

Douglas Murray and Turkish MP Safak Pavey to speak at 'Secularism 2016' conference

Posted: Fri, 13th May 2016

The National Secular Society is delighted to announce that Turkish opposition MP Safak Pavey and the writer Douglas Murray will be joining the Society to speak at its anniversary conference to be held in London on 3 September.

The conference, '[Secularism 2016: Living better together](#)', will explore the role of secularism in the modern world and its importance in creating a fairer, more just and harmonious society for all.

Safak Pavey and Douglas Murray will be joining panel discussions about human rights, secularism and Islam, joining a host of other personalities lined up for the conference to mark 150 years of the NSS.

Other speakers include Maajid Nawaz, the co-founder and chair of the counter-extremism think tank Quilliam, Tehmina Kazi of British Muslims for Secular Democracy, Paul Rowe of Educate Together, historian Deborah Lavin and keynote speaker Jacques Berlinerblau – author of *How to be secular: a call to arms for religious freedom*.

Safak Pavey is a leading opposition MP who represents Istanbul Province for the Republican People's Party in the Turkish Parliament. In 2012 Pavey was honoured by the US Department of State with the International Women of Courage Award. In 2014 she was awarded the National Secular Society's "[Secularist of the Year](#)" prize for her work promoting human rights and defending secularism in Turkey and she is an honorary associate of the NSS.

During her [acceptance speech](#) for the award she said that secularism was the "closest we have ever gotten" to reconciling differences of religion and belief, and that "in the Middle East, we need secularism more than anywhere else."

Stephen Evans, NSS campaigns director, said: "Safak will offer a fascinating perspective on the increasingly alarming events in Turkey, as President Erdogan tries to solidify his grip on and Islamise the Turkish state – in defiance of its long tradition of secularism.

"We are delighted to offer this opportunity for Safak's important voice to be heard – it's an opportunity certainly not to be missed."

Douglas Murray is Associate Director of the Henry Jackson Society and a regular guest on current affairs programmes, including Question Time and The Daily Politics. Since 2012 he has been a contributing editor of The Spectator.

After a German comedian was prosecuted for a satirical poem, Murray introduced a "President Erdogan Offensive Poetry Competition" in the Spectator to defend freedom of speech.

Mr Evans said: "Douglas Murray offers clear thinking on important issues such as free speech, multiculturalism and Islamism.

"We're offering a conference with a diverse range of views and perspectives on secularism and the challenges that confront our movement today, Douglas will offer his unique insight and we're very much looking forward to hearing him and our other panellists' contributions."

The conference take place in central London on Saturday 3 September. Tickets are available now and can be booked online [here](#).

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