

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

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Weekly Updates on Reports, Committees and Events: Issue 22

Reports and Committee Updates

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 Wednesday May 15th. 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:

1. 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.
2. With regard to integration, the fact is that while over the recent years Muslim participation in public community has vastly improved, barriers to integration seemed to be coming from institutional culture, especially the media, whose unfair and negative projection of the community has the effect of impeding normal integration.
3. In respect of forced marriage, Islam does not recognise 'forced marriages' as marriage and the practice itself affected not just Muslims alone, it concerned many other communities and it was presented and projected a Muslim-specific problem.
4. Sometimes official statements did not help the way they are formulated. For example, although many asylum-seekers came from an unstable Muslim world, they were not all Muslims and it is projected as a singularly Muslim vice. It would not therefore be fair to use them as a stick to beat the settled Muslim communities in the country.
5. The delegation felt that post September 11, the process of inclusion and integration seems to have suffered a setback and clearly things need to be set right and normalised.
6. The delegation sought assurance from the Home Secretary that the prisoners in Camp X-Ray will be treated under International Laws.

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 Thursday May 16th. Gurbux Singh, 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 exploring wider issues such as Social Exclusion, Community Cohesion and Social Justice. An open debate was held with the audience to discuss various issues. The panel consisted of John White - Channel 4 Broadcaster, Prof. Stuart Hall – Social Historian, Baroness Helena Kennedy QC and Gurbux Singh.

Letter sent to Prime Minister Blair on issue of Faith Schools

A letter was sent to Prime Minister Blair 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". To see the full Press Release please visit the MCB website at www.mcb.org.uk.

Social Policy, Welfare and Regeneration Committee (SPWRC)

Shiban Akbar, Acting Chair, SPWRC attended the NCWMP (National Council for the Welfare of Muslim Prisoners) meeting on Sunday, 12 May, 2002 held at the Muslim World League office in London from 12.30 to 5.30pm. 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 Br Qadri, Director of Islamic Cultural Centre Dr Ahmed Al-Dubayan, Br Salah El-Hassan of Iqra Trust, Visiting Prison Chaplain Sr Azizat Adefesobi, former Asst Chief Probation Officer of Northamptonshire Br Rashid Ghumra & Br Nizar Boga.

Media Committee

Inayat Bunglawala, the secretary of the media committee, wrote an article which was published in The Observer on 19th May 2002, about the MCB's response to the remarks made by Peter Hain, the Minister for Europe, who had described some of the Muslim community as "very isolationist". To see the article please visit the MCB website at www.mcb.org.uk .

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.

Public Affairs Committee

Tanzeem Wasti, Chair of the International Affairs Committee, Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary of the Media Committee, and Sher Khan of the Islamic Society of Britain attended a meeting with the Conservative Vice Chairman responsible for Ethnic and Faith Communities, Gary Streeter, on Tuesday May 14th. 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.

London Task Group

London Muslim Coalition (LMC) met with Mr Kumar Murshid, Adviser to the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone on Wednesday 15th May. 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 ISB.

Events

Justice for Palestine

The Palestinian Solidarity Campaign organised a 'Justice for Palestine' march and public rally on Saturday May 18th. The march began at Hyde Park and proceeded onto Trafalgar Square where a rally was held. Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary General of The Muslim Council of Britain was one of the speaker to address the rally. The number of people who participated in the march exceeded well over 40,000.

Employment Status of Ministers of Religion

Nawazish Bokhari, Chair of the Education, Training and Employment Committee has attended a meeting organised by the Department of Trade and Industry which took place on Wednesday 22nd May. The aim of the meeting was to review the employment status of individuals currently excluded from the Employment Relations Act. Ministers of religion (imams) are be included in the Government's review of current legislation.

Hajj Delegation Reception

To celebrate and thank all those that contributed their services to the British Hajj Delegation's work, Baroness Amos will be hosting a reception at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on Wednesday May 22nd. Mr Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary General and Dr Abdul Raheem Khan, the Chief Medical Advisor to the Delegation will attend on behalf of the MCB.