

THE MUSLIM COUNCIL OF BRITAIN

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

Muslim Council of Britain Weekly E-Newsletter

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Reports and Event Updates

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

On 30th 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 Shibani 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. She 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 port of calls.

Single Equality Body Consultation Seminar

On 25th 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 brought 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.

Iranian Embassy Meeting

On 25th July 2002, a delegation from the MCB attended a luncheon meeting with the Iranian Ambassador HE Mortaza Sarmadi and his senior colleagues at the Embassy of Islamic Republic of Iran. The MCB delegation explained to the Ambassador the work carried out by the MCB and they were able to exchange views on a range of issues of mutual interest. The ambassador lauded the work carried out by the MCB in the interests of the Muslim Community in the UK.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office Receptions

On the 24th 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 Shibani 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 Thursday 25th July.

Citizens and Governance

Inayat Bunglawala, on behalf of the MCB, attended the Summer Reception and Presentations evening held by the Citizen Organising Foundation (COF) at Marlborough House on July 25th 2002. The presentations were on the theme of 'Citizens and Governance: Strengthening Civil Society in Britain and Ireland for the Twenty-First Century'. The COF trustees also distributed their Annual Report at the reception.

Singapore High Commission Dinner

The Secretary General was invited for dinner on Monday 29th July by the Singapore High Commissioner HE Michael Eng Cheng TEO in honour of the visit of the Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, Acting Minister for Community Developments and Sports and Minister in Charge of Muslim Affairs. The dinner was also attended by Muslim parliamentarians: Lord Adam Patel, Mr Muhammad Riaz, Muslim advisor to Iain Duncan Smith, and Mr Museji Takolia, Adviser to the Cabinet Office.

Palestine Seminar

Inayat Bunglawala, on behalf of the MCB, attended a seminar on Palestine held by the Leicester-based body the Friends of al-Aqsa on 14th July 2002.

Summer Reception

Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary of the Media Committee, and Sher Khan, Chairman of the Public Affairs Committee, both attended a summer reception organised by Rod Liddle, Editor of the BBC Radio 4's Today programme on Thursday 18th July in London.

Committee Updates

Media Committee

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 July 28th 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 July 24th 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.

Finance & General Purpose Committee

The Finance and General Purpose Committee met at the Muslim Welfare House on Tuesday 23rd July. The meeting, chaired by the Treasurer Ali Omar Ermes, discussed a range of issues relating to finance and general purpose committee such as fund raising and items for inclusion on the agenda of future Central Working Committee Meetings.

Research & Documentation Committee

In response to a request from the office for National Statistics, the MCB has provided comments on the draft chapter on religion in the UK Year Book 2003.

Events

Event: Expoislamia 2002

Date: Sunday 4th August 2002 11.30 am - 8.30pm

Held By: Young Muslims Organisation UK

Venue: Kensington Town Hall, London NW6 6RG

Contact: Telephone 020 7247 7918

Information: Speakers include Imam Siraj Wahhaj, Br Dawud Warnsby Ali of Canada, Imam Abdullah Hakim Quick of South Africa amongst others.

Event: Public Affairs Committee Meeting

Date: 5th August 2002

Held By: The Muslim Council of Britain

Contact: MCB Office, Telephone 020 8903 9024, E Mail: admin@mcb.org.uk

Event: Furthering Cultural Ties between Britain and the Islamic World

Date: Monday 5th August 2002

Held By: Brent Islamic Circle

Venue: London Inter Faith Centre, 125 Salusbury Road, London NW6 6RG

Contact: G Jones, Telephone 020 7604 3053

Information: Speakers include Professor Jamal Badawi and other distinguished scholars

Event: Muslim Demographics - the way ahead

Date: Thursday 26th September 2002

Contact: Chair of ReDoc, Dr Aziz Shaikh, c/o MCB office

Information: Topics for discussion include the census output on the religion question

Event: Million Man March For Palestine

Date: 28th September 2002 Start Time: 1pm

Held By: The Muslim Association of Britain

Venue: Congregate at Hyde Park Corner and end in Trafalgar Square

Contact: MAB Head Office: 020 7272 2888 Mobile: 07958 329 879

Information: Play your part in the biggest mobilisation for Palestine in this country ever, insha'Allah. It is a demonstration in support of all the Palestinian people. It is now no longer a concern only for Muslims; but for anyone, Muslim or non-Muslim, who realises and is aware that every human on Earth has a right to live and be treated fairly.

