

# THE MUSLIM COUNCIL OF BRITAIN

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

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## Muslim Council of Britain Weekly E-Newsletter

*28 Shawwal 1423 AH Thursday 02 January 2003*

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### Weekly Updates on Reports, Committees and Events: Issue 37

#### Reports and Events Update

- Eid receptions
- The Richard Dimbleby Lecture
- MCB Cabinet Meeting
- Meeting with PM's Assistant Political Secretary
- London Muslim Coalition Meeting
- Church of England and Prison Reform Trust Meeting
- Meeting with Sally Keeble MP
- British Hajj Advisory Group meeting
- Interfaith Network meeting
- FCO Reception
- Initiative by Muslim Peer Commended
- MIHE Graduation Ceremony

#### Committees Update

- Media Committee (MC)
- Finance and General Purpose (FGPC)
- Public Affairs (PA)
- Research & Documentation Committee (ReDoc)
- Social Affairs Committee (SAC)
- Women & Family Affairs Committee (WFAC)

#### New on the MCB Website

#### The Quest for Sanity Reviews

#### Events

#### Committee Contacts



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## **Reports and Events Update**

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### **Eid Receptions**

#### **Brunei Eid Reception**

The MCB Secretary General Iqbal Sacranie attended an Eid reception hosted by HE the High Commissioner for Brunei Darussalam and Mrs Pengiran Haji Yunus at the Brunei High Commission on Saturday 7 December.

#### **GLA Eid reception**

The Mayor of London hosted an Eid reception for the Muslim community at City Hall on Tuesday 10 December. Members of the MCB and its affiliate organisations including Dr Abdul Bari, MCB Deputy Secretary General; Dr Abdul Raheem Khan, Vice Chair of the MCB Membership Committee and Tanzeem Wasti, Chair of the MCB London Task Group attended the event. Dr Abdul Bari spoke on behalf of the Muslims thanking the GLA for organising this function.

#### **Eid Reception at Lancaster House**

Baroness Amos hosted an Eid reception at Lancaster House on Thursday 12 December for representatives of the British Muslim community. The MCB was represented by Iqbal Sacranie, Mahmud Al-Rashid, Chair of the Europe and International Affairs Committee; Tanzeem Wasti, Chair of the London Task Group, Sher Khan, Chair of the Public Affairs Committee and a number of other members from the Central Working Committee in their individual capacities. The Baroness Amos appreciated the important role played by British Muslims in the country as well as the work of the Muslim Council of Britain.

#### **House of Lords Eid Dinner**

The MCB Secretary General was invited to attend an Eid dinner at the House of Lords at the invitation of Lord Ahmed of Rotherham on Thursday 17 December at which The Rt. Hon. Don McKinnon, Secretary General of the Commonwealth, was the guest of honour. The MCB's Constitutional Advisor, Mr Khurshid Drabu was also invited.

#### **House of Commons Eid Reception**

Ernie Ross MP welcomed over 200 Muslim guests at a reception in the House of Commons on 18 December, jointly organised by the MCB, Union of Muslim Organisations and the Al-Khoie Foundation. In their speeches, Prime Minister Tony Blair and Foreign Secretary Jack Straw conveyed Eid greetings to the community and referred to the importance of shared religious values in bringing communities in Britain together.

Speakers at the event included Dr Aziz Pasha of the UMO; Dr Zaki Badawi of the Muslim College; Maulana Syed Mustafa Qazvini of Al-Khoie Foundation and the MCB Secretary General Iqbal Sacranie. The Secretary General and Dr Pasha conveyed British Muslims' disquiet and opposition to a war against Iraq. The MCB's position was that "justice at both home and abroad is

what is required...not just because we ask for it. But because it is right in itself."

The MCB Secretary General also stated that "the brutal occupation of Palestine continues unabated...but more than that, we're on the verge of creating even more misery and injustice by embarking on an immoral and unjustified war against Iraq. Our government must be aware that it is not only the Muslim community in the UK and worldwide who oppose military attack on Iraq but, as all the polls show, the vast majority of the British public share our serious concerns that it is the innocent civilian population of Iraq who would suffer loss".

### **The Richard Dimbleby Lecture**

Secretary General Iqbal Sacranie was invited to the recording of the 27<sup>th</sup> Richard Dimbleby Lecture delivered by the Mt. Rev. Dr Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, on 'Nations, Markets and Morals' on Wednesday 18 December.

In his lecture, Dr Williams said "We are no longer confident of educating children in a tradition. Schools can't do the job of a whole society, sustaining a 'tradition' on behalf of the whole community, an accepted set of perspectives on human priorities and relationships, a feel for the conventions of common life; they can do a certain amount of damage limitation in the context of a rootless social environment, but cannot of themselves sustain a culture that can command loyalty outside the school gates." and argued that in the face of such challenges, religion had a fundamental role to play in providing a wider context and setting for our understanding of who we were as individuals and communities.

### **MCB Cabinet Meeting**

The MCB Cabinet met on Wednesday 18 December 2002 to discuss a range of issues. The Chairs presented reports of the work carried out since the last CWC meeting.

### **Meeting with PM's Assistant Political Secretary**

A delegation from the Muslim Council of Britain which included Iqbal Sacranie; Daud Abdullah, MCB Assistant Secretary General; Iqbal Asaria, Chair of the Business and Economics committee; Tanzeem Wasti, Vice Chair of Europe and International Affairs committee; Basil Mustafa and Najwa Abdulwahab met with the Prime Minister's Assistant Political Secretary Razi Rahman on Thursday 12 December.

The delegation discussed a number of issues affecting the Muslim community including its concerns regarding a possible war against Iraq, the posting of Muslim candidates in safe seats in elections to increase the community's representation in parliament, legislation on religious discrimination and the use of inflammatory language in the media.

### **London Muslim Coalition Meeting**

A meeting of the London Muslim Coalition was convened on 30 December under the chairmanship of Kumar Murshid, Member of the Mayor's Advisory Cabinet with responsibility for regeneration. The meeting was attended by MCB representative Dr Abdul Raheem Khan and discussed the launch of the London Muslim Coalition, a group established after 11 September to ensure closer consultation between the Mayor of London and the Muslim community. It was

decided that the launch date should be postponed until February 2003. Further details will be provided at a later date.

### **Church of England and Prison Reform Trust Meeting**

On 4 December 2002 an event was organised jointly by the Prison Reform Trust and Church of England Board of Social Responsibility to launch the collection of essays titled 'The Future of Criminal Justice.' It was held at Church House, London and was chaired by the Archbishop Dr Rowan Williams and followed by a seminar discussing the future of criminal justice focussing on prison reforms and sentencing. Khalid Sofi, Secretary of the MCB Legal Affairs Committee participated in the deliberations.

### **British Hajj Advisory Group meeting**

The British Hajj Advisory Group met on Tuesday 10 December at the House of Lords. The MCB was represented by Dr Shuja Shafi, Chair of the Health & Medical Committee.

### **Interfaith Network meeting**

On 12 December 2002 an Interfaith Network meeting took place which Dr Abdul Raheem Khan, Vice Chair of MCB Membership Committee attended, representing the MCB. The main item for discussion was the formation of a council to discuss, address and action specific interfaith problems. The meeting also discussed the law against religious discrimination.

### **FCO Reception**

To mark International Human Rights Day and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office open day, Mahmud al-Rashid attended a reception and preview of the 'My Rights, Your Rights, Human Rights' exhibition at the invitation of the FCO Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Bill Rammell.

### **Muslim News Awards**

On 11 December 2002, the Muslim News hosted its third annual Awards for Excellence at The London Marriott Hotel to honour the efforts and achievements of Britain's 2.5 million Muslim community as well as those of other faiths, whilst also identifying role models for others to emulate with over 550 guests in attendance. HRH The Prince of Wales was the Guest of Honour and presented a number of awards stating: "The Muslims of this country continue to be an extraordinary asset to this country. I am delighted that with these awards, now in their third year, the contribution of the community's many unsung heroes and heroines is being properly recognised and acknowledged."

Winners included veteran Scottish councillor and community activist Bashir Mann JP CBE who was awarded the Alija Izetbegovic award for good citizenship. He made history in Scotland by becoming the first Muslim JP as well as the first Muslim councillor.

### **Initiative by Muslim Peer Commended**

The MCB welcomes Lord Ahmed of Rotherham's question in the House of Lords on 16

December on the use of the term "Islamic terrorist" in statements by government and the public services. Muslim organisations, including the MCB, have repeatedly had to point out that 'Islamic' and 'terrorist' were contradictory and incompatible.

In response, to Lord Ahmed's question, Minister for Trade Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean replied: "My Lords, Her Majesty's Government do not believe that the term 'Islamic terrorist' is appropriate. We should not allow any credibility to the claims of some terrorists that they are motivated by religious conviction. They must know, as we do, that Islam is a faith of peace. As many leaders, political and religious, have made clear, terrorism is an anathema to Islamic faith and practice."

'Islamic terrorist' is being loosely applied by those who should know better to describe any individual or organisation carrying out acts of terror and happening to be of Muslim faith. The MCB was pleased to note the prompt retraction by the Metropolitan Police in December 1999 in its use of this terminology.

## **MIHE Graduation Ceremony**

An MA degree graduation ceremony was conducted on 9 December at The Markfield Institute of Higher Education (MIHE), the British Muslim community's premier academic centre. The Institute, sponsored by MCB affiliate The Islamic Foundation, Leicester, awarded the degrees in Islamic Studies to 11 of its full-time students.

Professor Khurshid Ahmad Director of MIHE addressing the graduates, guests and faculty, acknowledged the support the Institute had received from the University of Portsmouth, Loughborough University and other institutions. He observed how the first Qur'anic revelation (in Surah al-Alaq) invoked aspects of the physical world, biological truths and the realm of instruments and technology, thus providing Muslims with a concept of knowledge that integrated the material and spiritual realities.

Referring to the Prophet's Ascension (Me'raj) and also quoting the Persian scholar Mulla Sadra, Professor Khurshid noted that man's quest was not only the passage to the Creator, but also of then 'returning' to serve society - this is how prophets differed from mystics. His inspiring address also called on the graduates to fulfil their social responsibilities - "the concept of Islamic studies is to cultivate and deepen in you a vision to serve humanity" - and to strive towards creating a society based on justice. At a time when there is talk of the clash of civilisations, they should be striving for a cross-fertilisation of cultures

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## **Committees Update**

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### **Media Committee (MC)**

#### **Letter to the Observer**

On 8 December, the Secretary of the Media Committee wrote to the Editor of the Observer regarding the issue of immigration raised in an article by Burhan Wazir "Long nights, low pay and no play" which showed how many immigrants work long and hard hours for meagre wages and still somehow manage to send remittances back home to help their families. The letter thanked the Observer for "debunk(ing) many of the lazy myths propagated by the opponents of immigration."

### **Letter to the BBC**

On 9 December, Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary of the MCB Media Committee, wrote to the BBC Editor Mark Damazer regarding BBC coverage of the Intifada in Palestine. He raised the concerns that the cumulative tally of Israelis and Palestinians killed are no longer included in reports and further that reporters should clarify whether they are reporting from occupied Jerusalem or not to prevent the implied recognition of "Israel's illegal occupation and expropriation of Palestinian lands." and thereby remove any possible misconceptions.

In response, Mr Damazer stated that they would continue to mention numbers of dead "from time to time" but would not expect to incorporate the details in short reports. He also stated that it was not BBC house style to sign off their pieces with the terms 'Arab East Jerusalem' or 'Occupied Jerusalem' but agreed with the relevance of the fact that "Israel's claim to sovereignty over all of Jerusalem is not recognised by an overwhelming majority of nations."

### **Radio 4 Interview**

Inayat Bunglawala appeared on Radio 4's Sunday programme on 22 December to answer questions raised by Patrick Sookdeo's new campaign about apostates from Islam. The interview can be listened to on the BBC website

at [http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/tv\\_radio/sunday/archive\\_dec02.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/tv_radio/sunday/archive_dec02.shtml).

### **Finance and General Purpose (FGPC)**

The FGPC held a meeting on Tuesday December 10<sup>th</sup> at the Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre.

### **Public Affairs (PA)**

#### **Liberal Democrats Meeting**

The Chair of the Public Affairs Committee Sher Khan attended the Ethnic Minorities Liberal Democrats' Annual Dinner on Friday December 13<sup>th</sup> at Finsbury Leisure Centre, London EC1. Also in attendance were the Rt. Hon. Charles Kennedy, Simon Hughes, Lord Avebury, Baroness Shirley Williams (Leader of House of Lords Group) and Diana Wallis (Leader of the UK Liberal Democrats in the European Parliament). The dinner presented an opportunity to meet, brainstorm and discuss issues facing the Muslim community in Britain with senior members of the Liberal Democrats such as faith schools and religious discrimination.

### **Research & Documentation Committee (ReDoc)**

#### **School Workshops**

Dr Aziz Sheikh led two workshops (each with approximately 30 GCSE students participating) on 'Jihad' at the Plashett Grove School's 'Peace and War' event on Friday 20 December.

#### **Advances in Paediatrics**

Professor AR Gatrad (Manor Hospital, Walsall) and Dr Aziz Sheikh have had a chapter on 'Muslim Birth Customs' published in 'Recent Advances in Paediatrics 20', published by the Royal Society of Medicine. Copies of the book are available online

at <http://www.rsm.ac.uk/pub/bkdavid2.htm>

### **Social Affairs Committee (SAC)**

#### **Prisoners' Welfare**

Dr Abdul Raheem Khan, representing the MCB Social Affairs Committee (SAC), accompanied by Salah El-Hassan, General Secretary of the National Council for the Welfare of Muslim Prisoners (NCWMP) visited Woodhill Prison, Milton Keynes and Broadmoor Prison, Reading on 2 and 24 December respectively.

They met with a number of prisoners detained under the Terrorism Act and noted the marked frustration that no charges have yet been brought against the detainees. Their families are suffering without the heads of their families. They were also made aware of problems with the food arrangements and visiting privileges allowed to the detainees. These concerns were discussed with the Prison Governors and other officials at Woodhill Prison during a meeting which presented the opportunity to air prisoner's grievances and allowed a number of problems to be addressed.

## **Women & Family Affairs Committee (WFAC)**

### **Women's Relief Iftar**

On 25 November 2002, Reefat Drabu, Chair of the Women & Family Affairs Committee (WFAC) attended an Iftar dinner held by Women's Relief at Whitechapel. She was extremely impressed by the enthusiasm and dedication of the young sisters and noted that the level of co-operation that they had in place between the local Imam and the organisation is worth replicating in other Mosques.

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## **New on the MCB Website**

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- Committees Section updates
  - Text of speech delivered by Iqbal Sacranie at the House of Parliament Eid Reception
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## **The Quest for Sanity**

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### **Letters of Appreciation (Cont'd)**

*Let me commend you for the timing of this publication. Since the unfortunate and senseless events of September 11 our Great Religion has been the focus of attention, unfortunately not all has been positive. The need for genuine dialogue and understanding between religious communities became imperative and urgent. With the publication of this book it is my fervent hope that there will be a better understanding and appreciation of the true values of Islam not only by non-Muslims but Muslims alike. Please count on my support at all times.*

Sulaiman Tejan-Jalloh, High Commissioner, Sierra Leone High Commission, London

*This publication is indeed a most timely one and merits a wide readership.*

Isabel Rauscher, Minister, Austrian Embassy, London



*The book is very informative and I am sure it would certainly help towards understanding the greatness of Islam and to put an end to the ignorant and ignoble ideas that are prevalent.*

HO Gumbo Kibelloh, High Commissioner, Tanzania High Commission, London

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*I fully share your call for genuine dialogue and understanding between communities and nations, and commitment to the values you enunciated in your message.*

William S Farish, Ambassador, Embassy of the United States of America, London

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*I found the book fascinating reading. I was unable to put it down until I had leafed through it.*

Faisz Musthapha, PC, High Commissioner, High Commission for the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, London

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For the full listing of reviews please see the MCB website

To order copies of The Quest For Sanity (£12.75 each, plus P&P) please contact the MCB on 0208 903 9650 or order online at [www.mcb.org.uk/books](http://www.mcb.org.uk/books)

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## Events

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Event: **Inter-religious Insight journal launch**

Date: 8 January 2003

Held By: World Congress of Faiths

Venue: St-Martin's in the Field, London WC2

Contact: Dr Abdur Raheem Khan

Information: The World Congress of Faiths will be launching its new journal Inter-religious Insight: a journal of Dialogue and Engagement. For further information contact the MCB

Office.

Event: **Visions of Palestine**

Date: 9 January 2003

Held By: Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding (CAABU)

Venue: Royal Geographic Society, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7

Contact: Chris Doyle, Director, CAABU – 020 7832 1310

Information: An evening of readings and music to raise funds for educational and medical charities

working in the Occupied Territories. The evening will feature readings by Ghada Karmi,

William Dalrymple and Adela Laidi.

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## Committee Contacts

MCB Committee	Position	Name
<b>Media</b>	Chair	Mr Iqbal Sacranie
	Secretary	Mr Inayat Bunglawala
<b>Research &amp; Documentation</b>	Chair	Dr Aziz Sheikh
	Vice Chair	Ms Shabana Khan
	Secretary	Dr Jamil Sherif
<b>Finance &amp; General Purpose Committee</b>	Vice Chair	Dr Akber Mohamedali
	Secretary	Mr Jamil Versi
<b>Legal Affairs Committee</b>	Vice Chair	Mr Suleman Osman
	Secretary	Mr Khalid Sofi
<b>Membership Committee</b>	Chair	Mr Ahmed Sheikh Mohamed
	Vice Chair	Dr Abdul Raheem Khan
	Secretary	Mr Mohammed Aslam Ijaz
<b>Social Affairs Committee</b>	Chair	Ms Shiban Akbar
	Vice Chair	Ms Neelam Farzana
	Secretary	Mr Babak Zadeh Amin
<b>Health &amp; Medical Issues Committee</b>	Chair	Dr Shuja Shafi
	Vice Chair	Dr Abdullah Shehu
<b>Europe &amp; International Affairs Committee</b>	Chair	Mr Mahmud Al-Rashid
	Vice Chair	Mr Tanzeem Wasti
	Secretary	Mr Zymer Salihi

<b>Youth &amp; Sports Committee</b>	Chair	Mr Hussein Shefaar
	Vice Chair	Ms Basma El-Shayaaal
	Secretary	Ms Raihana Naseem
<b>Public Affairs Committee</b>	Chair	Mr Sher Khan
<b>Education / Training &amp; Employment Committee</b>	Chair	Mrs Karima Mustafa
	Vice Chair	Mr Nawazish Bokhari
	Secretary	Mr Yusuf Hussein
<b>Mosques &amp; Community Affairs Committee</b>	Chair	Mr Ibrahim Mogra
	Vice Chair	Mr Ayyub Laher
<b>Business &amp; Economics Committee</b>	Chair	Mr Iqbal Asaria
<b>Women &amp; Family Affairs Committee</b>	Chair	Dr Reefat Drabu
<b>Regeneration &amp; Renewal Committee</b>	Chair	Mr Joseph Ahmed-Dobson
	Vice Chair	Ms N Majid
	Secretary	Mr S Butt
<b>London Task Group</b>	Chair	Mr Tanzeem Wasti
	Vice Chair	Dr Abdul Raheem Khan
	Secretary	Mr Harun Rashid Khan

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