

# MCB

The Newsletter of The Muslim Council of Britain

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# The Common Good

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*The newsletter is named after the MCB's commitment to the shared seeking of the common good for our society.*

## Affiliating to the MCB

The MCB is a representative body of established national and regional organisations as well as local mosques, Islamic centres and specialist institutions. It has over 350 affiliates, plus individuals committed to helping the work of MCB. These organisations and individuals come from diverse and varied specialities and interests: mosques, charities, the medical, educational, social and legal fields, business - the list could go on. They are united in their commitment to seeking the common good. **If you would like to join in this work and this commitment then please contact the MCB for further information and an affiliation form.**

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## UK Muslims Against War on Iraq

The Central Working Committee of the MCB, met at the offices of its affiliate, the Federation of Muslim Organisations in Leicester on 12 October and endorsed the findings of a survey of over 120 Muslim bodies that the vast majority of British Muslims were opposed to any new military strike against Iraq.

The views of British Muslims on Iraq were conveyed to the Foreign Office Minister Mike O'Brien by an MCB delegation during a meeting with him on 7 October 2002. It was made clear to the Minister that a pre-emptive strike against Iraq and a 'regime change' would be illegal and have catastrophic consequences for international peace.

An earlier emergency meeting of MCB affiliates in September had also discussed the issue of the possible war on Iraq. The meeting was attended by nearly 60 lead-

ers of British Muslim bodies and ulama. They raised widespread concerns about the continuing suffering of the Iraqi people, while one of the real aims of the United States was to secure access to the region's valuable resources, as the former Cabinet Minister, Mo Mowlam, had recently declared.

Following these extensive consultations with the British Muslim community, a Press Release was issued in which the MCB Secretary General, Iqbal Sacranie said that there was: "unease among British Muslims about the selective implementation of UN resolutions relating to Iraq and the deliberate overlooking of UN resolutions about Palestine and Kashmir."

*Results of the MCB survey on Iraq conducted by its Research & Documentation Committee are available on the MCB website.*



## Britons United in Anti War Protest

Britons united in a massive protest march on 28 September 2002, against a war on Iraq and in solidarity with the oppressed Palestinian people. Over 400,000 participated in the march from all sections of British society. It was jointly organised by the MCB affiliate, the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) and the Stop the War Coalition. Speakers at Hyde Park included Tony Benn, the investigative journalist John Pilger, London Mayor Ken Livingstone, and the former UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter. The MCB Secretary General, Iqbal Sacranie, also addressed the gathering and made reference to the new MCB publication 'The Quest for Sanity' that has an important message in this time of global crisis.

## MCB launches book



The Muslim Council of Britain is pleased to announce the publication of its book, "The Quest for Sanity: Reflections on September 11 and the Aftermath".

*See back page.*

## Bali atrocity condemned

On 15 October 2002, the MCB issued a press release strongly condemning the bombings that have led to the loss of innocent lives.

For the full text see the press release section at <http://www.mcb.org.uk>

## MCB Opposes Government Moves on Adoption

The MCB gave its full support to the campaign led by Church-based groups, including the Christian Institute, to ensure that only married couples be allowed to adopt children. It urged affiliates to lobby their MPs not to support the government amendment which would have also allowed homosexual or cohabiting couples to adopt children.

The Rt Rev the Lord Bishop of Winchester, Michael Scott-Joynt, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Cardiff, Peter Smith, the editor of the Sikh Messenger, Indarjit Singh, and the MCB Secretary-General, Iqbal Sacranie, said in a letter to the Daily Telegraph on 16 October 2002: "It is our conviction that joint adoption by homosexual couples, or by unmarried heterosexual couples, would not be in the best interests of children." The MCB holds that the married family is the best environment for raising children. Dr Reefat Drabu, Chair of the Women & Family Affairs Committee gave four radio interviews on this topic.

Government plans to allow unmarried couples to adopt children were subsequently defeated that same night on 16 October 2002 in the House of Lords by 196 votes to 162.

## ISESCO Furthering Cultural Ties



Dr. Altwajri signing protocol

On 20th June, the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) signed a Protocol of Understanding with the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO). ISESCO is the counterpart of UNESCO in the fifty seven

nation Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), which has its headquarters in Rabat. A two-day International Symposium entitled 'The West and Islam in the Media' also took place (20-21st June) at the Islamic Cultural Centre in London.

Attendees included Rt. Hon. Mike O'Brien MP, Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, HE Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altwajri, Director General of ISESCO, HE Dr Khalid al-Ankary, Minister of Higher Education, Saudi Arabia and Dr Ahmed al-Dubayan, Director General of the Islamic Cultural Centre.

ISESCO Director General Dr Altwajri said: "We hope to open a fresh new chapter in our relationship with the West, Britain in particular". The MCB Secretary General Iqbal Sacranie commented that "the Protocol extends the opportunity of furthering greater understanding and deepening cultural co-operation between Britain and the Islamic World".

## MCB Annual General Meeting and Elections



Group photo - MCB CWC 2002-2004

The MCB held its Annual General Meeting on 28th April 2002 at Brent Town Hall, Wembley. The AGM was attended by delegates representing mosques, educational and charitable institutions, and regional and national organisations from all over the UK to review the work of the last year and to elect new office bearers to the posts of Secretary General, Deputy Secretary General and Treasurer for the two-year term. Sessions at the meeting were chaired by Professor Dawud Noibi, Rumman Ahmed and Election Commissioner Khurshid Drabu.

The outgoing Secretary General, Yousuf Bhailok, was praised for his efforts and service to the British Muslim community in what had been two difficult years marked by the riots in northern towns in the summer of 2001 and the tragic events of September 11.

Delegates at the General Assembly elected a new Central Working Committee. The elected office bearers of the MCB for 2002 - 2004 are Iqbal Sacranie (Secretary General), Dr Abdul Bari (Deputy Secretary General), and Ali Omar Ermes (Treasurer). At subsequent meetings of the CWC four additional office bearers were appointed: 3 assistant Secretary Generals - Unaiza Malik, Ahmed Sheikh and Dr Daud Abdullah; and one Assistant Treasurer Dr Akber Mohamedali.

## MCB ReDoc Conference Benefits from Census Data on Religion

Lucy Haselden from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), attending an MCB conference 'The Demographic Profile of Britain's Muslim Community: Charting a Research Agenda' on 26 September 2002, clarified the timetable for the publication of Census results. The first tranche announced on 30 September 2001 will not provide ethnicity and religion analyses - this is to be published on 13 February 2003.

This second tranche will include tables indicating head counts of gender, age band and ethnic group by religion, from ward level upwards, subject to disclosure constraints.

Other speakers at the event, that had 95 attendees, included Professor Tariq Modood from the University of Bristol and Mohibur Rahman, New Policy Institute. Professor Modood indicated that his current estimate for Britain's Muslim population stood at about 1.7 million.

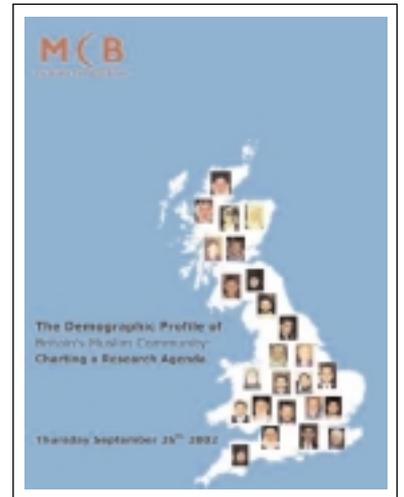
Lucy Haselden, who works in the ONS's Ethnicity & Identity Unit, also stated that the scope of a detailed 'topic report' on Religion was currently being discussed. The MCB is pressing the ONS that at a minimum, the statistical tables and cross-tabulations proposed for the presentation of ethnicity information should also apply to religion.

Dr Aziz Sheikh, Chair of MCB's Research & Documentation Committee, and Professor Muhammad Anwar of Warwick University chaired conference sessions.

The keynote address was presented by Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary General of the MCB who noted that: "Previous studies and debates have identified the problems experienced by various communities along ethnic and racial lines. However, very little solid information has been available in respect of the British Muslim community, which has its own particular needs and characteristics, transcending ethnic and racial boundaries... The Census will enable the Muslim community to learn more about its own ethnic diversity, socio-economic breakdown, age demographic etc. The Muslim community will have hard facts and figures with which to back up its arguments, allowing for evidence-based advocacy rather than guesswork, in order not only to meet the needs of its members, but also to promote its needs within the wider community."

Mohibur Rahman's presentation identified three policy benefits from the Census's religion data: it would help identify and spread good practice (for example, through comparisons between Muslim communities of different ethnicity); better targeting of resources, and better evaluation of policies.

Copies of the Conference Book are available from the MCB Office (£2).



## Meeting with Church of England Representatives

On 15 September 2002, representatives of the MCB including Iqbal Sacranie, Unaiza Malik, MCB Assistant Secretary General, Ibrahim Mogra, Chair of the Mosques & Community Affairs Committee, and Dr Manazir Ahsan, Director General of the Islamic Foundation, attended a meeting with Jeremy Harris, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Secretary of Public Affairs, David Marshall, Chaplain for the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rev Canon Michael Igrave, Inter Faith Relations Advisor to the Archbishop of Canterbury, at Church House. The meeting discussed how to establish better links between the MCB and Lambeth Palace. Amongst the issues discussed were interfaith relations and the recent consultations on establishing Christian/Muslim dialogue.

## Faiths for Peace



Mr Indarjit Singh addresses reception

The MCB hosted a multi-faith goodwill reception on 25 June at the Commonwealth Institute, attended by representatives of the Hindu and Sikh communities and other religious faiths. The meeting was addressed by Iqbal Sacranie of the MCB, Om Prakash Sharma, President of the National Council of Hindu Temples, Mr Indarjit Singh, Director of Network of Sikh Organisations (UK), and Lord Filkin, Minister at the Home Office. Guests included senior figures from other faith communities.

The event was convened to urge peace in the Indian subcontinent, harness the goodwill and co-operation that exists amongst the faith communities and present a united platform for peace. The MCB Secretary General Iqbal Sacranie noted in his speech that: "here in Britain and increasingly across Europe we need to fight racism and discrimination...In the Indian sub-continent the greatest evil is poverty. We should help both in increasing aid and in promoting fair trade."

## International Conference, Caux, Switzerland

Khurshid Drabu, the MCB's Constitutional Advisor, and Imam Dr Abduljalil Sajid, former Chair of the MCB's Social Welfare Committee, were invited in their individual capacity to attend an international conference on 26-29 July 2002 in Caux, Switzerland. The conference was attended by scholars and community leaders of different faiths from many countries of the world. It was hosted by Initiatives which is jointly headed by Prince Hassan of Jordan, Dr Cornelio Somaruga and Professor Dr Raj Mohan Gandhi.

The conference was a dialogue amongst concerned Muslims and non-Muslims on Peace, Justice and Faith and discussed in particular the conflicts in Palestine and Kashmir. Delegates attending the conference showed great interest in the work of the MCB.

## Reception for Faith Communities, Buckingham Palace



Inter-faith representatives with Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell at Buckingham Palace

On 10th June 2002 The Queen, The Duke of Edinburgh and The Prince of Wales, hosted a reception for representatives of different faiths at Buckingham Palace, inviting over 800 guests from multi-faith communities to mark the Golden Jubilee. Among the 100 Muslim guests were scholars, ulama, journalists and youth and community leaders. The evening highlighted the importance of inter-faith relationships and reflected the growth of religious and cultural diversity over the 50 years of the Queen's reign and furthered the goodwill between communities.

## Golden Jubilee Young People's Faith Forum, St James's Palace

On 10 June, 80 young people aged 16 to 24 from a range of faith communities, including 14 Muslim youths, took part in a special Faith Forum. The event discussed the themes of faith, service and community in 21st Century Britain.

Hafiz Mohammed Naveed from Halifax gave a short speech on growing up in Britain as a young Muslim. Khalid Al-Mulad represented the MCB affiliate Islamic Relief saying that, "Working together, and helping others, strengthens our morals, whilst helping those less fortunate ultimately benefits the whole community. Strong, individual communities, working toward a common goal, make for a stronger Britain. Into the new Millennium, this strength is reflected in our multi-faith, multi-cultural diversity."

Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell noted that, "The Jubilee is bringing together young people from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and



Youth representation at reception

Wales to explore what it means to be a young person of faith... We believe that the Golden Jubilee Young People's Faith Forum will be a truly representative, inclusive and groundbreaking event."

## Cumberland Lodge Conference

A residential conference took place on 7-9 June 2002 at the King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Foundation of St Catherine, entitled "Being British and Feeling Muslim: Challenges to Police Understanding."

Dr Raheem M A Khan, Deputy Chair of the MCB Membership Committee and the London Task Group gave a presentation on 8th June, "Oldham and Bradford Youth perspectives" on the MCB's contribution in the fact finding mission regarding the disturbances of the northern cities. Dr Khan also chaired a session for youth leaders.

Shiban Akbar, Chair of the Social Affairs Committee, gave a talk entitled "The Problems for Muslims living in Britain". The conference and workshops were also attended by Cllr Afzal Khan, Abduljalil Sajid, Salah El-Hassan of Iqra Trust and NCWMP.

## Milli Gorus Conference, Holland

A Day of Brotherhood was held in Gelredome, Arnheim on 15 June 2002 aimed at strengthening the solidarity between Muslims throughout the world. Dr Abdul Bari, Deputy Secretary General attended the event in Holland which focused on Islam in Europe. The Islamic Community Milli Gorus represents the largest Islamic community group in Europe.

## Muslims in Britain & The Modern World, Preston

A Conference entitled "Muslims in Britain and the Modern World" was held on 22 June 2002 in Preston, at the University of Central Lancashire. The conference was organised by Mark Hendrick MP for Preston. Councillor Afzal Khan, member of the Central Working Committee, was one of the main speakers. The event was also attended by Lord Patel of Blackburn, Ebrahim Bassa, University of Central Lancashire, Faruk Desai, Director of Preston & Western Lancashire Racial Equality Council and Talid Shamsuddin, Secretary of Preston Muslim Forum.

The issues which were discussed included urban regeneration, equality and local and national issues.

## Understanding Islam Seminar

The 'Understanding Islam in a Secularised World' seminar, held on 5th August 2002 at the London Interfaith Centre, was an overwhelming success. Approximately 100 people attended, the majority of whom were non-Muslim. The event was organised by Brent Islamic Circle, the MCB Research and Documentation Committee and the London Interfaith Centre.

## PEOPLE

The following Muslim individuals who have attained public recognition of their work and have been awarded honours in the Queen's Golden Jubilee Birthday Honours List.

### CBE:

- Zaha Hadid, services to architecture.
- Perween Warsi, services to business

### OBEs

- Waqar Azmi, former Chief Executive Worcestershire Racial Equality Council, services to community life in the West Midlands.

### MBEs

- Naseem Aboobaker, Co-ordinator Mushkil Asaan, services to London.
- Mohammed Adris, Special Constable, West Midlands Police, services to police.
- Faruque Ahmed, services to the Bangladeshi community in Cheshire.
- Suleman Nagdi, Federation of Muslim Organisations, services to Muslim community in Leicester.
- Mohammed Abdur Rahman, services to primary care in Wolverhampton.
- Taifur Rashid, Tower Hamlets Race Equality Council, services to the community in London.
- Kutubuddin Ahmed Shikder, services to the Muslim community in East London.
- Ismail Ahmed Rahman, services to the community in Manchester.

## EVENTS

### WAMY National Youth/Scouts Camp

Among the annual activities that WAMY organises is the National Youth/Scouts Camp, which was held this summer from 1-5 August 2002 at Gilwell Park campsite, Chingford. This proved to be an exciting and interesting event for the youth who attended.

Activities available were canoeing, swimming, go karting, hiking, night games and much more. Along with these recreational activities the youth enjoyed numerous talks given by various speakers such as Sheikh Haitham Tamim, Dawood Matthews and Habib Chatti. The talks covered topics ranging from da'wa by example and the environment to the role of the Muslim youth in the west and the dangers of drugs and intoxicants.



WAMY organises other camps and events during the year. For further information please contact 020 7636 7010, E-mail: info@wamy.co.uk, website: www.wamy.co.uk

### Palestinian Return Centre Seminar on 'From Sabra and Shatila to Jenin'

To commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Sabra and Shatila massacres, the Palestinian Return Centre (PRC), an MCB affiliate, organized a public seminar on 17 September at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. The seminar, chaired by the Labour MP for Erith and Thamesmead, Mr John Austin, examined the possibilities of pressing legal charges in a British court against Israel's incumbent Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and other political and military officials involved in the 1982 massacres and that of the Jenin refugee camp in April 2002.

The first speaker at the seminar was Dr Swee Chai Ang, a British surgeon who worked in the Gaza Hospital during the time of the Sabra and Shatila massacres. Other speakers included Lloyd Quinan of the Scottish Parliament, who was one of the first British and European officials to visit the Jenin refugee camp in April 2002 after its invasion by the Israelis.

Quinan said he never thought in his wildest dreams that he would have witnessed such carnage in his entire life. The Belgian solicitor, Michael Verstraeten, who participated in the case brought against Ariel Sharon, explained the position of Belgian law regarding crimes against humanity. The final speaker at the seminar was the prominent British Queen's Council, Owen Davies, who recently handled the Augusto Pinochet case. For further details please contact PRC Head Office: Tel: 0208 453 0919; e-mail: info@prc.org.uk; Website: www.prc.org.uk

### Mauritian Islamic Welfare Association

MCB Affiliates, the Mauritian Islamic Welfare Association and the Waltham Forest Noor Ul Islam Trust, arranged a lecture night on 6th August together with the Forum for Social Studies. The event took place at the Waltham Forest Theatre and featured four key speakers including Abdullah Hakim Quick, Dr Jamal Badawi and Feisal Ally.

### Association of Muslim Researchers (AMR)

AMR is pleased to announce that Sameera T Ahmed was elected President of the organisation at an AGM held in July. Sameera, a researcher in Media Studies at the University of Leicester, had served the organisation as its Committee Secretary. She takes over from Dr Farzin Deravi.

AMR held a conference 'Music Education for Muslims' on 16 May. A report of the conference, which attracted 50 music teachers and advisors from all over the UK, is available from the organisation's newsletter, AMR News. AMR email: amr@amrnet.demon.co.uk

### Muslim Women's Helpline Injustices in Marriage Breakdown

The Muslim Women's Helpline Annual Report published in July 2002 calls for greater community involvement in the problem of marriage quality and breakdown. It says that women are growing increasingly frustrated by perceived injustices and great anomalies in the way in which shari'ah law is administered by shari'ah bodies in the UK.

Women who have civil divorces complain about obstruction in securing a religious divorce where husbands are refusing to cooperate in granting a *talaq*. Some wives find themselves being summarily divorced by husbands with the cooperation of certain Imams who have not even tried to initiate any attempts to understand and sort out the marital problems being experienced. For further information contact: 020 8904 8193 / 020 8908 6715, email: mwahl@amrnet.demon.co.uk

## Commemorating 11 September

On 11 September 2002, The Islamic Society of Britain (ISB) and The Young Muslims UK (YMUK), affiliates of the Muslim Council of Britain, held an event at the Islamic Cultural Centre, to remember those who died in the attacks on America a year ago, including the many thousands of innocent Muslims who died subsequently in Afghanistan.



Joe Ahmed-Dobson at the event.

Joe Ahmed-Dobson spoke of a "message of

a balanced, tolerant and peaceful view of Islam. This is a very important day for us because we will remember for the rest of our lives those people, who for no crime of their own, lost their lives." He continued by stating that the Qur'an made clear that "whoever kills a human being shall be regarded as having killed all mankind".

In his address Ajmal Masroor noted that "throughout the ages men have falsely attributed violence and intolerant actions to their faith. The vast majority of Muslims and those of all religious faiths hold their beliefs dear and choose what in Islam we would describe as 'the straight path of good, peace and justice.'" Sarah Joseph spoke on behalf of the mother of Sarah Ali, who was among the estimated 70 Muslims killed in the Twin Towers.

If you are an affiliate body of the MCB and have some good practice projects/initiatives you would like covered then please contact the MCB on 020 8903 9650 or email: media@mcb.org.uk

**Article in *The Observer***

An article by Inayat Bunglawala appeared in *The Observer* on 19 May 2002. It was the MCB's response to the remarks made by Peter Hain, the Minister for Europe, who had described some in the Muslim community as being "very isolationist". Visit the MCB website [www.mcb.org.uk](http://www.mcb.org.uk) for full details.

**Palestine Coverage Critique**

Councillor Bashir Maan, President of the National Association of British Pakistanis, has written letters to the *Glasgow Herald*, the *Sunday Times* and *The Scotsman* newspapers to critique their coverage of Palestine and Israeli aggression in the West Bank and on the issue on Muslim integration into British society.

Cllr Maan wrote to the newspapers cautioning them over their misrepresentation of events in the Middle East and their unwitting encouragement of anti-Muslim sentiment through insensitive, inaccurate and sometimes inflammatory journalism.

**MCB Media Consultative Committee**

A new initiative first announced during the launch of Islam Awareness Week last year, chaired by Lord Weatherill, met for the first time on 5 March 2002 in the House of Lords.

The attendees included representatives from *The Times*, *The Guardian*, BBC, Press Complaints Commission, ITC, Broadcasting Standards Commission, Diversity Network - Carlton Television, as well as members of the MCB Media Committee. The group is looking into the contentious issues surrounding the use of offensive terminology and the representation of Muslims in the media.

A second meeting is planned before the end of the year.

**Letter to *The Times***

The Media Committee wrote to the editor of *The Times* regarding the misleading and inaccurate comments made about the MCB by Jo Wagerman, the President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews (4 May 2002).

The letter rebuffed Ms Wagerman's claim that the MCB supported attacks on Israeli civilians and stated that criticism of Israel was increasingly being represented as anti-Semitism and that such censorship proscribed critical and open analysis of events in the Middle East. Mr Sacranie added that the MCB believed that "there is more to Muslim/Jewish relations than the Board's total commitment to Israel, right or wrong."

**Muslim Participation on Question Time**

The Media committee wrote to the Deputy Director of Programmes at the BBC, Mr Ric Bailey, on 21 May, to raise its concerns over insufficient Muslim participation on both the panel and the audience in recent editions of Question Time. The MCB stressed that it was important that the BBC attempt to fairly represent all sections of British society.

**Letter to BBC**

Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary of the Media committee wrote on 23 May to the Director of Editorial Policy at the BBC, Mr Stephen Whittle, to complain of the use of the term 'Islamic terrorist' on BBC news broadcasts on Kashmir. He also complained of the BBC's inadequate account of the historical events that have been the root cause of Pakistan and India's dispute over Kashmir.

Stephen Whittle replied on 28 May to apologise for the Corporation's use of the term 'Islamic Terrorist' in recent reports. Mr Whittle acknowledged that it was not BBC policy to refer to 'Kashmiri separatists' as such and assured the MCB that the error would not be repeated.

**MCB Expresses Appreciation to *Daily Telegraph* for Gujarat Coverage**

The Media Committee wrote to Alex Spillius at the *Daily Telegraph* on 18 June 2002 to express their appreciation for an article he had written that same day regarding the recent pogroms in which over 2000 Muslims were murdered in the Indian state of Gujarat in organised violence led by the BJP and its extremist Hindu allies. The MCB pointed out that "this tragedy has not got the international coverage it warrants" in the media.

**Letter of Appreciation Sent to *The Guardian***

The Media Committee wrote to Alan Rusbridger, the editor, to thank his team of reporters and photographers who worked on the excellent

Muslim Britain series which was published on 17-22 June, 2002. In their letter, the Media Committee said that, "It was the most extensive and sympathetic look at the British Muslim community that has yet appeared in a national newspaper in the UK. The series successfully tore down many stereotypes of British Muslims and showed a degree of understanding that was greatly encouraging."

**Boycott of Israeli Academics**

A letter to the Editor was sent to *The Guardian* on 12 July 2002. It was signed by a number of Muslim representatives including Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain, Majed Al-Zeer, Director of the Palestinian Return Centre, Dr Munir Ahmed, President of Islamic Society of Britain, Ayatullah Mohsen Araki, President of Islamic Centre of England, Mohammad Sawalha, President of Muslim Association of Britain, Massoud Shadjareh, Chairman of the Islamic Human Rights Commission, Betty Hunter, Secretary General of Palestinian Solidarity Campaign, Dilwar Hussein, President of Islamic Forum Europe and Tanzeem Wasti, President of Muslim Solidarity Committee.

The letter underlined the need to apply moral pressure in the absence of any decisive Government action to condemn the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands. It firmly supported the campaign to boycott academics from Israel in order to send a clear message to Israel that it is committing moral outrage analogous to that of the now defunct apartheid government of South Africa. Furthermore, the signatories called for "academic communities in the UK to advocate a more general policy of divestment of British academic, financial and commercial investments from Israel."

**Letter of Appreciation Sent to *The Independent***

The Media Committee wrote to Paul Valley, of *The Independent*, to express appreciation for his article "All Quiet On The Northern Front?" on 3rd July 2002. The article reported sympathetically on recent developments in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley, one year on from the riots. He portrayed the Bengali and Pakistani Muslim youths as more reflective, determined and keen to work for the good of the wider society in the face of rising Islamophobia. The MCB drew Mr Valley's attention to the worrying phenomenon of under achievement in many Bengali and Pakistani children, requesting further media examination.

**Pork protein in chicken alarms UK Muslims**

The MCB was mentioned in a news item from Reuters on 8 July 2002. Entitled "Pork protein in chicken alarms UK Muslims" the article highlights the Food Standard Authority and Muslim concern for the inaccurately labelled imported chicken, possibly containing pork, which may have been on sale in the UK for the past six months. "This is deeply worrying for the Muslim community. All food should be labelled accurately. This is very important to us because pork is absolutely forbidden according to the Koran," said Inayat Bunglawala, of the Muslim Council of Britain."

**Support for Single Faith Schools.**

An article from Reed Business Information on 11 July 2002, shows that "Single faith schools promote greater understanding of other cultures, offer children more opportunities and deliver better academic performance," according to delegates. Muhammad Abdul Bari, Deputy Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain, added that faith schools provided a sense of identity. "People from ethnic minorities care about having children educated where they are surrounded by their own culture but in a way that is not isolated from society."

**Media Committee Urges Dropping of the use of "Moslem" in Newspapers**

The Media Committee wrote to the editors of the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail* on 16th July 2002 urging them to standardise their spelling of common Arabic words so as not to cause any unnecessary offence to British Muslims.

The *Daily Express* responded by confirming a change in its long-standing policy of spelling of the word 'Moslem' to 'Muslim'. The Media Committee is continuing in its efforts to also convince the *Daily Mail* to alter its policy as well.

**MCB Asks *The Guardian* and the BBC to Make Clear that Jewish settlements are Illegal**

On 16 July 2002, the Media Committee wrote to the Middle East editor of *The Guardian*, Brian Whitaker, and the Controller of Editorial Policy at the BBC, Stephen Whittle, expressing concern that their reports from the Occupied Territories in Palestine were not making it

sufficiently clear that the Jewish settlements that have been established there are totally illegal under international law. A shocking report earlier this year revealed that most Britons wrongly believe that it is the Arabs who are illegally occupying Israeli territory rather than the reverse.

Stephen Whittle responded positively to this correspondence by adding a line to the latest version of their Palestinian story on BBC Online to make clear that settlements are illegal under international law. Furthermore, he elucidated that the BBC have a standing editorial policy on this matter which is to state where relevant that "Israeli settlements are 'illegal under international law' ...this is correct ... We should avoid repeating it automatically in every story - that might give the impression we are on some sort of campaign. But where it's important to the context we should spell it out using this exact wording (the wording 'illegal settlements' is open to debate). Israel doesn't accept this view, but almost everyone else does."

## MCB Receives Apology for Offensive Article in the *Sunday Times* Magazine

The Media Committee received a written apology from Robin Morgan, the editor of the *Sunday Times* magazine after an extremely offensive passage about a Mosque in Birmingham was published in an article in the 28 July issue. The passage described the sight of the Mosque lit up at night as being allegedly referred to as "Allah's arse" by the locals. Mr Morgan said that the *Sunday Times* accepted that it was offensive and vowed to exercise "extra vigilance in future to ensure we do not offend our valued Muslim readers." He also stated that he would be sending a letter to everyone who wrote in to complain offering his "sincere apologies."

## Serious Error Admitted by Konemann Publishers

The Media Committee received a reply from Konemann publishers on 24 July 2002 admitting they had made a serious error of translation on page 24 of their book 'Islam: Art and Architecture' which was originally published in German. A caption of a miniature drawing read "Muhammad and Abu Bakr in Hell". It should have read "Muhammad and Abu Bakr in a Cave". In their reply, Konemann admitted a mistake had been made due to confusion between the German words *Hohle* and *Holle* and added that they were now including an errata slip in every copy of their book pointing out the correction.

## Briton convicted of attack on British mosque

On 6 August 2002, Reuters published a news item detailing the conviction of a British security guard for "taking part in an attack on an English mosque just two days after the September 11 assaults on the United States". Two charges of criminal damage were brought against Christopher Williams at Exeter Magistrates Court for an attack on the Islamic Centre in Exeter. The article quoted Inayat Bunglawala of the Muslim Council of Britain: "We hope it will send a signal that it's important that places of worship ought to be respected".

## Letter to Archbishop of Canterbury Designate

The Secretary General of the MCB wrote to Rt Rev Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury Designate commending his article published in *The Guardian* on 12 September. It stated that the MCB welcomed his comments, drawing attention to the impersonal nature of modern warfare and the prospects of war with Iraq. The letter iterated that "Islam teaches us that all human life is sacred and it cannot be taken away from someone without the due process of law. The horrific numbers of civilian deaths caused by modern warfare should give us all immediate pause for thought."

## September 11 Interviews

On 11 September 2002, a number of representatives from the Muslim Council of Britain, including Secretary General Iqbal Sacranie, Media Secretary Inayat Bunglawala, Sarah Joseph, Prof Dawud Noibi, Ibrahim Mogra and Imam Jalil Sajid amongst others gave interviews to various media organisations to present the Muslim perspective.

## Letter to *Daily Mirror*

Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary of the MCB Media Committee, wrote to the *Daily Mirror* regarding John Pilger's article published on 16 September 2002 thanking them for the courageous printing of the article which vividly described how hellish life for ordinary Palestinians has become under a very brutal Israeli occupation.

Inayat went on to say: "Israel has been in breach of many UN resolutions for over 35 years now, yet there is no question of the United States attacking them to force them to withdraw from the occupied ter-

ritories and to allow the Palestinians to live with dignity in their own homeland. To adapt the PM's words, it is Israel that is the real 'international outlaw'."

## Letter to Chairman of Carlton Communications

Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary General of the MCB, wrote to Mr Michael Green, the Chairman of Carlton Communications on 23 September to express incredulity at his reported criticism of John Pilger's documentary: "Palestine Is Still The Issue", saying "Israel will never achieve peace and security by oppressing another people." The letter called for evidence that the film was 'factually' and 'historically incorrect' as Michael Green was quoted as saying in the *Jewish Chronicle* on 20 September 2002.

## Recent MCB Press Releases

- 15 Oct 2002 Rethink Iraq War Plans, Urges MCB
- 12 Oct 2002 MCB Condemns Attacks in Bali
- 25 Sep 2002 Conference Announcement
- 19 Sep 2002 British Muslims Launch Book About September 11 And The Aftermath
- 10 Sep 2002 A Year On: Reflections and Concerns of British Muslims
- 04 Sep 2002 The Quest For Sanity: Reflections on September 11 And The Aftermath
- 31 Jul 2002 MCB Meets Home Office Minister: Protest on Police Raid on Stourbridge Mosque
- 09 Jul 2002 Muslims angered by Government support for Israeli repression
- 24 Jun 2002 Faiths for Peace Initiative
- 19 Jun 2002 Furthering Cultural Ties between Britain and the Islamic World
- 5 June 2002 British Muslims Shocked by Violent Assault on Worshippers in Wales
- 27 May 2002 Kashmir-Plebiscite Not Nuclear Holocaust
- 24 May 2002 MCB Welcomes EU Report on Post 11/9 Islamophobia - Demands Urgent Gov't Action
- 24 May 2002 Muslims Alerted on the Risk of BSE Infected meat
- 21 May 2002 Hain acknowledges Muslim unease and reaffirms his links with the Muslim community
- 20 May 2002 Muslims laud Tony Blair's stand on faith schools. But concerned over rise in Islamophobia
- 12 May 2002 MCB Regrets Remarks By Peter Hain, Minister for Europe
- 30 April 2002 MCB Annual Meeting Elects New Secretary General
- 23 April 2002 An Open Letter to Rt. Hon. Jack Straw MP, Secretary of State
- 17 April 2002 Muslims reject Chief Rabbi's insinuations and Zionist advocacy
- 17 April 2002 MCB Welcomes Dutch Government's Resignation - Calls on Britain To Take Action Against Israel
- 15 April 2002 MCB Hails Huge March For Palestine - Criticises Press Coverage
- 08 April 2002 British Muslims urge Government to enact sanctions against Israel
- 03 April 2002 British Muslims call on the Government to intervene and protect Palestinians

## Appeal for Funds

The MCB exists to serve the community and the country and to work together for the common good. Our aim to be representative of the Muslim community requires us to deliver a service that ensures the protection of their interests. Recent MCB activity including the lobbying of peers and ministers on vital issues such as religious discrimination, Section 28, the Prevention of Euthanasia Bill and Census 2001 all involve significant costs.

The MCB relies on the dedicated input of various individuals - professionals and specialists in their fields - who give their time and energy as they too are committed to serving the community.

Without adequate investment however our resources are scarce and we are frustrated in our scope for development. It is only through the sustained support of those who share the MCB vision that we can hope to realise our potential and fully deliver a service to the community. As MCB Treasurer I invite you to join us in our work and so help to promote the common good.

All Omar Ermes, Treasurer  
 MCB Bank Details: HSBC, Wembley Park Branch, 122 Wembley Park Drive, Wembley HA9 8HT, Account Number 11227408  
 Branch Sort Code 40-46-10

### CRE 25th Anniversary Celebration

MCB Treasurer Ali Omar Ermes attended the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE)'s 25th Anniversary celebration 'Britain Beyond the Rhetoric' on 16 May 2002. Gurbux Singh, former chairman of CRE in his speech outlined how he saw the development of Race Equality in Britain in the 21st Century. Also discussed were key issues of Identity, Citizenship and wider issues such as Social Exclusion, Community Cohesion and Social Justice were explored. An open debate was held with the audience to discuss various issues.

### Single Equality Body Consultation Seminar

On 25 July 2002 Shenaz Bunglawala attended a seminar on behalf of the MCB entitled "Single Equality Body Consultation" which discussed a project to consider existing commissions such as the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality. The seminar served as a forum to consult existing commissions and interest groups with the aim of reviewing existing discrimination legislation as well as providing new legislation on age and religion.

From the seminar proceedings, Shenaz recommends that "the Muslim community will have to lobby hard in concert with others to see that an Equality Act is bought in to bolster the work and jurisdiction of either a new equality body or changes to the existing." This will involve enlisting the advice and support of those involved in order to understand and rectify current failings.

### UN World Conference Against Racism

A Steering Group Meeting was held on 12 June 2002 at the Home Office. Dr Abduljalil Sajid represented Muslim Council of Britain. The meeting was chaired by Home Office official Mr Ian Naysmith who is currently acting head of European and International Policy Section of Home Office.

The meeting agreed the terms of references of the steering group. Regional and national consultation meetings were decided upon to promote the cooperation and partnerships of voluntary organisations such as the Runnymede and 1990 Trust. Dr Sajid raised the question of defining racism and the current government held view and whether Islamophobia and religious discrimination could be included within this definition. Following discussion, it was agreed that should these issues prove to be of concern to communities, they would be actioned and included within the final documentation.

### Faith Schools

Nawazish Bokhari, former chair of the Education, Training and Employment Committee, attended a meeting with Liberal Democrat Education Spokesperson Phil Willis on 8 May at the House of Lords.

The meeting was called to discuss the Liberal Democrats' amendment to the faith schools clause of the Education Bill. The clause deals with the need for faith schools to service both a faith community and the local area in which the school is situated.

## State-inspired Genocide in Gujarat

A Muslim delegation led by former Secretary General Yousuf Bhailok met with the Acting Deputy High Commissioner for India on Monday April 22nd to discuss the Indian Government's response and handling of violence perpetrated against the Muslim community in the State of Gujarat.

The delegation expressed the concerns of the British Muslim community, many of whom have family in the region, at the failure of the Indian Government to curb religious hostilities and adequately protect India's Muslim minority.

Other members of the delegation included Lord Adam Patel, Ibrahim Master and Shamsuddin Agha.

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Dr Abdul Bari, the Deputy Secretary General of the MCB spoke at the headquarters of the Indian Muslim Federation in Leytonstone, East London on the 'Genocide of Muslims in Gujarat, India' on Sunday May 19th.

Imam Abdul Qayum in his speech, called upon members of all communities and nationalities to rise against this injustice and exercise their democratic right of peaceful protest. Dr Bari pointed out that the MCB had already raised this issue at the highest levels of our Government and was working closely with other organisations, including the Indian Muslim Federation, to support the Muslim victims of the Gujarat crisis.

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Maulana Fazlur Rahim, visiting Britain from India, was invited to address the CWC meeting on 12 October. Maulana Rahim is Chairman of the Foundation for Civil Liberties (FFCL) and a dynamic Indian Muslim religious leader. The FFCL has produced an 8-volume report on the Gujarat genocide, based on witness statements, which are now being used in court cases by the victims. He has an interest working with British Muslim organisations to seek redress for victims, including British Muslims who were in Gujarat at the time of the state-sponsored genocide.



An Indian Muslim grandfather and grandson huddle in the remains of their destroyed home after six other members of their family were killed in religious violence in the village of Sasen Nava, 280 km from Ahmedabad in Gujarat state.

### House of Lords Meeting to Discuss Palestine

A meeting was arranged at the House of Lords on 11 July 2002 by Baroness Uddin on events in Palestine. This was attended by leaders from the Muslim, Jewish and Christian communities. The MCB was represented by Tanzeem Wasti, Inayat Bunglawala and Dr Abdul Raheem Khan.

### Home Secretary Meeting

A delegation from the MCB consisting of the Secretary General Mr Iqbal Sacranie, Deputy Secretary General Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari and Treasurer Mr Ali Omar Ermes met with the Home Secretary on 15 May. The meeting was held to discuss various community concerns from so-called 'isolationism' to forced marriages, asylum seekers and Islamophobia. The following points were discussed:

Muslims were not at all isolationists but if we found them unemployed, under-achieving in education and locked inside inner city ghettos then it did actually reflect on policy and not on any desire for self-isolation.

Muslim participation in public life has vastly improved, though barriers to integration

arose from institutional prejudices and stereotypes, especially in the media.

The issue of forced marriages was raised and the delegation responded by stating that this cultural practice was not valid in Islam. However, it was presented and projected as a Muslim-specific problem.

The delegation felt that post September 11, the process of inclusion and integration seems to have suffered a setback and clearly matters need to be set right and normalised.

The delegation also sought assurances from the Home Secretary that the prisoners in Camp X-Ray will be treated under International Laws.

### London Muslim Coalition

The London Muslim Coalition (LMC), under the chairmanship of Mr Kumar Murshid, Adviser to the Mayor of London, met on 15 May 2002. The item for discussion was the decision to formalise the LMC. Four members from those present were selected to draw up the main objectives and ground rules for the coalition. The meeting was attended by Dr Abdul Raheem Khan, Mr Tanzeem Wasti, Mr Ajmal Masroor and representatives of other Muslim bodies including the Islamic Society of Britain.

## MCB Meets Home Office Minister: Protest on Police Raid on Stourbridge Mosque

On 30 July, a delegation from The Muslim Council of Britain comprising Secretary General Iqbal Sacranie, Assistant Secretary General Unaiza Malik, Sheikh Ibrahim Mogra, Chair of Mosques & Community Affairs Committee and Shibban Akbar, Chair Social Affairs Committee, met with the Immigration Minister Beverley Hughes at the Home Office to protest at the manner the police raided the Stourbridge Mosque to evict an Afghan family seeking asylum in the UK. The Deputy Director of the UK Immigration Service, Colin Harbin and Rolf Toolin, HM Assistant Director for Midlands were also present.

Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary General of the MCB stressed that instead of forcing entry the police should have approached the mosque authorities. "Using a battering ram to gain entry violates the sanctity of the mosque, damages good community relations and was wholly unnecessary". The delegation emphasised that Mosques were places of worship. It would not be appropriate for anyone to abuse that sanctity or use it as a place of refuge in violation of the law. Mr Sacranie also urged the Immigration Minister to deal with the case of the Afghan couple and their two young children with compassion.

In response, the Minister acknowledged that it was essential that the police and immigration authorities showed respect and sensitivity towards places of worship and gave assurances that such a harsh enforcement order would not be repeated and a proper process would be instated. The Minister stated that 'Mosque and mosque elders' will be contacted and consulted "if negotiations break down" and furthermore that the MCB would also be one of their first ports of calls.

### Meeting with Conservative Vice Chairman

Tanzeem Wasti, Vice Chair of the International Affairs Committee, Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary of the Media Committee, and Sher Khan, Chair of the Public Affairs Committee attended a meeting with the Conservative Vice Chairman responsible for Ethnic and Faith Communities, Gary Streeter, on 14 May. This was the fourth in a series of meeting with the Conservative Party and those present discussed a range of issues including faith schools, Muslim representation in the political parties, and the Conservative Party's desire to listen more to disadvantaged communities.

### Meeting with the Foreign Secretary

The Foreign Secretary Jack Straw met with members of the British Muslim, Hindu and Sikh communities on 29 May to brief them on his recent visit to both India and Pakistan.

The Secretary General Iqbal Sacranie stressed that "the only real solution for the long-running Kashmir conflict is to honour the wishes of the people of Jammu and Kashmir about their future through a 'free and impartial plebiscite'."

British Muslims that attended the meeting included Shamsuddin Agha, President of the Indian Muslim Federation, Ibrahim Master, Chairman of the Lancashire Council of

Mosques and Mr Munaf Zina of the Council of Indian Muslims.

### Meeting with Peter Hain MP

A delegation from the MCB led by Secretary General Iqbal Sacranie met with the Minister for Europe Peter Hain on 20 May. The delegation raised the issue of integration with the Minister in light of his comments regarding the so-called resistance of Muslims to integrate into British society.

'British Muslims have made rapid progress integrating into the wider society in one generation', said the MCB Secretary General. 'We support this ongoing process and where the progress in any faith community is slow - and this is not an issue confined to Muslims alone - we need to collectively address any concerns. At the same time, however, it is also important for the government to be seen to be responding to Muslim concerns about inclusiveness, especially when it comes to providing legal protection against religious discrimination', he added.

Members of the delegation included: Ali Omar Ermes, Tanzeem Wasti, Shibban Akbar, Sibtain Panjwani and Inayat Bunglawala.

### Muslim Delegation Meet New Minister at the Home Office

A delegation from the Muslim community met Lord Filkin, the new Minister at the Home Office responsible for race relations on 12 September 2002. The delegation comprised Iqbal Sacranie; Prof Dawud Noibi, Nigerian Muslim Federation; Sher Khan, Islamic Society of Britain; Mohammad Sawalha, Muslim Association of Britain and Ibrahim Mogra, Chair of the MCB Mosques & Community Affairs Committee.

The meeting was called by the Home Office to introduce the new Minister and was an opportunity to hear issues and matters concerning British Muslims. A number of items were raised at the meeting including:

- the need to extend existing legislation concerning religious discrimination beyond employment
- the community's concern at the heavy and disproportionate sentencing of young people involved in the Bradford rioting
- the fears in the Muslim community that despite reminders that the war on terror is not aimed at Islam or Muslims, the rhetoric that is coming from the United States Government has served to reinforce that impression
- Muslims are anxious that an attack on Iraq is imminent and are concerned at the support given by the British Government to the US administration.

It was agreed that regular meetings should take place between the Muslim community leadership and the Home Office Minister.

### Foreign and Commonwealth Office Receptions

On the 24 July, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Mr Jack Straw MP, invited a cross section of representatives from the Muslim Community to attend a reception held in the Locarno Room

at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The meeting was attended by the MCB Secretary General and other prominent members from the Muslim Community and the MCB. Senior officials from the Foreign Office and other government departments were also present. This was the first time that such a reception has been organised by the FCO which was in recognition and acknowledgement of the positive and constructive role played by the Muslim Community in the UK.

Tanzeem Wasti and Shibban Akbar attended a Reception at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) hosted by Stephen Smith, Head of South Asian Department, FCO. The reception marked the opening of the South Asian Heads of Mission Conference on 25 July.

### GLA Reception

The GLA held a reception at City Hall on 10 September. The reception was attended by a strong contingent from the MCB including Iqbal Sacranie, Tanzeem Wasti, Chair of the London Task Group, Dr Abdul Raheem Khan, Mohibur Rahman and Ajmal Masrur. Others invitees included members from the Jewish and Muslim community. The evening began with an address by Trevor Phillips, Chair of the London Assembly, welcoming the guests. This was followed by two eloquent and timely speeches by sixth formers, one Muslim and one Jewish, remembering the events of September 11 2001.

### Letters

#### MCB Expresses Appreciation to Alice Mahon for opposition to Warplanes Sold to Israel

The Media Committee wrote to Alice Mahon, MP on 9 July 2002 to express their appreciation for her principled opposition to the government decision to allow the export of British components for warplanes sold to Israel. The MCB said: "Despite the government's verbal calls on Israel to abide by UN resolutions by withdrawing from all illegally occupied Palestinian lands, we seem by our actions to be supporting the very opposite and actually helping the Israelis maintain their apparatus of repression and terror."

#### Letter sent to Prime Minister Blair on issue of Faith Schools

A letter was sent to Prime Minister Blair on 20 May 2002, appreciating his stand not only re-asserting the principle underlying the idea of faith schools, but also declaring that it would be wrong to "tell the Muslim community that they are the one community that can't have [faith] schools".

Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain, said in a letter to the Prime Minister: "you not only affirmed a very important principle, you also recognised that the controversy about faith schools which has been revived recently basically reflected a desire in certain circles to derail your agenda of national inclusion and integration. From this recognition of the underlying phenomenon, we expect", added Iqbal Sacranie, "the government to deal with the policy implications of a situation in which the community felt excluded yet at the same time found itself accused of isolationism".

## Social Affairs

### Inter-faith Forum on Teenage Pregnancy

Shiban Akbar and Dr Abdul Majid Katme attended the Inter Faith Forum on Teenage Pregnancy organised by the Teenage Pregnancy Unit at the Department of Health on 15 April 2002.

The Forum addressed the role faith groups could play to (a) help reduce unintended teenage pregnancies (b) reach boys and young men (c) reach and support young people in care.

### National Council for the Welfare of Muslim Prisoners

Shiban Akbar attended the National Council for the Welfare of Muslim Prisoners (NCWMP) meeting on 12 May 2002 held at the Muslim World League office in London. The meeting discussed the conditions of Muslim prisoners and detainees in UK prisons, the proposed constitution of the Council and a number of other issues which included trying to identify means of addressing them.

The meeting was chaired by Dr Zaki Badawi and was attended among others by Vice Chair Qadri, Director of Islamic Cultural Centre (ICC) Dr Ahmed Al-Dubayan, Salah El-Hassan of Iqra Trust, Visiting Prison Chaplain Azizat Adefesobi, former Assistant Chief Probation Officer of Northamptonshire Rashid Ghumra & ICC advisor Nizar Boga.

### "Forced" Marriages

Shiban Akbar attended a seminar on forced marriages convened by the Foreign and Commonwealth office on 20 May.

Commenting on the launch of 'Dealing with Cases of Forced Marriage, Guidelines for Police', Ms Akbar stated that 'We appreciate the initiative taken by the Home Office, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the ACPO in launching Guidelines for Police on "forced" marriages. It shows their concern and resolve to tackle this issue.' Ms Akbar noted however, that the booklet failed to include a single Muslim organisation in its list of National Support Agencies and that the use of Muslim cases highlighting the problems faced by those forced into marriages misleadingly gave the impression that this was something experienced by members of the Muslim community alone.

Shiban Akbar attended a meeting at the FCO Offices on the subject of

forced marriages with Mockbul Ali on 13 June. She explained the MCB's clear opposition to "forced" marriages and identified a number of ways of taking the work forward and stressed the need for preventative action.

### Marriage and Relationship Support Seminar (MARS)

The Lord Chancellor's Department held a Marriage and Relationship Support Seminar (MARS) on 26 June 2002 at the London Natural History Museum. This all day seminar was attended by Shiban Akbar and gave an overview of government objectives for the family and children. The discussion also covered how policy should be linked with marriage and relationships. The MARS grant programme for 2003 to 2004 was also discussed.

### Mental Health Issues

On 9 August, Shiban Akbar, Chair of the Social Affairs Committee, met with Gerard Leavey, the Assistant Director of Research & Development at Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health Trust in Oxford. Mr Leavey is working in collaboration with Professor M King, of University College London, undertaking research to examine the relationship between religious organisations and mental health services in London.

The meeting discussed experiences in mental health issues relating to the Muslim Community. Specifically the meeting focussed on whether those that required psychiatric care believed that their problems could be addressed and help given in a spiritual context. The meeting also addressed the issue of whether religious leaders such as Imams were involved in the professional teams that assist those with psychological difficulties.

### Police & Muslim Community Meeting

Shiban Akbar, Chair of the Social Affairs Committee attended a Police and Muslim Community meeting with Assistant Commissioner David Veness at the New Scotland Yard on 5 September, 2002. Others present were Dr Abdul Raheem Khan, Chief Superintendent Javid Aktar, West Yorkshire Police, Chief Superintendent Adrian Leppard, Surrey Police, Mohammed Mahroof, Metropolitan Police, Dr Alastair Niven, Principal, Cumberland Lodge, Great Park, Windsor, Sandra Willson, Senior Fellow, Cumberland Lodge, Shabbir Lakha, Barrister and Detective Sergeant Dorothy Crossan, New Scotland Yard.

The items discussed included the conclusions drawn from the June 2002 Cumberland Lodge Residential Conference and suggestions were made for possible remedies for major concerns. The meeting provided a number of case study perspectives and decided upon the measures and structures required to build bridges between communities. The meeting also served to highlight the channels of communication which currently do not exist and provide terms of reference for the Muslim Safety Forum (MSF). A programme was established for police and community work over the next twelve months.

### Muslim Women's Helpline Seminar on Marriage and Family Values

Shiban Akbar and Dr Reefat Drabu, Chair of the Women & Family Affairs Committee attended the Muslim Women's Helpline (MWHL) Lunch and Seminar held on 14 September at the Islamic Centre of England, Maida Vale. The seminar was entitled "The individual and collective challenge for twenty first century Muslims in upholding Islamic marriage and family values."

Speakers included Osman Sheikh from Coventry, Khattib Shahnawaz Haque from London and Mufti Barakatullah from London. This was followed by open discussion amongst participants.

## Europe & International Affairs

### Islamic Human Rights Commission Reception

Mahmud Al-Rashid, Chair of the Europe and International Affairs Committee, and Vice-Chair Tanzeem Wasti hosted a reception for a visiting delegation from the Iranian Islamic Human Rights Commission on 16 July 2002. The reception was attended by Ayatullah Muhammad Mousaui Bojnoori, Chairman Scientific Committee, Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC), Muhammad Ghari Syed Fatemeh, Member of Scientific Committee, IHRC, Syed Hossein Hosseini, International Office, IHRC, Vahide Asgharbindari, Translator and Secretary, IHRC.

Ayatullah Bojnoori was on a one week tour of the United Kingdom at the invitation of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). The Ayatullah was briefed on various human rights and civil liberties issues within the UK.

The Ayatullah was informed that

the UK government is proposing to introduce legislation to protect against religious discrimination in the workplace. However, the MCB believes that further action must still be taken to provide the comprehensive protection required in order to create a level playing field in all spheres of society.

The Ayatullah briefed the MCB on the work of the IHRC and extended his invitation to visit them in Iran. The FCO representative, Mr van der Hoot, expressed his gratitude and appreciation for the meeting.

## Meeting with Bangladeshi Minister of Agriculture

On 2 August 2002, a meeting was held between members of the European & International Affairs Committee and Maulana Matiur Rehman, Minister of Agriculture from Bangladesh and leader of Jamaat-i-Islami. The meeting, held at East London Mosque, served to introduce the MCB to the Minister.

## Condolence Meeting

A condolence meeting was held on 8 August to commemorate the passing away of Dr Mani al-Johani, previously Secretary General of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) and Hassan Bahafzullah. The meeting, held at the Muslim World League, Goodge Street, was attended by Tanzeem Wasti on behalf of the MCB.

## Liberal Democrat Conference

Mahmud Al-Rashid attended and contributed to a discussion on Iraq at the Liberal Democratic Conference in Brighton on 23 September. The session chair was Lady Emma Nicholson.

## Health and Medical

### Department of Health Meeting

On behalf of the MCB Health and Medical Committee, Dr Mujahid Qureshi, Dr Shuja Shafi, Dr Abdul Raheem Khan and Dr Wasim Haneef attended a meeting held on 29 April 2002 with Dr Sheila Adam, Deputy Chief Medical Officer and Director of Policy at the Department of Health. The meeting was also attended by Professor Richard Parish, the Chief Executive of Health Development Agency, and by several senior officers in the Department of Health (DoH).

Dr Abdul Raheem Khan led a series of short presentations from the MCB team containing specific proposals on how to reduce the burden of diseases such as Diabetes, heart disease and

mental illness among our communities.

### Primary Care Trust (PCT) Contract Seminar

On behalf of the MCB Health & Medical Committee, Dr Shuja Shafi and Dr Abdul Raheem Khan, attended the "PCT Contract Seminar" held at the Department of Health on 17 June 2002. The seminar was used to discuss ways of achieving the Government's objective, as outlined in the document "Delivering the NHS Plan", for developing a new contract relating to the rights and responsibilities between PCTs and their communities.

Its main aim was to forge a new relationship between the public and public services generally and the NHS in particular in order to engender a new working contract between the providers, users and citizens. Furthermore, the seminar sought to gain a wider appreciation of the responsibilities that all parties have to each other.

### Flu Immunisation Campaign

The Department of Health is launching a flu immunisation campaign and it has requested MCB support in its publicity. Dr Shuja Shafi attended the campaign launch on 2 October. The Health and Medical Committee have provided advice on the influenza vaccine for the coming winter and has sent information letters to all affiliates and mosques.

### Smoking, Tobacco and Ramadan Conference

A campaign to help Muslims to Stop Smoking has been launched by the MCB, in conjunction with the Islamic Society of Britain and other local 'Stop Smoking' services.

The initiative was launched at Manchester Town Hall on 18 September when Imams from local mosques and other community leaders signed a Joint Declaration of their intention to promote a smoke-free lifestyle to their entire congregations. Trained advisers were available to speak to the congregations at mosques or to centre-users in the run up to the start of Ramadan. Dr Abdul Aziz Sheikh was among the attendees and also presented a paper on 'The health profile of British Muslims' at the conference.

## Public Affairs

### Letter to Bill Speirs

Sher Khan, Chair of the Public Affairs

Committee, wrote to Bill Speirs, General Secretary of the Scottish TUC on 12 September, thanking him for his brave stance in criticising a football match between Israel and Scotland.

## Telco Liaison

The Public Affairs Committee is liaising with Telco, an organisation which is a coalition of the TUC and a number of other faith groups. The coalition is campaigning for a living wage. Representatives of the MCB Public Affairs Committee will be attending a march organised for 12 November 2002.

## Mosques & Community Affairs

### Good Practice in Mosques

The Mosques & Community Affairs Committee met on 19 September at the Islamic Cultural Centre. Sheikh Ibrahim Mogra was endorsed for the position of Chairman and Brother Ayub Laher was appointed Secretary of the Committee. The meeting discussed the way forward through inviting imams and mosques to draw up guidelines for good practice in mosques and how best to maximise the use of mosques.

The committee also discussed a number of other objectives for the year, including plans for a National Mosques Open Day insha' Allah and the provision of Muslim burial spaces in cemeteries. The Committee requests that more Central Working Committee members come forward to join or recommend members.

## Youth

### Database on Youth Work

On 13th July, the Youth Committee appointed Hussain Shefaar as Chair, Basma El-Shayaal as Deputy Chair and Raihana Naseem as Secretary. At a further meeting held on 15 September 2002 at the Islamic Cultural Centre, items discussed included the intention to create a database of youth work currently carried out throughout the country. This database will then be used as an information resource that would facilitate the coordination of existing activities and focus on those that required further development as well as to highlight areas of work for the MCB. The Committee also discussed plans to liaise with the Government Institutions that are related to youth affairs and hold a meeting with Muslim Youth Groups next year.

## Education, Training & Employment

### Committee Meeting

The Education Committee held their first meeting on 15 September 2002. A number of items were discussed including the production of a Ramadan Magazine for schools which will confirm and publicise Islamic Regulations on fasting for children, to be distributed to all primary and secondary schools. Other programmes that were discussed included a series of meetings and workshops to be organised for Muslim parents to encourage them to join governing bodies.

### Ramadan Guidelines for Schools

Directors of Education have been sent a 4-page 'Guidance to Schools on arrangements for Muslim Pupils during Ramadan' for distribution to head teachers. The document is based on work undertaken by working group representing Headteachers in Hounslow and School Governors representing Hounslow Jamia Masjid.

This is an initiative of the MCB's Education, Training and Employment Committee (ETEC) which states, "As fasting is a responsibility as well as an obligation in Islam it is important that pupils are supported while continuing with normal school life. It is equally important that pupils realise that Ramadan is not an opportunity to try to gain special individual rights within the school. Schools will wish to recognise the importance of Ramadan to Muslim pupils through the curriculum, collective worship and other opportunities." The guidance letter can be found at [www.mcb.org.uk](http://www.mcb.org.uk).

## Business and Economics

### Student Loans

Iqbal Asaria, Chair of the Business and Economics Committee has been in correspondence with the National Union of Students (NUS) on the issue of student loans. The NUS is reviewing the issue and the MCB has advised against tying loan charges to market rates.

## Legal Affairs

### Religious Offences Bill

The MCB Legal Affairs committee with guidance from the Constitutional Adviser, Khurshid Drabu, drafted the MCB submission to the House of Lords Sub Committee on Religious Offences Bill. The submissions were lodged with the Clerk to the Committee on 9 August 2002. The

Committee invited representatives of the MCB to give oral evidence before it on 17 October.

The Submission stated that, "the Muslim community would like to see the early introduction of a law that makes it a criminal offence to vilify any religious belief... The incitement to religious hatred proposals in the Anti-Terror, Crime and Security Bill suggested the amendment of the Public Order Act 1986 to extend it to cover "religious" as well as "racial" hatred... we, in partnership with a number of other Muslim organisations had asked, that the proposals should incorporate certain safeguards to ensure that the application of the proposed new law would be effective and equal.

The MCB would like to thank all affiliates who made submissions to the Select Committee on the issues of Blasphemy Law and the need for law on incitement to religious hatred. The submissions concern the MCB view of not seeking an abolition of Blasphemy law, but rather to campaign for a comprehensive law on vilification that protects all faiths.

The MCB also seeks a law that makes incitement to religious hatred a crime on the same lines as incitement to racial hatred but only more effective in its implementation, ensuring that it is not used to target Muslim individuals or groups for prosecutions as the racial hatred law has been used against the Black and ethnic minority communities.

## Research & Documentation

### Meeting at Office for National Statistics

Dr Jamil Sherif attended a meeting at the Office for National Statistics on 27 May, with staff of the Ethnicity & Identity Unit. ReDoc represents the MCB on the Religious Affiliation Group, an interfaith alliance with an interest in Census issues, chaired by Professor Leslie Francis. The meeting discussed census output and coding rules for the religion question. In response to a request from the Office for National Statistics, the MCB has provided comments on the draft chapter on religion for the forthcoming UK Year Book 2003.

### Islam & Health

Dr Aziz Sheikh, Chair of the Research & Documentation Committee, gave a presentation on 'Islam and Health' at the Tajdid 2002 conference in Nottingham on 10 August 2002.

At the same conference, on 14 August 2002, he also ran a workshop

on 'The Role of Muslim Medics in a Pluralist Society'.

### Symbols of Islam

Dr Aziz Sheikh, Chair of the ReDoc Committee and Professor Gatrad OBE, have had a paper entitled: 'Symbols of Islam: Bees and Honey in the Qur'an' published in the current issue of Reflect. This is an abridged version of an article by the same title published in the June issue of 'Beecraft: Journal of the British Beekeepers Association'.

### 9/11 Peace Memorial

Homaira Khan and Saddia Malik represented MCB at the 9/11 Peace Memorial held at the London InterFaith Centre on 11 September. They each delivered two readings on the themes of peace and social cohesion.

### Caring for Muslim Patients

Dr Aziz Sheikh, Chair of the Research & Documentation Committee, presented a paper on 'Caring for Muslim Patients' at the Royal College of General Practitioners, London on 5 September. This event was covered in Pulse Magazine on 16 September 2002.

### Paper Published

Dr Aziz Sheikh has worked together with Dr Richard Ashcroft (Ethics Unit, Imperial College) and Dr Liam Smeeth (Dept of Epidemiology, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine) to publish a paper in the September issue of the British Journal of General Practice on the design and application of randomised controlled trials in a research context.

### Census Religion Scoping Report

In response to a Census Religion Scoping Report, the ReDoc Committee issued a report in October commenting on, amongst other issues, the importance of a separate religion topic in the census. The full report is available from the ReDoc Committee section at [www.mcb.org.uk](http://www.mcb.org.uk).

## London Task Group

### Muslim Safety Forum Meeting

On 14 August 2002, Dr Abdul Raheem Khan represented the MCB at a Muslim Safety Forum meeting at New Scotland Yard. The exploratory discussions recommended that the Forum exist independently of Scotland Yard and considered how this would be facilitated. The Forum seeks to register as a charity, establish a website and elect a body of Muslim representatives to participate.

## 'The Quest For Sanity'

The MCB has published 'The Quest for Sanity - Reflections on September 11 And The Aftermath' to present Islam's positive message of peace and justice. The world has seen an assault on civil liberties, the growth of Islamophobia and the brazen violation of international law.



From right to left: Christopher Allen, Iqbal Sacranie, Unaiza Malik and Jamil Sherif at the book launch.

These developments are analysed in 'The Quest for Sanity' in a clear and forthright manner.

With contribution from academics, journalists, human rights activists and many moving personal accounts - this is the first book of its kind from a Muslim perspective.

Its message has been well-received and numerous mosques and Muslim organisations are purchasing copies to give to non-Muslim well-wishers and Muslim youth. The MCB urges its affiliates and other bodies to order copies in bulk at special terms (£275 for a box of 36). Individuals are also urged to seek the book at their local libraries.

To order copies of *The Quest For Sanity* (£12.75 each, plus P&P) please contact the MCB on 0208 903 9650 or order online at [www.mcb.org.uk/books](http://www.mcb.org.uk/books).

## Muslims give evidence to Lords Select Committee on Religious Offences

The Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism (FAIR), The Muslim Council of Britain, and the Association of Muslim Lawyers (AML) UK - in that order - gave evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on Religious Offences on 17 October 2002. The Select Committee has been taking evidence since June 2002 from a wide cross section of British society including the police, faith groups and non-faith groups.

FAIR was represented by Mohammed Abdul Aziz, Christopher Allen, Sadiq Khan and Dilwar Hussain. The MCB was represented by Iqbal Sacranie, AbdulWahid Hamid, Khalid Sofi and Sarah Joseph. AML was represented by Ahmad Thomson and Issath Nawaz.

The FAIR submissions concentrated on the various 'mischiefs' that has been created as a result of the lack of protection in British law for faiths such as Islam that were not mono-ethnic. The MCB submissions highlighted the need for harmony and stability in society. The MCB was against the abolition of the existing law on blasphemy although this only protected the Anglican faith because this would mean 'negative equalization' and also because 'we covet no freedom to commit sacrilege against other faiths'.

However the MCB expressed the need for a new law on 'vilification of religion and religious sanctities' since vilification and abuse are often the first steps towards more horrific crimes such as the genocide in Bosnia. Provisions were also needed to deal with 'incitement to religious hatred'.

### MCB Resources on the Website

Speeches, articles, letters written by the MCB's committees in response to events, MCB submissions to Parliament and responses to consultation requests are now available on the MCB website.

**MCB on the Net**  
<http://www.mcb.org.uk>

**Ramadan Guidelines for Schools: A document for teachers for the well-being of Muslim students has been issued by the Education, Training and Employment Committee of the MCB - available on the MCB website.**

We are looking for sponsors for the newsletter and other MCB projects. Those interested are kindly requested to contact the MCB Office for details.

**THE MCB WISHES ALL READERS  
RAMADAN MUBARAK**

## Muslim Aid



'Whoever saved a life it would be as if he saved the life of humanity' Qur'an 5:32.

Since the founding of Muslim Aid in 1985 this Qur'anic verse has been guiding Muslim Aid's work to alleviate the suffering and poverty of people around the world from Albania to Zimbabwe.

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