

# THE MUSLIM COUNCIL OF BRITAIN

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

---

## The Muslim Council of Britain Weekly E-Newsletter

*20 Safar 1423 Friday 3 May 2002*

---

### **E-Newsletter Issue 20 - Reporting MCB events since 5th April 2002**

#### **MCB Annual General Meeting and Elections**

The MCB held its Annual General Meeting on Sunday April 28th 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 11th.

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). Four additional office bearers will be elected by the Central Working Committee later this month.

#### **Launch of 'Respect'**

Secretary General Iqbal Sacranie attended the launch of a new campaign called 'Respect' in the presence of HRH Prince of Wales and the leaders of Britain's faith communities on Monday 29th April 2002 at the International Convention Centre in Birmingham. 'Respect' is a campaign which seeks to inspire people of different faiths to give time to each other and to come together to help improve or become involved in their local communities. This campaign will last for at least two years and will also mark the Golden Jubilee of Her Majesty the Queen. The Secretary General of MCB emphasised the need for faith community leaders to speak out at injustices wherever they occur. This will bring credibility not only within the faith communities but would command the respect of the larger communities as well.

#### **Violence 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.

## **Reception for the President of the Islamic University, Riyadh**

The former Deputy Secretary General Mahmud Al Rashid attended a reception for Dr Muhammad bin S'aad Al-Salim, the President of the Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University, Riyadh, hosted by the Director General of the Islamic Cultural Centre, London on Saturday April 27th.

The reception was held to mark Dr Al-Salim's visit to the UK and his meeting with Muslim leaders in the UK.

## **Meeting with Rt. Hon. Jack Straw**

The former Secretary General Yousuf Bhailok along with other members of the Muslim community met the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw on Monday April 22nd and delivered an open letter from the Muslim community in Britain on the escalation in violence and brutality in the Occupied Territories in Palestine.

The letter questioned the Government's inaction over the Palestinian issue and called upon the Foreign Secretary to demand the immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Occupied Territories; for the imposition of economic sanctions against Israel until compliance is secured; and for the support of the Saudi Plan to effect a just solution to the ongoing occupation of Palestinian land.

## **Inaugural Ceremony of Royal Mail Prayer Hall**

The former Secretary General Yousuf Bhailok attended the inauguration ceremony for the opening of the prayer hall at Royal Mail Mount Pleasant Sorting Office in London on Sunday, 21st April 2002. The ceremony was organised by the Muslim Postal Association.

## **Conference in Winchester**

On 13th April Iqbal Asaria, Chair of MCB Business and Economics Committee, was keynote speaker at a meeting jointly organised by the Winchester Council for Peace and Justice and the Southampton Al-Nissa Association, an affiliate of the MCB. The title of his talk was "Islam – Myths and Realities". The meeting was attended by over 300 people including the Bishop of Winchester and Mark Oaten MP. Iqbal also explained the purpose and work of the MCB.

## **Funeral Ceremony of HM the Queen Mother**

The former Assistant Secretary General of the MCB Afzal Khan attended the funeral ceremony of the Queen Mother at Westminster Abbey on Tuesday April 9th. A letter of condolence was sent on behalf of the MCB.

## **Conference on Islamic Ummah and Globalisation**

The former Secretary General Yousuf Bhailok attended a conference on the Islamic Ummah & Globalisation on 6-10th April 2002 in Makkah, Saudi Arabia. The conference organised by the Muslim World League invited 500 participants, scholars, intellectuals and community representatives, from 109 countries to address the current issues facing Muslims.

Yousuf Bhailok, on behalf of the MCB and the British Muslim community delivered a 10-minute speech on 'Muslim Minorities in the West & International Relations'.

---

## **Committee Updates**

## **Media Committee**

### **Demonstration for Palestinians and the BBC**

The Media Committee wrote on April 19th to Stephen Whittle, BBC Director of News, to express concern at the lack of coverage on the BBC of the demonstration for Palestinian solidarity organised by the Muslim Association of Britain, supported by the MCB, and attended by over 150,000 people from all over the UK.

### **Letter to the Independent**

The Media Committee wrote a letter to the Independent in response to an article by David Aaronovitch, (Independent, April 19th). The letter took issue with Mr Aaronovitch's claim of an 'anti-Israeli sentiment' in the British press and his neglect to mention the terrible consequences of Israel's continued illegal occupation of Palestinian land.

### **Letter to the Sunday Telegraph**

The Media Committee wrote to the Sunday Telegraph in response to Mark Steyn's article on the Middle East (Sunday Telegraph, April 14th 2002). The letter expressed concerns at the author's attempt to cast Muslims as the villains and Jews as the victims in the ongoing hostilities in the West Bank and Gaza. The letter criticised Mr Steyn depiction of events and his pronounced view that discrimination is something suffered only by the Jewish people.

### **Meeting With The Observer Editor**

Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary of the Media Committee, led an MCB delegation to see the editor of The Observer, Roger Alton and some of his senior editorial staff on April 24th 2002. There was a very wide-ranging and fruitful discussion on many topics including the portrayal of Muslim in the Media, religious discrimination, the process of integration etc.

The other members of the MCB delegation included Ahmed Versi (editor, Muslim News) and Abdurahman Jafar (Islamic Society of Britain).

### **Attacks on a Synagogue in London**

In a statement to the Press, the MCB Secretary General Iqbal Sacranie has condemned the Finsbury Park desecration: "We find any attack on a place of worship cowardly and reprehensible. In a civilised society there is no room for intimidation towards any section of the community, irrespective of their faith or cultural background." In the wake of Sept 11, British Muslims have suffered a wave of similar attacks on their mosques, cemeteries and even physical assaults. The British Jewish community is fortunate in that they are protected by this country's racial discrimination laws. British Muslims on the other hand have no such protection.

---

## **Social Policy, Welfare and Regeneration Committee (SPWRC)**

### **Committee Meeting**

SPWRC held their committee meeting on Sunday April 21st at Islamic Cultural Centre (Regent's Park Mosque). The meeting covered the image of MCB among UK Muslim women in grass root organisations and the role of the Mosque towards the community. The committee also explored ways forward.

## **Islamic Experience Exhibition launch**

Shiban Akbar, Acting Chair of SPWRC attended the launch of Iqra Trust's Islamic Experience Exhibition on Monday April 15th at the Islamic Cultural Centre in London. The exhibition is an interactive experience for both schoolchildren and the general public.

Speeches were delivered on the day by HE Dr M A Yamani, Chairman of Iqra Trust, Mrs Kaushika Amin, Director of the Islamophobia Commission, Mr Roger Butler, Inspector of Religious Education for the London Borough of Ealing and HE Dr Ghazi Al Ghosaibi, Ambassador for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Other members of the MCB in attendance were Dr Abdur Raheem Khan, Chairman of the London Task Group and Dr Abdul Majid Katme, member of the Health and Medical Committee.

## **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 April 15th.

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.

---

## **MCB in the Press**

### **British Muslims feel betrayed**

Joe Ahmed-Dobson and Ajmal Masroor Tuesday April 23 2002 The Guardian

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/israel/Story/0,2763,689124,00.html> Rabbi Fears Anti Semitism Rise

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/uk/newsid\\_1934000/1934612.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/uk/newsid_1934000/1934612.stm)

---

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