

## **To the Honourable Delegates Attending the Thirty First Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers**

Istanbul, Turkey 14 - 16 June 2004

Respected Leaders of the Ummah,  
As-salaamu alaykum wa rahmatullah

On behalf of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) we would like to take this opportunity to offer our sincere thanks to the Secretary General of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Government of the Republic of Turkey for their kind invitation to attend the 31st Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers here in Istanbul, Republic of Turkey from 26 to 28 – Rabi'ath-Thani 1425H (14 - 16 June 2004).

Al hamdu lillah, the Ummah of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, is blessed with the eternal message of truth and justice and with huge resources and potential for bringing about genuine growth and stability in the world as a whole.

The Muslim world has the legacy, the calling and the potential for being the leading sector for positive and enlightened change in the world. To realise this, they need to know what this glorious legacy that they have is. They also need to engage positively with the world. And they need to play their full role in the world by clarifying their own goals.

Being in the west and of the west, we do not believe that there is any intrinsic hostility between Muslims and the vast majority of people in the societies in which we live. There may indeed be fanatical elements driving policies at the heart of powerful governments in the western world. How else, for example, do we account for the continued support of many governments for Zionist arrogance and brutality in Palestine? But our overwhelming experience in Britain is that the vast majority of people are caring, generous, decent and genuine whose consciences are alive and who want to see and live in a better world. We have a duty to convey by precept and example an authentic understanding of Islam to the peoples of the West in particular and of the world in general. This is a critical and tremendous duty upon us all, especially at these times.

All of us here, no doubt, condemn all acts of terrorism, and terrorism needs to be combatted. We need to be vigilant everywhere, to try to prevent any attacks from taking place and any loss of innocent lives and damage to property. One terrorist attack is one too many. When one does occur, however, we should be careful in not apportioning responsibility and blame without proper investigation and due process of law.

The arrest of one innocent person and the ruining of his life and that of his family, is one arrest too many. In this connection, The Muslim Council of Britain has been working hard to secure the release of innocent persons held like animals in cages by the Americans in Guantanamo. We had an unprecedented meeting with the Attorney General of the United Kingdom which contributed to the release of five young innocent Muslim men. There are still hundreds of others being held without charge. This is a violation of all civilized values.

We would like to call upon this Conference to initiate a thorough and dispassionate enquiry into the phenomenon of terrorism in today's world, including state terrorism, institutional terrorism, group terrorism and individual terrorism; most of all we have to have a clear and cognisable definition of terrorism without taking away the right of the oppressed and occupied to struggle for their liberation.

The Muslim Ummah is at present going through turbulent times. It is now more than ever that the world Muslim community is looking towards the Organization of Islamic Conferences to provide determination and direction in addressing in the most constructive manner the injustices and the oppression in different parts of the world.

In response to these challenges, we are deeply conscious of the fact that Islam places a unilateral obligation on Muslims towards the welfare of their fellow human beings and the societies in which they live and to work for the common good of all. The need to protect and preserve social order is a supreme value in Islam.

The Muslim Council of Britain as the national umbrella body of the Muslim community in the UK works closely with the grassroots community. We strive to play our full and equal part in the life of our nation if society is to overcome its prejudices and phobias about Islam.

The MCB works as closely with both the Government and the wider society for the welfare and stability of our nation and country. Being a broad-based, representative organisation of Muslims in Britain, it accommodates and reflects the variety of social and cultural backgrounds and outlook of the community. The MCB encourages full

participation of Muslims in mainstream society so that we may work and live in this society with dignity and self-respect.

Through engagement with topical and current issues that affect our daily lives, positive outcomes are produced. This is exemplified by the work of the MCB committees such as that of the Public Affairs Committee and of MCB affiliates which have played a key role in encouraging Muslims to vote in the European Parliament and Local Government elections and the elections for the Mayor of London and the Greater London Assembly. We are pleased to note that the community is trying to play its fullest and positive part in the political life of the country.

There is no gainsaying the fact that like the rest of the Islamic Ummah, the British Muslim community is deeply concerned about the continued ethnic cleansing of the Muslims in Palestine and in particular the desperate plight of the poor people of Rafah and the Gaza simply because they do not want to put up with the illegal military occupation of their homeland and the daily regime of brutalities and gross violations of basic human rights.

The question that is being asked - Is the Ummah so impotent and helpless as to be unable to do anything to save and protect the various parts of its own body, from Iraq, Chechnya, Kashmir to Palestine? We believe that this Conference has a moral and Islamic duty to answer this question. In this, member states will do well to realise the requirement of the Qur'an - to hold fast altogether to the rope of Allah, and stand as 'one solidly-cemented structure' - in combating all the injustices and indignities that continue to be inflicted on our Ummah.

This Conference cannot afford to fail and we hope and pray for the success of your deliberations. May the peace and blessings of Allah be on you. Ameen.

Yours sincerely

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Secretary General  
The Muslim Council of Britain