

SPEECH AT INTERPAL 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY RECEPTION

Your Excellencies, respected elders, distinguished guests, brothers and sisters,

Asalaamu Alaykum wa Rahmatullah wa Barakatuhu

On behalf of the Muslim Council of Britain I am delighted to convey warmest greetings and commendations to the International Relief and Development Fund (Interpal) on this its 10th anniversary.

For many of us gathered here today, this is truly an occasion of immense happiness. We in the MCB share a special sense of joy and satisfaction with your esteemed charity and all that it has achieved throughout the last decade.

Looking back over the period, there is much in your record that gives us reason to be proud. Through steadfast dedication, transparency and untold sacrifices you have raised the barriers of success in a crowded and competitive field.

My friends, there is in our view no better endeavour than engagement in healthy competition for the service of humanity and pleasure of God. Ten years ago Interpal took up this challenge in a troubled and hostile environment. One that was fraught with grave dangers, countless obstacles and enormous human suffering. Yet, you have prevailed.

At 10 years old, you can rightly declare that you have come of age. Your record of providing shelter, food, medicine and education for tens of thousands of deprived Palestinians is an accomplishment which many governments in the developing world have failed to achieve for their people.

Having now crossed this important milestone, I am sure you would be encouraged to reflect on your successes and failures, reorganize your resources and replenish your energies. May I take this opportunity to reassure you that your institution would find the MCB ever present to support you in your endeavours.

I would be failing in my duty today if I were to miss this opportunity to remind our distinguished gathering of the need to continue their support for Interpal in its unique humanitarian mission.

In a recent publication focusing on the 'poorest of the poor' the World Bank pointed out that as many as 600,000 Palestinians cannot afford to meet their basic needs in food, clothing and shelter in order to survive. This group - whose expenditures amount to less than \$1.5 a day per person - has become increasingly vulnerable because of the repressive policies of the Occupying Power.

In 2001-2003, international donors provided an average of \$950 million per year, which helped sustain social service delivery and support for Palestinians through food and cash support. Without these programs, an additional 250,000 persons would have fallen under the subsistence poverty line - 35 percent above the current level.

With these realities before us, I urge you not simply to continue, but rather to increase your support for Interpal and its partners in Palestine.

We all are aware of the recent campaigns to vilify and undermine Interpal. The MCB salutes the impeccable professionalism and impartiality of the Charities Commission in its dealings with these very serious allegations brought against Interpal. We trust that all such accusations would be finally buried and laid to rest for once and for all.

Friends, it is our faith and hope that the Commission would continue to demonstrate this very high standard of justice and fair-play that is so intrinsic to the fabric of British society.

I thank you all for your support and wish all a pleasant evening.

Wa Salaam Alaykum

Iqbal Sacranie MCB Secretary General

