

THE MUSLIM COUNCIL OF BRITAIN

A step towards greater consultation, cooperation and coordination on Muslim Affairs in the UK.

Muslim Council of Britain Weekly E-Newsletter

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MCB welcomes Stamp Duty changes

The Muslim Council of Britain welcomes the changes in the Stamp Duty regime announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 9 April 2003. New legislation in the Finance Bill which will remove the additional stamp duty cost burden incurred in connection with alternative property finance arrangements which are expected to include most Islamic home finance products. These new measures, which reduce the number of incidents upon which Stamp Duty is charged, will pave the way for the launch of Islamic home finance products in the UK, benefiting customers who want Shari'a compliant financing for the purchase of residential property. The relief will apply from 1 December 2003. This will go a long way towards fulfilling a key Muslim community wish to be able to utilise competitive Islamic Home Finance products in the UK.

For further details please refer to press releases at www.mcb.org.uk

Rejecting Neo-Conservative and Zionist plans for Iraq

On 11 April, the MCB released a press statement voicing UK Muslim rejection of Neo-Conservative and Zionist plans for Iraq. "Following the collapse of Saddam Hussein's repressive and brutal ba'thist regime in Iraq, the Muslim Council of Britain views with concern moves by the United States to replace it with a pliant regime." The MCB called for the Prime Minister to ensure that the United Nations administer Iraq for the interim period and transfer control to a truly representative Iraqi government. "We call upon the international community to give this tragedy their urgent attention and we also call upon the US/UK governments to withdraw their troops from Iraqi soil immediately. It is unlikely that the Iraqi people will tolerate for long the replacement of a hated dictator with an occupying force," added Mr Sacranie.

For further details please refer to press releases at www.mcb.org.uk

Census data

Jamil Sherif, Secretary of the MCB Research & Documentation Committee (ReDoc), was invited to make a presentation at the Imams Consultation seminar organised by Maqsood Ahmed, Muslim Adviser in the Community Policy Group, Home Office, on 5 April 2003 in Bradford. He used the opportunity to convey the important applications of Census data to community work, particularly in (i) planning the demand for services to be provided by mosques and other service providers, (ii) monitoring equal opportunity policies in employment and other areas, (iii) development of customised products and services by the private sector for the Muslim market and (iv) political representation. The Census statistics show that Muslim populations are highest in the most deprived parts of the country and with the lowest primary school performance rankings. The meeting was hosted by the Council of Mosques, Bradford, and chaired by Lord Nazir Ahmed.

In his keynote speech, Home Office minister responsible for Race Equality and Community Policy, Lord Filkin, stated that his starting point was that Islam is a peace-loving and truth loving religion and that British Muslims play an important and powerful role in society. Government was committed to a multicultural Britain and its diversity of faiths was "an asset to the country". He identified three challenges to this: (i) racism, Islamophobia and social exclusion (ii) leadership at the community and national level and (iii) the divisions arising because of the Iraq war. He noted positive developments such as the Race Relations Amendment Act, that will place a new onus on public bodies to be representative. He noted that until recently the Race Equality Unit in his Department had no Muslim member of staff, an unacceptable situation that he rectified on his appointment as Minister. Lord Filkin also referred to the recognition within Government that for many people in Britain, religious affiliation provided their main sense of identity. Policy makers could no longer regard religion as a purely private matter with no social policy implications. He added, "It is not just British Muslims who have to adapt to British society, but society too has to change [to reflect new realities]".

A question-and-answer session followed, in which a number of participants indicated their loss of trust with a Government had not listened to its citizens on an important issue of foreign policy. Other issues of concern included the draconian prison sentences on Bradford youth implicated in the Summer 2001 disturbances, the increasing application of 'stop and search' laws to Muslim youth, the interrogation of Mosque imams when returning to the UK from overseas visits, and the changing goal posts on the establishment of single-sex faith schools. Ishtiaq Ahmed of the Bradford Council of Mosques stated that it was unacceptable for Government to try to by-pass mosques or to view them as 'part of the problem': mosques represent a central binding factor for Muslims and this should be recognised.

The Census presentation is available in pdf format at <http://data.webstar.co.uk>

CRE Race in the Media Awards

On 10 April 2003, the MCB issued a statement welcoming the commitment of the CRE and its new Chair Trevor Phillips to work for better understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims in modern Britain. The CRE has apologised for any offence caused by its failure to take into account Muslim faith needs when arranging its Race in the Media Awards held on Friday 11 April 2003, in London, the day of congregational prayer for Muslims. A prayer room was made available at the awards and the CRE has undertaken not to hold the event in future at this time on a Friday.

Interfaith Network meeting

On 3 April 2003 a Faith Communities Consultative Forum meeting took place, organised by the Interfaith Network at Senate House, University of London. Dr Abdul Raheem Khan represented the Muslim Council of Britain. The meeting started by reviewing interfaith relations and war with Iraq. Although the consultation process has come to an end and draft regulations are being prepared, the responses from various communities has been less than satisfactory. This was primarily due to the lack of adequate funding and the presence of a proper infrastructure within the communities to respond to Government discussion documents. Consultations are currently

ongoing to provide guidance for employers and proposals for a Single Equality Body.

London Muslim Coalition launch

On 1 April 2003, the London Muslim Coalition was launched at City Hall, London. Present at the well attended launch were Ken Livingstone and a number of community leaders who delivered messages in support of the occasion. Dr Abdul RAheem Khan, speaking on behalf of the MCB, highlighted specific problems of health and employment confronting Muslims in parts of London well exemplified by East London.

United Religions Initiative reception

On 4 April 2003 the United Religions Initiative organised a reception in honour of the Rt. Rev. William E. Swing, Bishop of California and Muslim leaders including Abdul Hai. This took place at 1 Millbank, Westminster. Dr Abdul Raheem Khan represented MCB former Secretary General Yousuf Bhailok, who is a Trustee of this organisation. The reception was attended by a large gathering of UK community leaders.

Desecration of Muslim body in Hillingdon

On 17 January 2003, a Muslim woman, aged 65, died of cancer at Hillingdon hospital, West London. The following day as her family went to pay their respects they were told that bacon rashers had been placed on the body. The Metropolitan Police's Racial Crime Task Force say they have seized CCTV film from the hospital and are treating the crime as racially motivated.

Condemning the defilement of the body, spokesperson for the Muslim Council of Britain, Sarah Joseph said the act was clearly carried out by someone who knew practising Muslims consider eating or touching pork to be highly offensive. She said: "This was done to cause maximum upset. This was not only a Muslim but a human being. The desecration of any body will be condemned by everyone, there is not a sane person who would not be offended by this. It has not come to light yet if this was the act of an Islamophobe but there has been a rise in such attacks, such as desecration of graveyards." Also speaking out on this issue Mr Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary of the MCB Media Committee, said: "There has been a significant increase in the numbers of attacks on Muslims after 11 September, and in the lead-up to the second Gulf War this year. We are extremely anxious over these race-hate incidents." MCB Deputy Secretary General Dr Abdul Bari has said "The community should be on guard and report any attacks or harassment to the relevant authorities including the police and they must not suffer in silence."

Committees Update

Media Committee (MC)

Letter to the BBC

On 8 April 2003, the Secretary of the Media Committee wrote to Mr Mark Damazer, regarding a

BBC Breakfast report which mentioned that a cameraman working for the Arab satellite channel, al-Jazeera, was killed while he was filming fighting between US and Iraqi troops. In actual fact, the cameraman, Tareq Ayyoub, actually died when US forces bombed the al-Jazeera office in Baghdad, two quite different propositions. Additionally, the Media committee expressed concern that the BBC has not devoted enough coverage to the dreadful humanitarian situation in Basra and questioned the seeming reluctance to show al-Jazeera footage.

In response, Mr Damazer replied that the Breakfast team had made "one-off mistake in a fast-moving programme and both earlier and later in the programme Breakfast did report that Al-Jazeera was saying its Baghdad office had been hit and one of its cameramen killed." He further stated that the BBC "have used Al Jazeera footage throughout the conflict and there is no policy to down-play Al-Jazeera pictures."

Letter to Jewish Chronicle

On 11 April 2003, Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary of the MCB Media Committee wrote to the Jewish Chronicle responding to some of the criticisms from Zionists. The letter condemns the "killing of all innocents, whether they be Muslims, Jews, Christian, Hindu, or any other faith and none." and points out that the "killing of thousands of innocent Iraqis and illegal occupation of their land is being carried out with the support of my government using weapons my taxes have helped pay for." Further the letter states that "The creation of Israel was certainly a terrible mistake. It has led to immense, continued suffering for many Jews and Palestinians alike. It has also, unfortunately, served to poison relations between our two Abrahamic faiths."

Research & Documentation Committee (ReDoc)

Fundraising Dinner for MCBDirect

A fund-raising dinner to launch MCBDirect, a Muslim Community Information Service will be held at The Porchester on Saturday 5 July 2003. For tickets and further information please contact redoc@mcb.org.uk

Redoc E-Newsletter

The second issue of the ReDoc Research E-Newsletter has been published. To subscribe please contact redoc@mcb.org.uk

Public Affairs Committee

Liberal Democrats Meeting

On 15 March 2003, the Liberal Democrats held a fringe meeting discussing the impact of international affairs on domestic issues. Participants on the panel included Dr Jenny Tonge, MP and Sher Khan, Chair of the MCB Public Affairs Committee. The audience included a mixture of key party individuals such as Simon Hughes. Extensive discussion took place regarding the Liberal Democrats' position on the war in Iraq, followed by a question and answer session focussing on the Islamic perspective on a number of issues. Following the meeting, in an informal setting, Sher Khan was introduced to a number of party members and met with the Chief Executive of the Liberal Democrats. The MCB's Public Affairs committee are currently in discussion with the Liberal Democrats regarding the provision of Islamic awareness training for their members.

National Assembly Against Racism

On 22 February, Sher Khan attended the Unite Against Racism conference organised by the National Assembly Against Racism. The focus of this year's annual conference was to unite minorities and ethnic groups against the BNP. The conference was aimed at mobilising minority and ethnic groups to participate in the local elections in April. Cllr Mohammed Azam from Oldham underlined the need for support in the coming months run up to May's local election where the BNP are up for re-election in Burnley; and flagged next year's battle in all-out elections in Oldham and elsewhere.

Health & Medical Committee (HMC)

Letter to the Guardian

Dr A Majid Katme, spokesman on Halal Meat and Food for the MCB, wrote to the the Guardian regarding the meeting held between the Farm Animal Welfare Council and Jewish Groups on 27 March. The letter confirmed that British Muslims would also find unacceptable any suggestion to ban animal slaughter without stunning because that would infringe the Islamic code. Dr Katme stated that "The two specific Muslim and Jewish requirements, namely slaughter without stunning and welfare of animals, were incorporated in the Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulation 1995, following wide consultations and careful deliberations. The 1999 Amendment stipulating that religious slaughter must be carried out only in licensed or officially regulated slaughterhouses strengthens aspects of animal welfare. The emerging evidence that certain practices associated with stunning is both inhumane to animals and pose health hazards suggests that an urgent risk assessment of the practise may be necessary."

New on the MCB Website

- **Media/Letters to Editors**

8 April - Letter to Mark Damazer of the BBC - 'Reporting from Basra' from Inayat Bunglawala (Media Committee). The BBC response is also provided

- **Library/Articles and Reports**

12 April - British Medical Journal - 'Where worlds meet' by Dr Aziz Sheikh (ReDoc)

19 April 2003 - British Medical Journal - 'Islam' by Dr Aziz Sheikh (ReDoc)

- **mcb.org.uk/mcbdirect**

Donation Form/Bankers Standing Order form for the MCBDirect project

- **Links**

New link to MCB affiliate's site 'Gardens of Peace Muslim Cemetery'

- **Emails received by the MCB**

Click the banner at the top of the home page or go to this web site address

<http://www.mcb.org.uk/tragedy.php>

There is now a unique collection of over 130 pages of emails sent to the MCB by well-wishers, critics and xenophobes - in response to world events in the aftermath of September 11 2001.

The Quest for Sanity

Letters of appreciation (cont'd)

I have learnt a great deal from the first few pages of the book and look forward to finishing it.

Chris Heaton-Harris MEP, Conservative MEP for the East Midlands Region of the UK

I think it is most timely that this should be sent out by you at such a critical time and I am very grateful.

Mel Read MEP East midlands Region

May I add to the compliments paid the work by those whose comments you have printed. It is by turns moving and challenging but always informative.

David Calvert-Smith QC, Director of Public Prosecutions

I..congratulate you and the contributors for a timely and thought provoking contribution to inter-faith understanding and tolerance.

John Bowis OBE MEP for London

I would like to wish you every success with this publication and may you continue with your very important and valuable work.

Dana Rosemary Scallon MEP

The book has an excellent collection of articles covering the width and depth of assessment of the impact of Islam and Muslims in Europe and beyond. Congratulations!

Bashir Khanbhai, MEP

...the call for increased dialogue is painfully relevant.

David Gladwell, Lord Chancellor's Department, London

I greatly appreciate the time and effort which you have given in the setting up and distribution of this book. I believe it is important that we overcome some of the misconceptions relating to this matter and also that dialogue be maintained.

Brian Crowley MEP

May I offer you my congratulations on this publication, and the commendable work you are doing to increase dialogue and multi-cultural understanding in these troubled times.

Graham Watson MEP

I am sure that such a book will go a considerable way to enhancing understanding, tolerance and respect of Islam in the West. I am sympathetic to your concerns regarding the 'war on terror' and hope that everyone can work towards a peaceful resolution in the Middle East in future.

Roger Helmer MEP, East Midlands

Especially at the present time such calm reflections upon the world that we live in after September 11th are very welcome..I've read several of the pieces in it and have been moved and enlightened by them.

Neil MacCormick, MEP

I strongly agree on the need to promote increased dialogue and good relations between different communities. All efforts to this end are very welcome.

David Manning, Foreign Policy Advisor to the PM and Head of the Defence and Overseas Secretariat

This collection ranges from scholarly writings on Qur'anic themes to accounts that deeply touched me. I felt moved by a young Pakistani man, identifiable as a Muslim, recounting the help he received on September 11 from a stranger, a Hasidic Jewish man.

Numa, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland Newsletter

In these difficult and uncertain times, rest assured that the Press Complaints Commission shares common cause with you in working towards the strengthening of good community relations throughout the United Kingdom.

Professor R A Pinker, Acting Chairman, Press Complaints Commission

It is a most thoughtful work which does, indeed, focus on the serious challenges that face this nation and our world as we grapple with the aftermath of September 2001 and the catalyst for it.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Peter Squire, Ministry of Defence

I have read it over the weekend, and it has impressed me, as has the MCB newsletter.

Charles de Chassiron, Head of Protocol and Vice Marshal of the Diplomatic Corps, Foreign & Commonwealth Office

I found it of great value and am in the process of sharing it with colleagues. May wish you continued success in all you seek to achieve.

Sir Ronnie Flanagan, HM Inspector of Constabulary, London and the East

It is important for us all to have a good understanding and respect for one another's cultural and religious perspectives. As commented in your letter, the effect of September 11 has been far reaching in the United Kingdom and the wider Global community.

General Sir Mike Jackson, Chief of the General Staff

I personally found the book a valuable insight into understanding the events that stimulated it from a Muslim perspective.

Don Stewart, Executive Director, Regional Development Agency, Yorkshire & Humber

Whilst I may not agree with some of the views expressed by your contributors, I wholeheartedly endorse the underlying goals of building greater understanding and tolerance. Overall I see the tone of the book to be aspirational, using good examples from our shared past to point the way to

a future where prejudices are first challenged and then dismantled. In this you have my full support.

Sir Keith Povey, HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Home Office

For the full listing of reviews please see the MCB website

To order copies of The Quest For Sanity (£12.75 each, plus P&P) please contact the MCB on 0208 432 0585/6 or order online at www.mcb.org.uk/books

Events

Event: MCB Annual General Meeting

Date: Saturday 26 April 2003

Held By: The Muslim Council of Britain

Venue: Islamic Cultural Centre, London

Contact: MCB Office Tel: 020 8903 9024, email: admin@mcb.org.uk

Website: www.mcb.org.uk

Information: All day event. Sheikh Rashid Ghannoushi will be speaking at the AGM.

Event: Silent vigil against abortion

Date: 26 April 2003

Time: 11 am to 1 pm

Held By: The Muslim Division of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children

Venue: Parliament Square, London

Contact: Dr A Majid Katme, Muslim Coordinator on 07944 240 622/0208 345 6220 or

E-mail: akatme@hotmail.com

Information: Annual event occurring simultaneously in 55 other British cities to remind the public of the barbaric and bitter reality of abortion where over 600 innocent unborn children are tortured and killed every day in Britain.

Event: Media March

Date: Saturday 31 May 2003

Time: 1.30 pm to 4 pm

Held By: Media Watch UK.

Venue: Start at Tothill Street, opposite St James's underground, towards Parliament and congregate at Trafalgar Square for rally.

Contact: Dr A.Majid Katme Tel: 0208 345 6220 or Mobile :07944 240 62

Email: akatme@hotmail.com Website: www.mediamarch.org.uk

Information: March and petition to call for Britain's obscenity laws and related media regulations to be radically strengthened. Speeches will be made at Trafalgar Square by

prominent speakers in the media and a representative from the MCB.

Event: MCB Fund Raising Dinner

Date: 5 July 2003

Held By: The Muslim Council of Britain.

Contact: redoc@mcb.org.uk

Information: Dinner to support the MCBDirect Project - a community information service and portal.

Committee Contacts

MCB Committee	Position	Name
Media	Chair	Mr Iqbal Sacranie
	Secretary	Mr Inayat Bunglawala
Research & Documentation	Chair	Dr Aziz Sheikh
	Vice Chair	Ms Shabana Khan
	Secretary	Dr Jamil Sherif
Finance & General Purpose Committee	Vice Chair	Dr Akber Mohamedali
	Secretary	Mr Jamil Versi
Legal Affairs Committee	Chair	Mr Mahmud Al-Rashid
	Vice Chair	Mr SabahAl-Mukhtar
	Secretary	Mr Khalid Sofi
Membership Committee	Chair	Mr Ahmed Sheikh Mohamed
	Vice Chair	Dr Abdul Raheem Khan
	Secretary	Mr Mohammed Aslam Ijaz

Social Affairs Committee	Chair	Ms Shibani Akbar
	Vice Chair	Mr Salah El-Hassan
	Secretary	Mr Babak Zadeh Amin
Health & Medical Issues Committee	Chair	Dr Shuja Shafi
	Vice Chair	Dr Abdullah Shehu
Europe & International Affairs Committee	Chair	Dr Kamal El-Helbawy
	Vice Chair	Mr Tanzeem Wasti
	Secretary	Mr Zymer Salihi
Youth & Sports Committee	Chair	Mr Hussein Shefaar
	Vice Chair	Ms Basma El-Shayal
	Secretary	Ms Raihana Naseem
Public Affairs Committee	Chair	Mr Sher Khan
Education / Training & Employment Committee	Chair	Mrs Karima Mustafa
	Vice Chair	Mr Nawazish Bokhari
	Secretary	Mr Yusuf Hussein
Mosques & Community Affairs Committee	Chair	Mr Ibrahim Mogra
	Vice Chair	Mr Ayyub Laher
Business & Economics Committee	Chair	Mr Iqbal Asaria

Women & Family Affairs Committee	Chair	Dr Reefat Drabu
	Vice Chair	Mrs Abdul Wahab
	Secretary	Mrs Jasmine Ansari
Regeneration & Renewal Committee	Chair	Mr Joseph Ahmed-Dobson
	Vice Chair	Ms N Majid
	Secretary	Mr S Butt
London Task Group	Chair	Mr Tanzeem Wasti
	Vice Chair	Dr Abdul Raheem Khan
	Secretary	Mr Harun Rashid Khan
