

Rebiya Kadeer, Irshad Manji, and Ayaan Hirsi Ali—women connected to Islam—receive human rights prize

by [Lauren Markoe](#) in the [January 6, 2016](#) issue

Three women connected to Islam received the Lantos Human Rights Prize December 10 in Washington, D.C.

The award is named for former U.S. representative Tom Lantos (D., Calif.), a Holocaust survivor known for his advocacy for oppressed peoples worldwide.

According to the Lantos Foundation for Human Rights and Justice, the winners earned the honor for their “willingness to defy social and cultural norms” and to risk their safety to expose human rights abuses.

Rebiya Kadeer is president of the World Uyghur Congress, a body that represents a Muslim group in China targeted by the Chinese government. Kadeer, who spent six years in a Chinese prison, now lives in the United States.

Irshad Manji, born in Uganda, is a best-selling author and advocate for reforms within Muslim cultures to promote individual freedoms. She founded the Moral Courage Project, which seeks to inspire individuals to protest human rights abuses even when threatened.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali is a Somali-born author who now lives in the United States. An atheist and a critic of elements within Muslim cultures, she had sought asylum in the Netherlands and was an elected member of the Dutch Parliament. She has angered some Muslims by questioning beliefs such as the divine origins of the Qur’an and the status of the Prophet Muhammad.

Former recipients of the Lantos Prize include former Israeli president Shimon Peres, former secretary of state Hillary Clinton, and the Dalai Lama. — Religion News Service

*This article was edited on December 23, 2015.*