

# 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. We hope you will join in that work.*

## 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.**

### MCB Contact Points

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## Islam Awareness Week



From left to right: Sher Khan, National IAW organiser, Simon Hughes MP, Mo Mowlem MP, William Hague MP and Yousuf Bhailok, MCB Secretary General

This year the Muslim Council of Britain for the first time gave its support to Islam Awareness Week. This annual event, initiated by the Islamic Society of Britain in 1994 and supported by major Muslim organisations across the country (most notably, MCB affiliates the ISB and the Islamic Forum Europe), was launched

from the House of Commons on the 6th November 2000. This event was widely reported in the media, including the *Today* Radio programme and provided an opportunity for Muslims to join hands. It consisted of a week of events held simultaneously in seventeen

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## 'Electing to Listen'

As speculation of a spring general election continues to grow, the MCB unveiled the first phase of its election campaign strategy with the publication last November of its policy document *Electing to Listen: Promoting Policies for British Muslims*.

Produced by the Public Affairs Committee *Electing to Listen* highlights the key issues of concern to the Muslim community in Britain and brings them to the attention of policy makers as they finalise their general election manifestos. The document has been widely circulated amongst senior politicians and their advisors in the three main political parties as well as

amongst think tanks and researchers. This is being followed-up by a series of roundtable discussions with each of the main parties separately.

The MCB Secretary General Yousuf Bhailok welcomed the document as a "a major initiative that highlights the contribution of Muslims to British society and sets out our concerns and proposals in a comprehensive and realistic manner that is aimed at benefiting all the people of Britain."

Based on consultations with community representatives and

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# MCB Annual General Meeting 2000



MCB Central Working Committee

The third Annual General Meeting of the MCB was held on Saturday, May 13 2000, at Brent Town Hall in London.

Yousuf Bhailok, 43, an investment company director from Preston with over 25 years experience in community work was elected the new Secretary-General of the MCB by delegates representing more than 300 affiliated Muslim organizations from across Britain, made up of 22 national, seven regional and 284 local and other organizations.

A member of the inaugural Central Working Committee of the MCB, Mr Bhailok has been active in the organisation since its inception. He is presently Managing Trustee of Lancashire Darool Uloom Higher Islamic College and is a former Chairman of Lancashire Council of Mosques, Preston Muslim Forum, the Jame Masjid Preston, Vice Chairman of Preston and West Lancashire Racial Equality Council. In his acceptance speech at the AGM Mr Bhailok said 'I believe we must participate in the mainstream of British society at all levels, local and national. Our task is to work constructively and positively for change within. Muslims are part of British society, let's make our mark'.

The Annual General Meeting expressed warm appreciation for the dedicated work of the outgoing Secretary General, Iqbal Sacranie who completed his two year term, the maximum allowed under the MCB constitution.

The other elected MCB office bearers who will serve for the next two years, God willing, were:  
 Mahmud Al-Rashid - Deputy Secretary General  
 Mohammad Afzal Khan - Assistant Secretary General  
 Fadi Itani - Treasurer



Yousuf Bhailok being congratulated by Iqbal Sacranie



Delegates during the public session

PEOPLE

MCB offers its congratulations to a number of prominent members of the community that have recently been assigned new responsibilities and attained public recognition for their work. These include:

■ Khurshid Drabu, Advisor on Constitutional Affairs to the MCB, was in December 1999 appointed Vice President of the Immigration Appeal Tribunal.

■ In the Queen's Birthday Honours List 2000, Adam Patel was presented with a Peerage. Bashir Maan, member of MCB Central Working Committee and zonal representative was awarded a CBE. Manazir Ahsan, member of MCB Central Working Committee and Chair of Community Affairs Committee was presented with an MBE.

■ In the New Year's Honours List 2001 MBE's were awarded to Professor Tariq Modood of Bristol University, consultant to MCB's Research and Documentation Committee, for services to social sciences and ethnic relations; Shamsuddin Ahmed, for services to the Bangladeshi community in North West England; Mohammed Akhter, for services to the ethnic communities in Strathclyde and Mohammad Sharif Salim JP, Chairman Bury Racial Equality Council, for services to the community in Lancashire and Greater Manchester.

UPDATE

EAST LONDON MOSQUE

In our last newsletter we reported on the success of East London Mosque which had raised a substantial amount of money towards its Mosque Extension Project. The extension is crucial in order for the mosque to accommodate the growing number of Muslims in the area. Currently some worshippers have to pray on the main road pavement, and some actually leave without praying. The East London Mosque Trust bought land adjacent to the Mosque for the purpose of building a five storey extension. Youth, community, educational facilities as well as multipurpose halls will accommodate up to 10,000 people at any one time.

With the first phase of the fundraising programme complete, mainly thanks to the warm response from the East London Muslim community, the mosque is now concentrating on raising £10 million for the extension building. The Deputy Secretary Secretary General, Mr Mahmud Al-Rashid represented the MCB at the recent fundraising event.

For more information and a breakdown of the project costs please contact:  
The East London Mosque  
Tel: 020 7247 1357, Fax: 020 7377 9879,  
Email: admin@eastlondon-mosque.org.uk

EVENTS

CARING FOR MUSLIM PATIENTS



Launch of 'Caring for Muslim Patients'. From right to left: Iqbal Sacranie, Lord Weatherill, Lord Hunt, Dr Aziz Sheikh, Dr Rashid Gatrad, and guest

The MCB is always supportive of new projects that challenge misconceptions about Muslim cultural practices. Our Health and Medical Committee is particularly keen to promote a better appreciation of the needs of Muslim patients and to suggest ways in which quantitative and qualitative improvements in health care delivery may be achieved.

'Caring for Muslim Patients' by Dr Aziz Sheikh and Dr AR Gatrad is a unique publication with constructive advice that will be appreciated by all those involved in the planning or provision of healthcare for Muslims. In July 2000 the MCB assisted

in the official launch of the book at the House of Lords, which was hosted by speaker of the House of Commons, Lord Weatherill. HRH Prince Charles and Prime Minister Tony Blair both sent warm messages of support for the book which were read out at the launch.

Sir Alexander Macara, former Chairman of the British Medical Association, notes in his foreword to the book:

"The elegant and scholarly text is a joy to read; as revelation succeeds revelation, preconceptions are challenged, misconceptions are aborted, and the dawn of enlightenment stirs conviction that believers and non-believers alike must do what they can to respond as fellow human-beings, especially those with the privileged responsibility of a doctor or other healthcare professional."

For further information please Email: admin@mcb.org.uk

MEMON CENTRE OPENS

On 8th February 2001 the inauguration ceremony took place of the Memon Centre in Balham, London. The Centre was formally opened by HRH the Prince of Wales. MCB was represented by its Secretary General, Mr Yousuf Bhailok and was introduced to HRH Prince of Wales.

The construction of the Memon Centre, which was originally purchased as a dilapidated factory building for £200,000 took five years to complete at a cost of just over £1.2 million. *Alhamdulillah* the entire cost of the development project was borne through donations and

interest free loans, given by members of the Memon community, ranging from young students, employed and unemployed persons, to businessmen and philanthropists. The multi-purpose sports and community centre is owned and managed by Memon Association UK, and is open to all communities but will be especially beneficial to the youth and women who will be able to use the facilities in an environment which will be conducive to building a healthy and responsible society.

For more information please contact association@memon.org.uk

THE ABDULLAH QUILLIAM HERITAGE CENTRE

In 1998 a group of Liverpool Muslims formed 'The Abdullah Quilliam Society', so-named after an early British convert to Islam in the nineteenth century. Abdullah Quilliam established the first mosque in Britain within the Liverpool Muslim Institute, located at 8 Brougham Terrace, West Derby Road in Liverpool. Due to an organised campaign of harassment and persecution, this small Muslim community had to abandon its mosque and migrate to other parts of Britain. The building has for the past hundred years been owned by Liverpool City Council and used by the Register Office for Births Marriages and Deaths.

In November 2000, Rashid McTeer, Secretary of The Abdullah Quilliam Society wrote to the

MCB detailing exciting plans for the re-purchase and refurbishment of the building so it can be re-instated as a centre of Islamic study and education and a heritage for Liverpool.

The building is currently in very bad condition and requires a lot of work, which will in turn require generous support from the Muslim community. The Society is currently conducting a project feasibility study and business plan that will provide an insight into the costs involved.

If you would like more information on how you can help this project please contact M Akbar Ali, Chairman of The Abdullah Quilliam Society on 0151 427 4489 or Rashid McTeer 01517088780

## MCB urges participation in April Census

After an historic late night debate in June 2000, Parliament accepted a legislative amendment to allow the next Census to include a question on religion affiliation. This is the first time since 1851 that a religion question has been asked in a census in England and Wales. It was the culmination of a long and intense lobbying campaign first spearheaded by the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs (UKACIA) and then taken up by the MCB, in cooperation with the other faith communities. Such a census statistic serves as a marker to central and local government that religion is a living force in society and faith cannot be ignored as a factor in the allocation of services and resources.

The campaign has not been without controversy within the Muslim community, but on balance the majority view has perhaps been that a truer picture of Muslim demographics would be of benefit. The MCB has held that the success of the campaign was a matter of strategic significance for the Muslim community. The campaign had its dramatic moments, particularly in May 2000 when it was realised that the amendment, if presented as a private members bill, would have little chance of success. The MCB then launched a hectic last-minute lobbying effort for Government to change its approach and ensure it made parliamentary time available. A direct appeal was made to the Prime Minister on 24th May 2000. The MCB would also like to place on record the support of Lord Weatherill in the Lords and MP Jonathan Sayeed in the Commons. Eleven MPs however voted against the amendment.

The MCB is disappointed that the religion question will be presented as a voluntary rather than compulsory one, and it urges Muslims to participate in the census and complete the religion question on 29th April 2001. Muslims in Scotland, under the leadership of Bashir Maan, have also successfully lobbied for the question in the Scotland census.

### FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE:

#### MCB DELEGATION MEETS HEAD OF MIDDLE EAST DEPT

In early October 2000 a six-member delegation from the MCB met with the head of the Middle-East Department, Mr Alan Goulty, at the Foreign Office to discuss the worsening crisis in Palestine. The delegation expressed the deep concern and anger felt by British Muslims at the vicious and murderous Israeli response to the Palestinian demonstrations against the desecration of the Islamic holy site of Al-Haram Al-Sharif in Al-Quds (Jerusalem).

Yousuf Bhailok, the MCB Secretary General, said "We have been very surprised and saddened with the muted reaction of our Government at the disproportionate and excessive use of force by the Israeli army on the Palestinians. The use of tanks, missiles and helicopter gunships on the civilian population is in total contravention of human rights and international law. The Israelis have not even spared young children. We call on the British government to issue an unequivocal condemnation of the Israeli actions and to demand an immediate cessation of the use of such excessive and lethal force by the Israelis."

The delegation stressed the resort to violence by Palestinians was directly linked to the failure of the Oslo peace process and peace negotiations in producing tangible benefits for ordinary Palestinians. The MCB urged the British government and the European Union to play a more constructive role to ensure that a just and realistic settlement is reached.

### FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE:

#### HAJJ DELEGATION

Last year, for the first time ever, the F.C.O. and H.O. sponsored the establishment of a British Hajj Consulate in Makkah al-Mukarramah. Along with other Muslim organisations, including the Association of British Hujjaj, the Lancashire Council of Mosques and the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs, the MCB played an active role in the setting up of the British Hajj Consulate. The delegation was formed to facilitate the pilgrimage of British Muslims and help resolve any problems they encountered during the Hajj, ranging from medical difficulties, contacting relatives in case of emergency, advice on passports and any welfare and spiritual concerns. The delegation was composed of volunteers from the Muslim community with relevant skills including medical expertise, community language skills, a knowledge of the Hajj environment and counselling skills.

Alhamdulillah the Hajj consulate was a success with over 2500 British pilgrims seen. This year MCB Secretary-General, Yousuf Bhailok, has been participating in discussions relating to the Hajj delegation. The delegation

this year leaves on 25th February and is once again to be manned by volunteers from the British Muslim community. The MCB will be represented by affiliate member, Councillor Muhammad Afzal, who will be the deputy leader. Lord Patel of Blackburn will lead the delegation. The MCB Health and Medical Committee, through its constituent body of the Muslim Doctors and Dentists Association and Mediconecern have been able to advise and put together a package of measures to send to doctors about the Hajj of 2000.

The MCB in co-ordination with the Department of Health have circulated leaflets to all Muslim organisations and mosques relating to vaccinations for Hajj.

For more information please contact the MCB Office on 020 8903 9024, or the British Consulate general in Jeddah on (00) (966) (2) 622 5550

### TREASURY:

#### JUBILEE 2000 CANCELLATION OF THIRD WORLD DEBT

In December 2000, Iqbal Asaria, Chair of the Business and Economics Committee was present at a meeting at 11 Downing Street. The seminar was hosted by Gordon Brown and Clare Short who announced the decision of the British Government to either cancel outright or hold in trust all payments made by HIPC (Heavily Indebted Poor Countries) to the UK. The MCB has been supporting the campaign to cancel third world debt through our membership of Jubilee 2000. The British Government's debt-policy is a welcome step forward, however many HIPCs still face barriers to economic recovery. Indeed as many poverty-stricken third world countries do not qualify for debt relief under the present HIPC scheme adopted by the G8 countries, the MCB will continue to actively press for an adequate and realistic solution to the economic difficulties of the HIPCs.

### D.E.T.R.:

#### OXFORD CENTRE FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES GIVEN PLANNING PERMISSION

After a lengthy process, the MCB is delighted that the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies (OCIS) was finally granted planning permission for the construction of residential and academic accommodation. The MCB wrote to the Ministers at the Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions supporting the application. Dr Farhan Ahmad Nizami, Director of the OCIS thanked the MCB for its 'sincerely appreciated' support.

### GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY:

#### GLA MEETING WITH TREVOR PHILLIPS

In November 2000 a four-member delegation from the MCB met Trevor Phillips, Chair of the Greater London Authority. The meeting considered issues to promote opportunities for disadvantaged communities, especially faith communities. Some of the issues discussed included: the need to increase representation from the faith communities in the GLA; the difficulties facing faith communities in obtaining funding for regeneration; and the need for the GLA to ensure the eradication of institutional racism and Islamophobia in local authorities.

The MCB delegation found the GLA sympathetic and receptive to Muslim concerns. Trevor Phillips suggested regular meetings with the MCB in order to address the problems facing the Muslim community. The MCB looks forward to a close working relationship with the GLA and is grateful for the warm and constructive atmosphere that prevailed during the meeting.

### HOME OFFICE:

#### HOME OFFICE CONNECTS COMMUNITIES

Before the start of Ramadan the Home Office announced the successful applicants to their "Connecting Communities" grant programme that aims to support minority ethnic communities in a number of ways. Thanks to lobbying from MCB and others, faith groups were recognised by the Home Office as being eligible to apply for funds just as groups that define themselves by ethnicity are already recognised to be eligible.

13 of the successful bids targeted Muslim populations. Amongst these successful bidders were a number of Muslim faith groups including Noor-

ul-Quran, Lancashire Council of Mosques and Muslim Welfare House (Finsbury Park, London). Other successful bids included those where Muslim faith groups are working in co-operation with the wider community for the common good such as the Minority Ethnic Regeneration Group (MERG) in Tower Hamlets, London.

Of the other successful bids that did not target the Muslim community, the vast majority were for projects that targeted Minority Ethnic groups as a whole rather than targeting any one community. In fact Muslim groups were the most successful in arguing for funds to support work specifically targeting one particular community and so congratulations to all those who were successful in applying for funds. Also, thanks should go to the Home Office for recognising the specific cultural needs of the Muslim population. MCB will continue to work with other public funding bodies who are not as progressive as the Home Office. The massive number of applications though clearly shows that the Government needs to find significantly more resources in order to support the excellent work going on amongst minority ethnic groups across the country.

Before the deadline for Connecting Communities applications MCB faxed out details of this fund to all MCB members with the offer of free advice from an MCB adviser that specialises in funding bids. Nationally, of 876 applications to the Home Office only 75 were successful (less than 10%). However, 40% of organisations who accessed advice through MCB before applying had at least one successful bid showing that with MCB support organisations were 4 times more likely to be successful.

MCB did submit a national bid itself to promote positive images of Muslims with the aim of working through local affiliates to carry this work out on a local level. Unfortunately this bid was unsuccessful, although there were no national bids that were successful in any case. However, we await the result of two separate funding bids to the Department of Environment Transport and the Regions (DETR) Special Grants Programme which are due to be announced soon.

Affiliates are encouraged to look at the list of successful bidders in their area to see if there are any organisations with whom you may be able to work together with. A list of successful bidders for each region can be accessed at [www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk) and then go to Press Releases > Press Releases Issued after 1 January 2000 > By Month > October 2000 > Next Page (they are stored as press releases by date of release on 5 October 2000).

## CONSERVATIVE PARTY:

### MCB MEETS WITH WILLIAM HAGUE, CONSERVATIVE PARTY LEADER

The Muslim Council of Britain's Secretary General Yousuf Bhailok led a delegation to meet with the Rt. Hon. William Hague MP, Leader of the Conservative Party, at the House of Commons on November 16 2000.

Yousuf Bhailok welcomed recent Conservative party initiatives aimed at consulting faith groups and policy proposals on ending discrimination faced by faith-based voluntary organisations when applying for public funds. A wide range of issues concerning the Muslim community were raised including religious discrimination, faith schools, asylum and immigration, media, representation, health and Palestine.

Mr Hague praised the contribution made by British Muslims across a broad spectrum of British society. The meeting was also an opportunity for MCB to present Mr Hague with a copy of its policy document *Electing to Listen*. Welcoming the document, Mr Hague expressed broad support over a number of issues and emphasised the shared values between Muslims and Conservatives. He agreed that the Conservative party should pursue the policy issues raised in the document over the coming weeks with the MCB in greater detail.

The meeting, first of its kind between the Conservative party leader and the Muslim Council of Britain, was described by Mr Bhailok as positive and constructive. He added that the meeting "provides the MCB with a good basis on which we can hold more detailed discussions on matters of concern to the Muslim community in the near future."

The MCB delegation was led by Mr Yousuf Bhailok and consisted of Dr Hany El-Banna, Mr Aslam Ejaz, Cllr. Afzal Khan, Dr Abdul Raheem Khan, Mr Ibrahim Master, Mr Mohibur Rahman, Mr Iqbal Sacranie, Dr Jamil Sherif, and Mr Tanzeem Wasti. Also present at the meeting were Mr David Lidington MP, Home Affairs Spokesman; Mr Gary Streeter MP, Shadow Secretary of State for International Development; and Mr George Osborne, Political Secretary to William Hague.

### The Guardian - Ramadan Timetable

Following the popularity of last year's decision by *The Guardian* to publish daily prayer times during the month of Ramadan, together with Suhur and Iftar times, the paper once again requested the MCB to supply data for this year's Ramadan. We would request our affiliates to write to the editor of *The Guardian*, Alan Rusbridger, welcoming this move, and ask him to further expand coverage of Muslim affairs.

### Media Committee Meeting with The Guardian

In October 2000 a delegation from the Media Committee led by the secretary of the Media Committee, Inayat Bunglawala, met *The Guardian's* Middle East Editor, Brian Whitaker. Inayat raised the concerns of affiliates that *The Guardian's* reporting of the Palestinian uprising (in particular, the reports filed by its correspondent Suzanne Goldenberg) had been very disappointing and had portrayed a moral equivalence in the actions of the Palestinian victims and Israeli aggressors. Whitaker agreed that *The Guardian* needed to expand the scope of its coverage to cover Jewish settlements on illegally-occupied territory and would through its editorial pages urge the EU to be more involved in the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations to offset the bias of the US administration.

### BBC's Newsnight and Palestine

The Media Committee wrote a strongly-worded letter of complaint to *Newsnight* for its report on the Palestinian uprising broadcast on 31st October 2000. The report included interviews with four Israelis and no Palestinians. The interviews with the Israelis concentrated on the views within Jewish settlements (on illegally-occupied land) when under attack from Palestinian gunfire. The MCB's letter criticised the blatantly one-sided nature of the report asked why no Palestinians were interviewed and why Palestinian mothers had not been asked about their feelings when the Israelis killed and maimed their children. The Deputy Editor of *Newsnight*, George Entwistle, responded on 8th November 2000 and argued that *Newsnight* sought to 'achieve balanced coverage over time.' Naturally, this is a totally unsatisfactory position and the MCB Media Committee urges affiliates to be vigilant in keeping a watch to see that the BBC reports (TV and Radio) are balanced, and write in to the BBC if there are any instances of bias. Please remember to note the name of the program and the date and time it was aired. Also, remember to send the MCB office a copy of the letters of complaint that you send out.

### MCB Backs Media March

Two members of the Media Committee, Iqbal Sacranie and Dr Abdul Majid Khatme were invited to speak at the Media March organised by the National Viewers and Listeners Association from the House of Parliament to Trafalgar Square on 16th September 2000. The MCB commended the organisers of the march for their work in trying to stem the relentless tide of pornography that is being beamed into British homes via the TV, newspapers, satellite, cable and now the Internet, and assured them of the full support of British Muslims. The MCB said that in a civilised society freedoms could not be absolute and there had to be safeguards, otherwise, freedoms would end up harming the very members of that society. "Our society has learnt the hard way not to allow the freedom to drink and drive," said the MCB in a press release.

### MCB Media Committee meets with The Daily Telegraph

Iqbal Sacranie, Ahmed Versi, Dr Abdul Raheem Khan and Inayat Bunglawala of the MCB's Media Committee went in January 2001 to the Canary Wharf building in London's Docklands to meet with Mr Charles Moore, the editor of *The Daily Telegraph*. Iqbal Sacranie, the Vice-Chair of the Media Committee briefly explained the role of the MCB, and then raised issues of concern, particularly with regard to *The Daily Telegraph's* recently published pro-Israeli diatribe by Barbara Amiel, and *The Daily Telegraph's* worrying coupling of the words 'Islamic' and 'terrorist', especially with respect to the Kashmiri mujahideen. It was explained to Mr Moore, that the Kashmiri mujahideen are engaged in a popular revolt against a very brutal Indian occupation. Mr Moore accepted that the designation of 'Islamic terrorists' to the Mujahideen was unfair and that they would use more neutral language in future.

## Research and Documentation Committee

The committee has held 6 meetings since June 2000. At its first meeting, Jamil Sherif was reappointed as Chair, and Shahanara Begum was appointed as Secretary for the 2000 - 2002 period. ReDoc is one of MCB's constitutionally-mandated committees with responsibility for preparing factual databases on the British Muslim community and conducting background research on behalf of other committees. The committee has launched three projects: analysis of Muslim electoral roll data, the 'Muslim statistics' project, and the PhD studentship project. Work has commenced on all three. The Muslim electoral roll project is collecting statistics on Muslim voters so that the impact of the Muslim voting strength can be analysed. A database has been prepared on the Muslim population over the age of 18 at the post code level which is then mapped to parliamentary constituencies. Quantitative information is now available on the Muslim population for each post code in the UK and each constituency. The second ReDoc project - Muslim statistics - is identifying demographic and socio-economic statistics available on the Muslim community from

government, academic and other sources. Unaiza Malik of the Committee is leading this project and supervising a part-time researcher, Humaira Kayani. The results of this research are being placed on the MCB web site. The MCB receives numerous requests for facts and statistics on British Muslims that can now be directed to the web site, so saving time of the office staff. The third project is being undertaken with the support of Professor Tariq Modood at the University of Bristol. The MCB is aiming to part-fund a PhD studentship in collaboration with the Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC) and a proposal has now been approved. The student, working under a joint University of Bristol and MCB supervision, will conduct rigorous research on Muslim statistical data, including the information to be available from the religion question in the next Census when this is made available by the Office for National Statistics. ReDoc has launched a fundraising campaign to support these three initiatives, with some limited success, *alhamdulillah*. However further financial help is still needed and project details can be obtained from the MCB office.

## Social Policy Welfare Regeneration Committee

### HOSPITAL CHAPLAINCY

As a member of the Multi-Faith Joint National Consultation on prison affairs the MCB has been lobbying for the recruitment of paid chaplains from the faith communities by NHS Trusts. In August this year we were happy to announce (through a press release) that a grant was awarded to the Multi-Faith Joint National Consultation for the purpose of training people who wished to apply for hospital chaplaincy positions. There was a positive response from the community and the MCB co-organised the training courses, two residential and one non-residential. Imam Shafiqur Rahman kindly distributed useful guidelines on 'good practice' for Imams (available from the MCB Office), which are based on the model set in Whitechapel hospital, London.

### PRISON ISSUES

An ongoing area of concern for the SPWR Committee has been the inadequacy of present facilities for Muslim inmates. The Committee has been actively campaigning for the improvement of religious facilities in various meetings with prison-service personnel. The MCB is represented on

the National Council for the Welfare of Muslim Prisoners by Imam Sajid who was part of a delegation who visited Mr Martin Narey, Head of the Prison Services in September 2000, to discuss some of the main difficulties faced by Muslim inmates. The three main areas of concern relate to Friday prayers, appointments of Prison Imams and the provision of halal food.

Another serious cause for deep concern has been the practise of Islamophobia in prisons. In Brixton last year an incident involving a visiting Muslim sister, who was asked to remove her Hijab by a male prison advisor, caused alarm in the Muslim community. The MCB was part of a three-member delegation who visited the Governor of Brixton Prison to discuss the incident and ensure that religious sensitivities are understood and practised by prison staff.

The MCB has been in close contact with Mr Maqsood Ahmed, Muslim Advisor to the Prison Services, with a view to bettering the religious provisions for Muslim inmates.

### QURBANI AND HALAL SLAUGHTER

Due the changes in law the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have agreed to issue a letter to all slaughterhouses in England permitting qurbani and halal slaughter. Dr Abdul

Raheem Khan and Dr Abdul Majid Katme, members of SPWR have been representing the MCB at MAFF meetings on this issue.

## Public Affairs Committee

The Public Affairs Committee (PAC) has concentrated on launching the first phase of the MCB Election Strategy. A Policy document *Electing to Listen*, was produced by the PAC and published in November 2000. This was distributed to all front bench MPs in all three main political parties, as well as to political advisors, researchers and directors of think tanks.

Roundtable meetings organised with all three main parties are currently taking place during January and February 2001 to discuss issues raised in *Electing to Listen*.

PAC has produced political briefings for the Secretary General and the MCB London Task Force to aide meetings with Ministers and politicians.

Mohibur Rahman, Chair of PAC, gave a radio interview on Muslims and the forthcoming general election, for BBC Radio 4.

PAC is also working to aide MCB International Affairs Committee on Palestine. It is planning the next phase of MCB election strategy and also preparing for the launch of PAC website.

## International Affairs Committee

### MCB PALESTINE CAMPAIGN

The Muslim Council of Britain has been appalled at the continuing crisis in Palestine sparked by the new Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon's, visit to Al-Aqsa. The use of overwhelming force by the Israeli army, including artillery, tanks and helicopter gunships on stone throwing youth has been condemned by Muslims in this country and from around the world. The MCB IAC has played a leading role in highlighting the atrocities being carried out by Israel. This has included letters from MCB Secretary General to UN Secretary General Kofi Anan, Prime Minister Tony Blair, President Jaques Chirac, President Jiang Zemin and President Putin conveying our deep concern at the distressing situation and the inertia of the International community. Since the crisis began the MCB has had meetings with the Foreign and Commonwealth Minister Peter Hain MP and Head of the Foreign Office Middle East Department, Mr Alan Goulty. In collaboration with Friends of Al-Aqsa, Palestinian Return Centre and Muslim Solidarity Committee, the IAC organised

two demonstrations in London, on 6th October 2000 outside 10 Downing Street and on the 22nd October 2000 in Hyde Park, when a letter was also delivered to Prime Minister Tony Blair at 10 Downing Street by a delegation from the MCB, outlining MCB's concerns over Palestine. Both demonstrations were well attended by Muslims and non-Muslims. Mr Tanzeem Wasti, Chair of IAC, and Dr Daud Abdullah, appeared on Pakistan TV Channel during a one hour special on Palestine, in which they answered questions from viewers.

## BRITISH MUSLIM STUDENTS OFFERED SCHOLARSHIPS

The President of the Islamic Society of Malaysia, Dr Sanusi, met a delegation from the MCB and expressed his appreciation of the work the MCB was doing for the community. He also outlined his plans for the future development of the Islamic University of Malaysia and offered these facilities for higher education for British Muslim students in the Islamic University. Dr Sanusi also offered a few scholarships to be arranged for Muslim students from Britain. Anyone interested in these scholarships can obtain forms by writing to the MCB.

## AMEER OF QATAR RECEIVES MUSLIM DELEGATION FROM BRITAIN

The Ameer of Qatar assured full support and cooperation to British Muslims and the MCB, when he met a delegation including Mr Iqbal Sacranie, Mr SMT Wasti and Dr J Qureshi whilst attending the OIC Heads of States Summit on 11th November 2000. The Ameer gave the delegation from Britain a warm and generous welcome and expressed his best wishes and prayers for the Muslims of Britain and asked his Minister of Auqaf to meet the delegation to discuss further possibilities of cooperation between Qatar and the Muslim community in Britain.

## PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION FROM MOROCCO MEETS MCB

A group of representatives from the MCB received a Parliamentary delegation from Morocco on the 6th December 2000.

The delegation included Dr Brahim Rashidi MP, Deputy Speaker, Dr Abdelilah Ahmedie MP, Chairman of the Foreign Committee, Mr Mohand Laenser MP, Secretary General of the Mouvement Populaire, Ms Badia Skalli MP, member of the USFP and Mr Abdeli Benkirane MP, Member of the PJD.

The MCB delegation comprised Mr



**MCB International Affairs Committee Meets Moroccan Parliamentary Delegation. From Left to Right: (Standing) Dr Kamal El-Helbawy, an official from the Moroccan Embassy, Dr Brahim Rashidi MP, Deputy Speaker, Mr SMT Wasti, Chair of IAC, Mr Zymer Salihi, a guest, Mr Derek Butler, Dr Ayyub Thakur, (Sitting) A Foreign Office official, Mr Mohand Laenser, Secretary General of the Mouvement Populaire, Ms Badia Skalli, Parliamentary Head of Delegation, Dr Fatma Amer and Foreign Office official.**

SMT Wasti, Dr Fatma Amer, Dr Kamal Helbawy, Dr Ayyub Thakur and Shaykh Zymer. The focus of this meeting was divided between an introduction of the MCB - its inception, history, roles and responsibilities, including a brief outline of each committee or task group's sphere of interest and a reciprocal outline of activities taking place in Morocco within the remit of the members of the delegation as well as the challenges faced by them.

## Families and Women's Support Committee

The establishment of a strong, cohesive society is a goal to which we all aspire. In the attainment of this goal one of the most important building blocks (if not the most important) of the society is that of the family. This unit, in its turn, is hugely affected by the women it contains, be they mothers, sisters or daughters.

It is with these points in mind that the Family and Women's Support Committee was set up by the MCB. The committee exists to serve the whole family, male and female; as without one there cannot be the other. Areas of interest and involvement for the committee are the initiation of active working groups, help lines, seminars, the provision of support networks and facilitating communications and the sharing of good practice between groups and organisations which share the committee's aims.

Your participation in all forms will be much appreciated. If you would like to become involved, please contact Dr Fatma Amer at the MCB office on Tel 020 8903 9024, Email [admin@mcb.org.uk](mailto:admin@mcb.org.uk)

## Health and Medical Committee

The following are just some of the areas in which the Health and Medical Committee have been involved in the last year. The MCB has been in discussion with the following in various capacities:

Department of Health— Minority ethnic smoking cessation services, places of worship, organ transplantation and retention and an initiative looking at the health of young Asians.

Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries-BSE and spread of infection of specific material, labelling of food.

Department of social services - disability issues.

The above simply provides a brief highlight: if you wish to get more information on the work of the Health and Medical Committee please contact Dr Mujahid Qureshi, Chair of the MCB Medical and Health Committee on [admin@mcb.org.uk](mailto:admin@mcb.org.uk).

*If you wish to get involved with any of the MCB Committees (full list below) please contact the MCB Office for a Committee Membership form on 020 8903 9024*

### MCB Committees:

Business and Economics, Community Affairs, Education, Training and Employment, Families and Women's Support, Finance and General Purpose, Health and Medical, International Affairs, Legal Affairs, Media, Membership, Public Affairs, Research and Documentation, Social Policy Welfare and Regeneration, Youth.

## *Islamic Awareness Week - continued from page 1*

major towns and cities all over the UK.

The MCB Secretary General, Yousuf Bhailok, speaking at the launch commended the idea behind IAW saying that "Islam Awareness' is sorely needed in our society where the word Islam has come to be associated with much that is unpleasant and negative. I hope and pray that Islam Awareness Week becomes, in time, a magnificent celebration for the values of faith and family, honesty and hard work, which lie at the heart of Islam."

Also at the launch were the three Muslim members of the House of Lords, Lord Ahmed, Lord Patel and Baroness Uddin and Mohammed Sarwar, the only Muslim MP. The launch event was also addressed by William Hague, leader of the Conservative party, Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, and Simon Hughes, the London and Home affairs spokesperson for the Liberal-Democrat party. The audience consisted of MPs, Peers, journalists, academics and representatives of other important institutions such as the Civil Service, Police Service and the BBC.

In London the IAW week coincided with the launch of the smoke-free Ramadan campaign organised jointly by Muslim organisations and the Department of Health, and the Remembrance Day service at which the Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain, representing the Muslim community, was invited to take part for the first time.

## *Electing to Listen - continued from page 1*

individuals, the document addresses areas ranging from civil society, education, health, employment and foreign affairs. Key policy priorities include legislation banning religious discrimination, the need for greater representation in public life, and more and better-targeted measures to tackle social exclusion, the importance of faith identity and the need for a principled and consistent approach to international affairs.

In keeping with MCB's ethos of 'seeking the common good,' the document is placed firmly in the context of a multi-faith, multi-cultural Britain. It recognises that although the needs and aspirations of Muslims are often similar to those of their fellow citizens, the views of Muslims and other faith and ethnic minorities often go unheard. Yousuf Bhailok stressed that "the Muslim community has pressing needs that must be addressed. This is our main concern and we believe this must be sought by serving and sharing in the common good of society as a whole."

With a general election expected by many in May 2001 there is increasing focus on Britain's 1.5 million Muslims whose vote can influence the outcome of the results in a number of marginal seats. The Chair of the Public Affairs committee Mohibur Rahman explained the MCB's election strategy. "*Electing to Listen* is about getting our views across to the right people at the right time before the manifestos

are finalised. But this is just the beginning. The roundtable discussions are important in gathering feedback and promoting our issues. Over the next few months we will widen our focus on the Muslim community itself." A series of awareness campaigns is being planned aimed at ensuring that Muslims cast their vote on polling day knowing where the parties stand on key issues.

## Ph.D Studentship

The MCB and the Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship, University of Bristol, are collaborating on a research project on the theme of statistical data on the British Muslim community. The project qualifies for an ESRC Collaborative (CASE) studentship. Potential candidates for this studentship should in the first instance check the eligibility requirements outlined in the ESRC web site (<http://www.esrc.ac.uk>).

Further information on the application process can be obtained from the MCB web site.

## MCB on the Net

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

### Good Practice Projects

There is so much good work going on in the Muslim Community - local people carrying out the vital, grass roots work. Often this work and these people are known only to those locally and those that they help. This work is an inspiration to us all and the MCB would like to know more. So, do you know of any good practice projects going on near you? We would like to hear about them. Please contact the MCB by e-mail or by telephone.

### 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 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.

Fadi Itani,

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

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

## SPONSOR

MCB acknowledges with gratitude the sponsorship of this newsletter by **Muslim Aid**.



Whoever saved a life it would be as if he saved the life of humanity' Quran 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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