

Atheists press to ban creationism from U.K. schools

by [Al Webb](#)

September 20, 2011

LONDON (RNS) A group of 30 leading scientists, including a Nobel laureate and a prominent atheist professor, are pressing the British government to ban all teaching of creationism in the nation's publicly funded schools.

The scientists delivered a petition to the coalition government of Prime Minister David Cameron as part of a new campaign to make it illegal to teach the biblical story of creationism as a scientific theory in schools.

Official government policy is opposed to creationism in school curricula and has issued guidelines against teaching it, but officials have stopped short of legally barring it from state-funded institutions. The scientists' campaign urges that Charles Darwin's theory of evolution be taught in all schools at both the primary and secondary levels.

Among the signatories to their petition is Paul Nurse, a Nobel laureate in physiology or medicine, and atheist professor Richard Dawkins.

"We need to stop calling evolution a theory," Dawkins said recently. "In the ordinary language sense of the word, it is a fact ... as solidly demonstrated as any fact in science."

The British Humanist Association is among the groups calling for the teaching of evolution in all schools in Britain.

"It has never been more urgent for concrete steps to be taken to ensure that all state schools teach evolutionism, and not creationism,

and we urge the government to implement the simple and sensible measures" in the scientists' petition, BHA chief executive Andrew Copson said.