand.

Celebrating Dissent 2022



This was a two-day conference held in Cologne, Germany on August 20-21, 2022. In support of our member organization and Co-organizer of the conference, Freethought Lebanon, Atheist Alliance International partnered with the event.

Nearly 50 speakers and artists from 30 countries worldwide came together at this conference to commemorate freethought and the spirit of dissent through a rich tapestry of talks, poetry, film, music, and comedy.

Secular Forums in Myanmar

Atheism in Myanmar has traditionally been a subject primarily discussed within academic circles. The Burmese Atheists project aims to bridge the gap and engage with the general population. This initiative will establish multiple reading clubs and discussion panels, while also conducting article-led seminars in urban areas to educate people on the significance of secularism, humanism, and social justice values.

Over time, this educational effort is expected to foster a deeper understanding of these principles among the masses. The ultimate goal is to lay the groundwork for the promotion of humanism and social justice activism once a democratic government is restored in the region.

As these values become more widespread and accepted among the population, Burmese Atheists will have the opportunity to unite people under a broader rationalist consciousness that advocates for secularism.

Advocacy

In a world characterized by a rich tapestry of beliefs and viewpoints, the fundamental right to express one's atheistic or religious perspectives should be safeguarded and celebrated. Throughout the year, our steadfast commitment has revolved around championing the safety and well-being of atheist activists. We have worked tirelessly, engaging with both governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to champion the principles of freedom of thought, expression, and belief for all individuals, irrespective of their religious or non-religious convictions.

Our active participation in events organized by The UN NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief has been a key part of our advocacy efforts, seeking the recognition of atheism as a valid and significant facet of human diversity. These engagements have provided us with a platform to shed light on the various challenges and discriminations that atheists face across the globe. By sharing the stories of individuals facing such hardships, we have aimed to cultivate greater understanding and empathy for those who have chosen a non-religious path. Ultimately, our vision is one in which individuals can openly identify as atheists without the looming fear of prejudice or persecution.

Furthermore, our collaborative endeavors with international human rights groups have been instrumental in addressing the urgent matter of protecting the rights and safety of atheists who are at risk due to their beliefs. Working hand in hand with these organizations has allowed us to amplify the voices of atheists confronting persecution and discrimination.

By highlighting specific cases and sharing the personal narratives of those affected, we have endeavored to foster a deeper comprehension of the adversities faced by atheist activists. Our ultimate goal has been to inspire action, encouraging NGOs and the wider public to stand in solidarity with those in need of support. As a direct outcome of these collective efforts, we have witnessed increased support for atheists at risk, offered in various forms such as legal aid, relocation assistance, and access to secure havens. It is through these collaborative initiatives that we aim to assist individuals in escaping persecution and finding safety in more accepting communities.

In summary, our advocacy endeavors have successfully conveyed a resounding message: the rights and safety of atheists are issues that transcend borders and concern us all. In a world that thrives on diversity and inclusivity, we are committed to ensuring that individuals, regardless of their religious or non-religious beliefs, can live in a society that values and respects their fundamental rights.

Financial Report

Currency: USD k

Statement of Activities		2022	2021
Donations (gross)		40,1	14,9
Memberships (gross)	Affiliate membership	0,9	0,9
	Individual Members	13,0	14,1
	Gross Memberships	13,9	15,0
Other Revenue		0,5	0,7
Total Revenue		54,4	30,6
Project Outlays	Various other projects	37,3	21,1
	To Affiliates	15,3	7,2
	Total Project Outlays	52,6	28,3
Administration	Salaries		1,0
	Professional Fees (incl Insurance)	5,4	2,9
	Other Admin Expenses	2,8	3,0
	Total Administration	8,2	6,8
Total Expenses		60,7	35,2
Excess / (Deficit) for the year:		-6,3	-4,6

Net Assets at Beginning of Year:	30,8	35,4
Net Assets at End of Year:	24,5	30,8
	6,3	4,6

Revenue kept on decreasing. Only \$9,9 k out of the total \$40,1 k of Donations represent general unrestricted donations, the rest is financial aid provided from major human rights organizations for specific ASN clients and funding for Kasese Humanist School in Uganda. Fundraising has always been a challenge for the organisation but the major cause for this year's decrease was the suspension of the organization's charitable status by California agencies.

That suspension was due to statutory omissions going back a decade, 199 forms had never been filed to the California Franchise Tax Board, ever since 2013, the current board had to do it!

Individual membership revenue has also decreased. Some individual supporters close their circle and do not renew and/or cancel their memberships. Benefits for individual supporters is an important area where the organization could improve in the future.

Moreover, the charitable suspension resulted in difficulty to attract new individual supporters.

Affiliate membership remained stable, however, Members in the first world could be encouraged to update their membership level.

Project outlays increased in both categories as an indication that important work continued to be delivered. Notable mentions go to the Atheist Refugee Assistance Program in Turkey and supporting the Celebrating Dissent 2022 conference of the Ex-Muslim movement.

One of AAI's strategic advantages is very low Administration expenses. All our work is accomplished by volunteering board directors and volunteers.

Additionally, renegotiation of insurance expenses resulted in further savings.

However, Administration expenses increased in 2022 due to the effort to reinstate the organization with the California authorities. They are expected to further increase in 2023.

Board Members

Bill Flavel stepped down from the board. Bill has been an indispensable part of the AAI family, taking action in countless ways and shaping discussions. Every role in an organization has its challenges, and through the highs and lows, Bill has remained dedicated to our mission. As one chapter closes, another begins. Bill is now redirecting his energies toward the literary world. We'd like to acknowledge his recent publication, *True or False?: 30 Questions to Kickstart Critical Thinking for Kids*. Bill, thank you for your contributions to AAI. We wish you success in your endeavors.

Other board directors to leave during the year were: Amir Schnabel and Christine Shelska. Amir has been very busy because of his growing involvement in the protest movement in Israel. Christine has recently started a new family and moved to a new city. She will still remain an important member of the AAI team in a volunteer capacity.

Prior to the upcoming Annual General Meeting, elections will be held for ten board positions. Members will cast their votes and results will be announced at the AGM.

Charting the course for 2024

Dear members, esteemed supporters, cherished members of the advisory council, and observers,

As we end the year 2023 and embark on the journey into 2024, we stand at a pivotal moment in the history of our organization. It is with immense gratitude that we extend our heartfelt appreciation to all of you who have been the bedrock of support during our most challenging phases. Your unwavering commitment to the cause of atheism and secularism has been nothing short of inspiring. Your support fuels our determination to achieve our vision for 2024 and beyond.

Growing Affiliate and Supporters Base and deepening our support:

Our first target for 2024 is to continue expanding our affiliates and supporters base. We also intend to increase our support to these groups. In a world where reason and evidence-based thinking are of paramount importance, it is crucial that we unite like-minded individuals from all corners of the globe and offer the highest possible support we can muster, especially in Africa and Asia where the need for secularism is of utmost importance.

Better Relationship and Communication:

To enhance the connection with our affiliates and supporters, we plan to continue our periodic newsletter that will center on issues surrounding leadership, advocacy, corporate governance, and initiatives that support atheists. This newsletter will serve as a conduit for transparent and meaningful communication.

Increasing Board Diversity:

Diversity in leadership is essential. We are committed to making our board even more diversified, ensuring representation from various backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives. This diversity will enrich our decision-making processes and reinforce our inclusive approach.

Campaigns and Advocacy:

We will intensify our efforts to create campaigns and advocacy initiatives aimed at supporting atheists and deepening the reach of our interventionist programs. Our mission to protect atheists and promote atheism remains steadfast.

Collaboration with Member Organizations:

Collaboration is key to expanding our influence. We will foster closer relationships with Member organizations to amplify our reach and impact, working together to champion the values of atheism and secularism.

Transnational Engagement:

By increasing our activity with transnational organizations such as the United Nations and the Council of Europe, we aim to secure a seat at the table where global decisions are made, advocating for the rights and recognition of atheists and secularists worldwide.

Research Initiatives:

In our quest for a better understanding of atheism and secularism across the globe, we will initiate and support research projects. These efforts will shed light on the unique dynamics that shape our movement.

Corporate Governance and Policy Development:

Addressing corporate governance issues and implementing a robust policy framework is essential. We are committed to learning from past mistakes and ensuring they do not recur, thereby ensuring transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct.

Furtherance of the Global Atheist and Secularist Movement:

Our commitment extends to doing everything necessary to advance the global atheist and secularist movement, standing as a beacon of reason, science, and ethical values.

A Global Force for Good:

In the coming year and beyond, we aspire to become a global force for good, advocating for the values of atheism, reason, and secularism that uphold human rights, social justice, and individual freedoms.

In conclusion, we embark on this journey with immense gratitude for your support and unwavering dedication to the principles that define us. The challenges ahead are great, but so too is our resolve. Together, we will achieve our vision for 2024 and continue to be the torchbearers of reason and compassion in an ever-changing world.

Thank you for your immense support.