

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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Weekly Updates on Reports, Committees and Events: **Issue 35**

Reports and Events Update

- Southampton Meeting
- Remembrance Service
- TELCO March
- St Ethelburga's Centre
- Meeting with Church of England Representatives
- Islam Awareness Week
- Radio Ramadans
- Give Safely during Ramadan
- Building Bridges
- International Conference on Terrorism, Baku, Azerbaijan
- Consultancy Services

Committees Update

- Media Committee
- Europe & International Affairs Committee
- Research & Documentation Committee
- Health & Medical Committee

New on the MCB Website

The Quest for Sanity Reviews

Events

Committee Contacts

Reports and Events Update

Southampton Meeting

Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary General of the MCB, attended the Annual General Meeting of the Southampton Medina Mosque on Friday 18 October. The Secretary General gave a key note speech emphasising the importance of unity and the need for the close community of Southampton to work together. He was very pleased with the manner in which the AGM was conducted and the subsequent elections that took place. He met a number of committee members and a number of members of the community.

Remembrance Service

On Sunday 10 November, Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary General of the MCB, and Muhammad Abdul Bari, Deputy Secretary General attended the Remembrance Sunday Ceremony at the Cenotaph. This was followed by a reception in the Locarno Room at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office where they had the opportunity to meet the Prime Minister, Leaders of the Opposition, Cabinet Ministers, faith leaders and Heads of Diplomatic Missions.

TELCO March

Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari and Sher Khan, along with other MCB representatives, attended a march organised on 12 November by The East London Communities Organisation (TELCO). TELCO is an organisation which is a coalition of the TUC and a number of other faith groups who are campaigning for a living wage.

St Ethelburga's Centre

On 13 November, Iqbal Sacranie, attended the reception to mark the opening of the St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation & Peace in Bishopsgate, London. The Church of St Ethelburga's has been refurbished to provide a well located seminar and meeting facility for the use of groups engaged in mediating and facilitating the resolution of conflict. The reception was also attended by HRH the Prince of Wales and the Bishop of London.

Meeting with CTIB

On Thursday 14 November, representatives of the Muslim Council of Britain, including Iqbal Sacranie, Dr Abdul Bari, Daud Abdullah and Mahmud Al-Rashid, met with representatives of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTIBI) namely Rev Michael Ipgrave, Inter-Faith Relations Advisor, The Church of England, Archbishops' Council; Baroness Kathleen Richardson; Paul Renshaw, Coordinating Secretary for International Affairs and David Goodbourn, General Secretary of CTIBI. The meeting discussed the Christian Muslim perspective on the present crisis in Iraq.

Islam Awareness Week

The annual 'Islam Awareness Week' organised by MCB affiliate Islamic Society of Britain (ISB) was launched this year on 4 November at the House of Commons which was attended by Dr Abdul Bari, the Deputy Secretary General who gave a speech, and other key members of the MCB. The main event of the week took place on Thursday 7 November, which saw a day of abstention, "Fasting to Remember", by Muslims and non-Muslims alike, to raise money for charities at a local and national level. Participants were encouraged to donate to local and national charities via the IAW web site, thus sharing in Ramadan's spirit of fasting and helping others. All monies raised will benefit local, national and international charitable causes.

"It (fasting) is a dimension rarely given airtime," says Sher Khan, Chair of MCB Public Affairs Committee and also the co-ordinator of Islam Awareness Week, "and people can have a very unrepresentative idea of what the faith is all about. We thought that this would be an opportunity to connect with us in a real way. We hope for recognition and that people see that there is common ground between all the faiths."

Among the many events of Islam Awareness Week were community events such as the break fast dinners at the House of Commons attended by a number of MCB Central Working Committee members and MPs and a school in Leicestershire which was attended by the deputy mayor and advisor to the Bishop of Leicester. A fund-raising dinner was also held in the heart of Manchester's celebrated curry mile to coincide with the Nationwide Sponsored Fast on 7th November. " This is a key opportunity for all of the diverse communities in Manchester to come together for a worthwhile cause, whilst simultaneously building bridges that will enable us all to understand each other better. These links will serve Manchester and Britain well, from our diversity will come our great strength," said Dr. Khalid Anees, Manchester Branch President of the MCB Affiliate, Islamic Society of Britain.

Hundreds of multicoloured balloons were released in Manchester to represent the multicultural nature of the city, and a number of nurses decided to fast to raise money for local hospitals. In Manchester and Birmingham, the week was launched with an announcement by a traditional town crier.

Radio Ramadans

Special radio stations are broadcasting during Ramadan, using temporary licences. A number of ISB radio Ramadan's are now available, for example, Radio Ramadan Glasgow is now live on the internet: <http://81.98.133.36/radio/isb.htm>

There is an opportunity to meet local Islamic activists and take part in community work by providing help to your local Radio Ramadan stations. You could help with research material, preparing adverts or on-air programs. Please contact your nearest Radio Ramadan station directly: The contact details are as follows:

Luton 87.9 FM, Tel: 01582 733 383, Email: Luton@radioramadhan.com

Glasgow 105.4 FM, Tel: 0141 401 1054, Email: Glasgow@radioramadhan.com

Birmingham 87.7 FM, Tel: 0121 772 7767, Email: Birmingham@radioramadhan.com

East London 87.7 FM (Radio Ummah), Tel: 0208 548 4647, Email: info@radioummah.com

Give Safely during Ramadan

Ramadan is one of the most important periods in the Muslim calendar and part of this includes generosity to others. Many of us will decide it's the right time to donate money to charity. We all want to do our bit to help, and there are thousands of good causes out there, but not everyone has the right motives in mind. The Charity Commission, responsible for the statutory regulation of charities in England and Wales, has joined forces with various organisations across the country to promote its Safer Giving campaign which aim is to raise public awareness about safe ways to donate to charity and to stamp out fraudulent collections which have nothing to do with genuine good cause.

Simon Gillespie, Director of Operations at the Charity Commission, said: "Charity fraud is rare. There are over 185,000 charities in England and Wales doing an excellent job and meeting real needs, but sadly there are cheats who prey on the generosity of people and use this as an opportunity to line their own pockets. As the charity watchdog we aim to give the public confidence in the integrity of charity and protect the reputation of genuine charities."

Sher Khan, Chair of MCB Public Affairs Committee said: "It is very important that when you choose your charity you check your money really is going to those most in need. We welcome The Charity Commission's guidelines as a helpful tool for Muslims donating to charity during Ramadan."

Genuine charity collectors can be assessed by checking whether they have valid local authority/police licences, display ID authentic badges, have sealed collection containers with the Charity's Registration number and name on it, or have letters or receipts from charities stating that legally a proportion of proceeds will go the charity stated.

If you have any doubts, call the Charity Commission Helpline on 0870 333 0123, email: feedback@charitycommission.gov.uk, or visit their website: www.charitycommission.gov.uk

Building Bridges

On Sunday 10th November, the Council of European Jamaats (COEJ) in consultation with the World Federation of the Khoja Shia Ithna'asheri Muslim Community (KSIMC) and the Regeneration Committee of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) held a meeting entitled "Building bridges with other communities" at the Husaini Islamic Centre, Stanmore.

The meeting, chaired by Dr Akber Mohamedali, Vice Chair of the MCB Finance & General Purpose Committee, served to raise awareness about the MCB, the work of the regeneration Committee of

the MCB and the value and need for Muslim organizations to build bridges with other Muslim and non-Muslim organisations. Ways to develop thinking and apply knowledge on how Jamaats and institutions should undertake organisational development (OD) to be able to seek resources from non-Muslim sources were debated.

Background information on the Khoja community was given by Sibtain Panjwani and the History of Jamaats in the UK was addressed by Mahmood Hooda. Joseph Ahmed Dobson, Chair of the MCB Renewal & Regeneration Committee spoke on how organisational development and capacity building is able to attract outside resources and illustrated this with case studies. This was followed by a brainstorming session on how to attract resources from outside the community.

International Conference on Terrorism, Baku, Azerbaijan

MCB member Dr Abduljalil Sajid attended an international conference in Baku, Azerbaijan between 9 to 12 October 2002 on behalf of the FCO. At the conference a message from Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary General of the MCB was circulated to the 250 official UN delegates and 500 NGO's who attended the conference as observers. The message confirmed the MCB's stance on terrorism: "The Muslim Council of Britain condemns violence and terror of all kinds, as there is no justification for senseless and extra judicial killing. Terrorism is an evil and destructive phenomenon that inflicts pain and suffering on defenceless people. Those who planned and perpetrated those atrocities, regardless of their religious, ideological or political beliefs, stand outside the pale of human values. Islam commands us to be just and wrong no one."

"To eradicate terrorism it is imperative that we address the conditions that can give rise it. To combat terrorism effectively we need a united front against terror. Building bridges between nations and peoples must be an integral part of that strategy. Sadly, the world is instead being pushed towards more violence and division. Instead of vengeance we need justice and instead of rhetoric we need reason. We must deny terrorists the opportunities to exploit the social, economic and political problems that continue to blight our world."

A compelling speech made by Dr Sajid at the conference emphasised that: " Terrorism is fuelled by the actions of exclusivist regimes that privilege some and deny basic rights to others. Rogue governments that use state security agencies and excessive force to silence critics and political opposition fuel it. To be effective in fighting terrorism we must dry the swamps of abuse and injustice that breed radicalism all over the world."

The text of Dr Abduljalil Sajid's speech is available on the MCB web site (See Media section - Speeches).

Consultancy Services

Egal Community Consultants, on behalf of the MCB, are conducting seminars and offering on-site visits to assist Muslim-focused organisations in submitting funding proposals to local councils or

Central Government. The consultancy will help communities, including mosques and charity organisations, become more involved in local projects to improve their area in an effective, efficient and responsive way. Egal Community Consultants will visit and identify the strengths and weaknesses of an organisation and provide a constructive written report with suggestions on how to improve organisational development, governance, management, training and development alongside future plans. For further information, please refer to the MCB Website <http://www.mcb.org.uk>

Committees Update

Media Committee

Charter 88 Seminar

Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary of the Media Committee, represented the MCB as a panellist at a Charter 88 Seminar on 'Islam and Tolerance' at Imperial College, University of London on Saturday 2 November 2002. The seminar focused on the link between religion and the state and addressed the question of whether faith schools enhance cultural roots and identities or promote social segregation. Additionally, following the terrorist attacks on September 11th 2001 the way that the government and the media have portrayed both Islam and British Muslims was tackled.

Islam & The West

Inayat Bunglawala spoke on "Islam & The West" at the final seminar of Camden Council's Islam Awareness Week on Tuesday 12th November 2002. The audience included Camden's Mayor, various local councillors and members of the public.

Camden Council is the first-ever borough that has actively taken part in the Islam Awareness Week and they produced a beautiful brochure to commemorate IAW. They also put together an exhibition about Islam which will be touring the London borough's various library's in the coming months.

Europe & International Affairs Committee

Committee Meeting

On 31 October, the Europe & International Affairs Committee (EIAC) held a meeting chaired by Mahmud Al-Rashid. The remit was discussed and responsibilities were allocated during the meeting. The EIAC are currently looking for people to join the committee, particularly those with administrative and secretarial support skills. For further information please contact the MCB Office.

Research & Documentation Committee

Austrian Delegation

Dr Aziz Sheikh, Chair of the Research & Documentation Committee led a discussion on British Muslims attended by a delegation comprising twenty Christians and Muslims visiting London from Austria. The meeting was held at the London Interfaith Centre on 3 November 2002.

Ramadan Timetable

ReDoc has provided a compilation of Ramadan timings to The Guardian newspaper. These are published daily.

Health & Medical Committee

Update on Risk of BSE Infected Meat

Dr A Majid Katme, spokesman on Halal Meat and Food for the Muslim Council of Britain, attended a meeting arranged by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) on Saturday 2 November 2002.

The meeting was organised to provide updates on the BSE and Sheep Stakeholders' Report, released in May 2002. Sir John Krebs, FSA spokesman, confirmed that although no traces of BSE have been found in sheep, the theoretical risk still exists. Recommendation to remove intestine and unnatural feed from animal feed have been complied with since 1996, however the FSA advises against the consumption of a number of Specific Risk Materials with the likelihood of infection from BSE. These materials include the spinal cord, brain, head, eyes, spleen, tonsils and intestine. Furthermore, the FSA recommends that in order to avoid the risk of BSE, lamb under the age of 12 months be consumed rather than mutton.

Muslims should be vigilant as statistics show that although they represent about 5% of the population, they consume more than 20% of the sheep on the market. Dr Katme urges that as Ramadan has just started, all Muslims should check that their meat has been slayed according to Islamic Sharia (Dhabh) and is Halal where maximum bleeding out has occurred as blood is harmful to health. A popular Hadith states "Avoid that which is doubtful over that which is not doubtful....", Tirmidhi/Nasa'i. For further information please contact Dr Katme on 07944 240 622.

Religious Law & Animal Slaughter

Dr A Majid Katme wrote to the Times on 12 November 2002 regarding a letter from the Director General of The Board of Deputies of British Jews. He endorsed the religious Jewish view regarding animal slaughter and outlined the Islamic direct method for slaying animals for food: "It should be carried out safely, comfortably and without pain to the animal using a very sharp smooth knife or blade to cut in the right anatomical site in the neck of the animal. The cut should be made to the major blood vessels: carotids and jugulars, which painlessly anaesthetises by causing rapid loss of blood from the brain." His letter went on to state that the method of stunning was inhumane as it effectively kills the animal twice. He therefore appealed that all animals should be slayed by the Direct Method.

New on the MCB Website

- The latest hardcopy newsletter is now downloadable as a pdf file - see Newsletters section.
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The Quest for Sanity

Letters of Appreciation (Cont'd)

I would like to congratulate MCB on the production of this timely and nicely produced book. May

Allah reward all your efforts.

Dr Anas Al-Shaikh-Ali, Chairman, Association of Muslim Social Scientists UK

I...commend the efforts you are exerting in correcting the stereotype perceptions which link Islam and Muslims with terrorism. I hope that these efforts and the efforts exerted by other organizations will help in building up understanding, tolerance and coexistence among the various peoples and religions in the world.

Mohamed Ghemari, Director of External Relations & Cooperation, Islamic Educational Science and Cultural Organization (ISESCO)

I wish to commend you and MCB on taking this initiative which will benefit a cross section of people - leaders, opinion makers, legislatures, academicians and ordinary souls. Congratulations.

Haji Salim Hashim, High Commissioner for Malaysia, London

It is a really helpful and well thought-out contribution to enlightened opinion and I hope it does some good..I'd like to see some more on the contribution of Islam to Western Civilisation, science, medicine, art...

Baroness J Whitaker, House of Lords

...through your website I have familiarised myself with your laudable activities in the service of Islam and Muslims in such a great country as Britain, and your innovative approach, in keeping with the contemporary spirit and challenges. [Also] the book in itself with its extensive information, constitutes solid, documented proof of the injustices suffered by Muslims worldwide as a result of the hostile campaigns led against Islam after September 11, 2001. It also contains a defence of the Islamic faith's lofty status and tolerant stand, sending a clear message to the West and urging an end to the wave of animosity and hatred directed against a community that forms one-fifth of the human population....I [also] congratulate you on your book with its wisely selected topics such as to attract a broad audience and disseminate accurate and genuine information on our noble faith.

Dr Abdelouahed Belkeziz, Secretary General, Organisation of the Islamic Conference (translated from the Arabic)

I have gone through the book, which is easy in reading because it deals with contemporary history and analyses a very complex situation, in a manner which is most beneficial for both sides i.e. Muslims and non-Muslims. You have done a great service to present the Muslim community's point of view in a very effective manner. Kindly accept my congratulations for this successful effort.

Raja Muhammad Zafarul Haq, Secretary General, World Muslim Congress, Islamabad

To order copies of The Quest For Sanity (£12.75 each, plus P&P) please contact the MCB on 0208 903 9650.

Events

Event: **Muslims in Britain: Action Towards Equality**

Date: 27th November 2002

Time: 5.30 to 7.30 pm

Venue: House of Commons Committee Room 12, Westminster, London SW1A 0AA

Contact: Graham Fox, Marketing and Publicity Officer, Minority Rights Group International, 379 Brixton Road,

London, SW9 7DE. Email: graham.fox@mrgmail.org tel: 020 7978 9498 x205 fax: 020 7738 6265

Information: A panel debate on the situation of Muslims in Britain which is one of the most pressing issues facing

British society today. Issues of concern to be addressed by this debate include: a rise in the number of

attacks on Muslims in Britain, increasing threats to civil liberties in the name of security measures, British

foreign policy and its impact on Muslims in Britain, discrimination in employment, education, housing and

the criminal justice system, Islamophobia in the media. A panel of experts will include: Humayun Ansari -

Author of the MRG report 'Muslims in Britain' and Director of the Centre for Ethnic Minority Studies,

University of London, Dr. Zaki Badawi - Principal - The Muslim College, Ealing, Sajidah Chaudhary -

Director, Slough Race Equality Council, Mark Lattimer (Chair) - Director of Minority Rights Group

International, Mohammad Sarwar MP

**The time of pilgrimage is due to end next week.
Eid Mubarak to our newsletter readers**

