

Blogger's brutal death for speaking his mind

By **Frida Ghitis**

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U.S. Blogger Hacked To Death In Bangladesh 06:00

Story highlights

Bangladeshi-American blogger Avijit Roy was killed Thursday

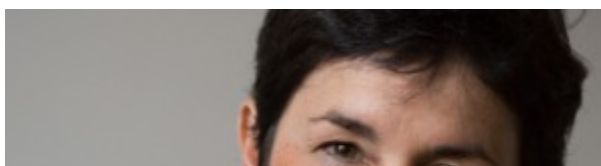
Frida Ghitis: Root cause of Islamist extremism is not poverty

Editor's Note: Frida Ghitis is a world affairs columnist for The Miami Herald and World Politics Review and a former CNN producer and correspondent. Follow her [@FridaGhitis](#). The opinions expressed in this commentary are hers.

(CNN)—Our minds still try to resist the idea that someone is willing to kill another human being because of the words that he or she

writes. Yet that is exactly what happened to Avijit Roy, an American citizen [hacked to death](#) by men brandishing knives and machetes during a trip to his native Bangladesh.

Roy and his wife, Rafida Ahmed Bonya, now in critical condition after also being attacked Thursday, were in Bangladesh to attend the national book fair, where Roy was promoting his books advocating tolerance, education and secular humanism.



Why was he killed? At the time of writing, the perpetrators had not been caught, but there seems little doubt he was killed by Islamist

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launches into action and the outbreak becomes an epidemic."

His assassination came [the same day we learned the identity](#) of the man known as Jihadi John, infamous for narrating in English as Western hostages of ISIS were decapitated. He has been identified as the London-raised, university educated Mohammed Emwazi.

Taken together, these two tragedies help shed light on what motivates people to conduct these brutal acts.

The revelations about Emwazi's life story were pieced together with the help of an organization that wants to make us believe Jihadi John's radicalization is the fault of the British security services, not of a murderous, apocalyptic ideology that helped make 2014 the deadliest year for terrorist attacks on record.

[According to the Washington Post](#), which relies [partly on information from a group called CAGE](#), Emwazi was described by some as a perfectly normal young Londoner, showing no signs of becoming the barbaric murderer he is alleged to have become, until security services started harassing him. The problems began, friends referred to in the article would have us believe, when he tried to go on safari to Tanzania with a couple of friends. He was stopped in Tanzania, and according to the article, he claims he was accused of planning to travel to Somalia, where the al Qaeda affiliate al Shabaab has been conducting its reign of terror.

An official from CAGE, which is described by the Washington Post as a "rights group," [described Emwazi as "extremely kind, extremely gentle,"](#) before Britain's MI5 started making his life hell for no apparent reason other than that he was a Muslim.

It is a misleading interpretation of events, one seemingly aimed at furthering the alleged

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As Roy so accurately pointed out, and as his death tragically demonstrates, the culprit is an apocalyptic, ultra-extremist ideology that religiously justifies every atrocity as it seeks to intimidate its foes and impose its vision.

Meanwhile, claims that the "root causes" of Islamist extremism lie in unemployment or prejudice simply serve to derail the campaign to eradicate it. Of course, unemployment and prejudice are ills that must be fought. But they are not what is getting bloggers like Ahmed Rajib Haider -- hacked to death in the streets of Dhaka in 2013 -- killed.

And it is not just atheists who are at risk, something that most Muslims fully understand; these extremists are just as likely to target a Shiite, a moderate Sunni, or anyone else who wants to live in the modern world or who disagrees with their extremist ideas.

Still, as an outspoken atheist, Roy knew that his views were putting his life in danger. He [wrote about how last year](#), at the same Dhaka book fair, his book "The Virus of Faith" quickly rose to the top of the fair's best-seller list. It was enormously popular, but also "hit the cranial nerve of Islamic fundamentalists." That's when the death threats started pouring in across social media. "I suddenly found myself a target of militant Islamists and terrorists," [he wrote](#).

In 2014, local media reported on some of the threats coming out of a local college known as a stronghold of politicized religious extremists. One Facebook post read "Avijit Roy lives in America and so it is not possible to kill him right now. He will be murdered when he comes back."

And so he was. The Islamist group Ansar Bangla-7 reportedly [tweeted after Roy's killing](#), "Target Down here in Bangladesh."

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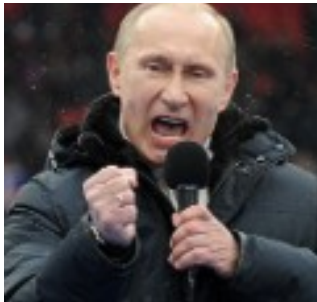
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