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 Events Update

Eid Mubarak

The MCB Secretary General and members of the Central Working Committee convey Eid Greetings to the community. Millions of pilgrims will be assembling on the plain of Arafah for prayer and supplication on Monday 10 February - 9 Dhu al-Hijjah (Yaum ul Arafah) insha Allah. The London Central Mosque, Islamic Cultural Centre and UK Ruiyat-Hilal Committee have announced that Eid ul-Adha shall be on the following day: Tuesday 11 February. At this time of Eid ul-Adha, the commemoration of sacrifice, we pray to Allah subhana wa ta'ala to strengthen the resolve of Muslims to stand up firmly for truth and justice and resist all plans and attempts to bring unjustified death and destruction to Iraq and the rest of the region.

Police Raid on Finsbury Park Mosque

On January 20, a heavy handed police raid took place at St Thomas Road Mosque, Finsbury Park. The Muslim Council of Britain immediately issued a press statement in which Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of The Muslim Council of Britain stated the importance for those detained to be charged and brought to the court or released immediately: "To detain any individual for indefinite period without the opportunity to defend themselves creates an atmosphere of mistrust and undermines people's confidence in our administration of law." The Muslim Council of Britain also reiterated a place of worship cannot be used for purposes other than it is meant for. A Mosque is a house of God and no one has a right to abuse its sanctity.

Along with a number of other Muslim organisations, the MCB were informed of the raid by telephone at 2 am as the incident occurred. The MCB expressed serious concerns that the police should have established contact with the Mosque Trustees prior to the raid as Police investigation could have been resolved in a satisfactory manner without the need for such a high profile raid.

The statement went on to describe how frustrated and angered British Muslims are by the inordinate amount of publicity that has been given to the fringe elements in the community. There are over 1000 mosques in the UK and yet the free publicity handed over to such individuals, contribute towards feeding Islamophobia.

The MCB commends the initiative taken by the MCB affiliate Muslim Welfare House (MWH) for organising a meeting of organisations and institutions to address the concerns of British Muslims in the locality. A press statement released by MWH showed that "There is a widespread feeling that the operation was unnecessarily heavy handed and that the sanctity of a religious place has been desecrated." A further statement went on to add "We do not defend any criminal activity. But we do ask why such aggressive methods were used in the action at the North London Mosque in Finsbury Park. They seem to us unnecessary, and calculated to cause fear in the wider community. Law abiding Muslims locally have been made to feel that they are part of the security services' target.... We see reports which associate asylum seekers and refugees with terrorism – while in our daily lives we work with asylum seekers and refugees who are our friends and make a valuable contribution to our society. We appeal to the media, and to all local and

national agencies, to respond to our experience of genuine mutual trust and co-operation."

Letter to the Prime Minister

On 13th January 2003, the Muslim Council of Britain wrote to the Prime Minister Tony Blair expressing the concerns of the British community and the Muslim community in particular quoting Donald Anderson, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, "the British public is unconvinced of the reasons for war". The MCB Secretary General, Iqbal Sacanie, wrote of the US' desire to change the political map of the Middle East, appropriate its oil wealth and appoint Israel as a regional super-power exercising total hegemony over the entire Middle East and beyond with or without a UN mandate, irrespective of world opinion or international law. The letter highlighted the human costs and the lasting damage this would cause to US relations with the Muslim world, along with the deterioration of community and interfaith relations especially in the light of the backlash of the September 11th atrocities. "The MCB was loath to contemplate what this would also do to Britain's economic and bi-lateral relations with the Muslim world," said Mr Sacranie. Furthermore, he was incredulous at the revival of such colonial policy: "The humiliation and bitterness that would attend a military conquest is likely to provide a natural ground for the growth of bitterness and conflict for generations to come."

The MCB Secretary General drew attention to the moral and political obligation to free the world of weapons of mass destruction but pointed out the lack of credible evidence linking the Iraqi regime with international terrorism and the appalling human rights record of the Iraqi regime in existence long before this crisis began. Highlighting the strong concern about the double standards being applied by the West, Mr Sacranie pointed out the plight of the innocent Iraqi people, many of whom have been the victims of repeated Anglo-American bombings and more than a decade long inhuman economic sanctions. This surely qualified as "collective punishment" – a crime outlawed under Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Furthermore UN resolutions are ignored when the freedom and fundamental rights of peoples such as the Palestinian and Kashmiri are concerned. The MCB reaffirmed that respect for international law cannot be ensured by its violation and that the 'war on terror' should and can be won, but it has to be fought collectively not selectively; openly not secretively." The MCB urged the Prime Minister to use this opportunity to restore international confidence in the integrity of British foreign policy by taking the lead to avert a war against Iraq and promoting peace and justice in the Middle East.

MCB Offers Condolences

The MCB contacted the Chief Constable of Manchester on Tuesday 14 January to express its heartfelt condolences to the family of DC Stephen Oake as well as in sharing in prayers for the early and full recovery of the three other officers who were wounded and hospitalised. The MCB has also responded to the Daily Telegraph's editorial on the tragedy: "Imams must speak out", published in the Telegraph on 16 January 2003. In a letter to its editor, the MCB notes with consternation that "the underlying premises of your leader [which] seems to assume that imams or for that matter any normal member of the Muslim community would somehow condone, if not actually approve, any such evil and criminal act and, therefore, the need of the imams to speak out. The imams and community leaders have continually been speaking to the community on issues of moral and public concern, as they should do, and at the same time trying also to advise the community that no matter how strongly they might feel on any particular issue, they should

never lend their ears to any agent provocateur nor take the law into their own hand. Any dissent or disagreement has to be expressed in decent and Islamic manner."

Space Shuttle Columbia Tragedy

On 2 February 2003, The Muslim Council of Britain wrote to Ambassador Farrish, the US Ambassador in London to express their deepest sorrow over the space shuttle Columbia tragedy leading to the loss of seven valuable lives. The MCB offered their heartfelt condolences and requested he kindly convey this to the President as well as to the bereaved families. Indeed it is God Almighty to whom we all return.

World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, Davos, Switzerland

Between 23 and 28 January 2003, MCB Secretary General, Iqbal Sacranie was invited to attend the World Economic Forum Annual meeting placed under the theme 'Building Trust' and held in Davos, Switzerland. This was the first time in its 33 year history that religious and community leaders from all over the world were invited to attend this forum. The meeting saw the establishment of a permanent council of 100 leading figures from religion, business, government, academia and media(C-100) to which Mr Sacranie was invited as a member. C-100 is intended to create a forum for dialogue and outcome oriented discussion affecting relations between the West and the Islamic World. The forum will address such issues as good governance, democracy, the role of civil society, the challenges of globalisation and modernism, integration and immigration.

The Secretary General also had the opportunity to introduce the work of the Muslim Council of Britain to a number of delegates from different parts of the world. He also raised the serious concerns of the British Muslim Community regarding the impending war on Iraq with a number of world leaders including Mahathir bin Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Chairman of the Turkish AK Party, the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister, US Congressmen and Senators, heads of NGOs and other political and religious leaders.

Further details of the event can be found at http://www.weforum.org/

Trevor Phillips: New Chair of CRE

In a press statement released on 17 January 2002, The Muslim Council of Britain warmly welcomed the appointment of Trevor Phillips as the new Chairman of the Council for Racial Equality.

"We certainly look forward to the day when the CRE helps us achieve the final eradication of the more blatant inequalities in our society and then the very reason for its existence will have been removed," said Mr Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the MCB.

"The Muslim community recognises that Mr Phillips is well qualified in his own right but also note his valued contribution as a member of the Runnymede Commission on Islamophobia. We very much look forward to working with him for the common good," said Mr Sacranie.

Landmark Event for British Muslims

HRH the Prince of Wales officially opened the new academic building of the Markfield Institute of Higher Education (MIHE) on Friday 24th January 2003 in the presence of diplomats, international guests and leading local civic dignitaries. MIHE is an academic project of MCB affiliate the Islamic Foundation, established in affiliation with the University of Portsmouth. MIHE houses Europe's largest private Islamic library.

In his opening speech, the Prince of Wales commended the work of the Islamic Foundation saying "The prime focus for the Islamic Foundation is the promotion of first-rate scholarship and learning, embodying the vision of the founder, the current Chairman and our host today, Professor Kurshid Ahmad. I believe that this whole complex here at Markfield, including the excellent library, has the potential to develop into one of Europe's leading centres for post-graduate study of Islam and the Muslim world."

Dr Manazir Ahsan, The Director General of the Islamic Foundation showed the growing strength of the MIHE: "Established only three years ago as a post-graduate centre for Islamic Studies, the Institute is helping to bring together young scholars from both home and overseas, from Brunei in the Far East to Canada in the Far West. Besides the Muslim World and Islamic Thought, they are able to study and research on such topical subjects as Muslims in Europe, Pluralism and Coexistence, Inter-faith Dialogue, Islam and the West."

Dr Abdul Bari the MCB Deputy Secretary General, along with a number of other members of the Muslim community, attended the function.

British Hajj Delegation

The British Hajj Delegation, launched in March 2000 by the The British Hajj Advisory Group, the Islamic Cultural Centre (ICC) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was established to provide consular, medical and pastoral advice and assistance to the 20,000 Britons that travel annually to perform the Hajj. The Muslim Council of Britain are permanent members of the Hajj Advisory Group. This year's delegation, headed by Lord Adam Patel and including MCB Assistant Secretary General Ahmed Sheikh, left for pilgrimage to Makkah on 3 February.

The Delegation's contact points in Makkah are: Hotel Joharat al-Mahzeer (02) 542 9490 Hotel Al-Hijlak (02) 542 9841

The contacts for the British Consulate are: Tel (02) 622 5550 Fax (02) 622 6249

The MCB and its affiliates are some of the sponsors for this year's Delegation and have provided financial support.

Don't Attack Iraq: International Day of Demonstration

The Muslim Council of Britain urges its affiliates and organisations across the country to attend and support this National Demonstration organised by its affiliate the Muslim Association of Britain in conjunction with Friends of Al-Aqsa, CND and the Stop the War Coalition. At the brink of war, this march is an opportunity for us to convey our message that the British public are against the war.

See Events section below for further details.

Holocaust Day: MCB regrets exclusion of Palestinian genocide

The MCB has conveyed its deepest sense of pain and anguish over the Nazi Holocaust in a message to the organisers of the Holocaust Memorial National Day ceremony in Edinburgh on 27 January, Iqbal Sacranie, MCB Secretary-General said: "We must do more than remember and reflect on the past - we must be able to see when the same abuses occur in our time...Remembrance must refocus our moral vision and rededicate our commitment to prevent current and future inhumanity, state brutality and crimes against humanity...regrettably the memorial ceremony in its present form excludes and ignores other ongoing genocide and human rights abuses around the world, notably in the Occupied Palestinian Territories."

For the full text refer to the press release section at www.mcb.org.uk

Young Muslim Women's Gathering

MCB affiliate Young Muslims (YM) UK organised a three-day successful camp over the Christmas Break attended by 230 young Muslim women. Speakers included Sarah Joseph and Tahmina Saleem. The theme of the event was Islamic worship in all its dimensions, from prayer to social activism. A tournament was also conducted to promote team-building and leadership skills. For further information on the YM Sisters group, contact ymsisters@myuk.net or see www.ymuk.net

Development of London Muslim Centre

Shaikh Yusuf Al Qaradawi, world-renowned scholar of Islam visited MCB affiliates at the East London Mosque on Sunday 26 January 2003. He greeted over 2,00 people from across London who are working together to establish centres for prayer and Da'wah. The London Muslim Centre (LMC) is one such project aimed at providing a wide range of services for the community, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. He hailed the project as 'the biggest development of a multi-purpose Islamic institution Europe that has ever been seen in modern times' and urged all Muslims, particularly the Muslim youth to put all available resources and expertise to make the project a success. Fundraising is currently a priority as the Centre will cost £9 million to complete.

For further information contact Dilowar Hussain Khan, London Muslim Centre (LMC), 82 Whitechapel Road, London E1 1JE, Tel: 020 7247 2626,

Website: www.londonmuslimcentre.org.uk

Committees Update

Media Committee (MC)

Meeting with Senior Journalists

Members of the MCB media committee discussed the representation of Islam and Muslims in the media with leading journalists from the mainstream press, including the Daily Telegraph, The Times, The Guardian, The Daily Mirror and the Daily Mail, at an event organised by the Centre For Peace And Reconciliation at St Ethelburga's in Bishopsgate, London on Monday 3 February 2003.

The meeting was chaired by Mr Ronald Smith, Director of St Ethelburga's Centre and led to a healthy exchange of views and debate about the role of Islam in the modern world. Both sides found the encounter to be valuable and it helped to remove several misconceptions about the British Muslim community. The Muslim invitees included Iqbal Sacranie, Inayat Bunglawala, Sher Khan, Dr Azzam Tamimi, Hamid Chapman and Sarah Sheriff.

Letter to BBC Radio 4

On 6th January, Inayat Bunglawala, the Secretary of the Media Committee wrote to Kevin Marsh, the BBC Radio 4 Editor of the Today Programme. His letter requested further information on complaints made by British Muslims regarding an item which reported on the twin bombings in Tel Aviv which resulted in the death of 22 innocent people (Israelis and non-Israeli immigrants) and wounded over a hundred others and asked why the one sided reportage made no mention of the fact that at least 69 Palestinians (including women and children) have been killed by the Israeli army since 1st December 2002. Furthermore, he pointed out that since the second Intifada began in September 2000 over 1800 Palestinians have been killed and over 40,000 wounded, while the number of Israeli dead is around 700.

Additionally Inayat raised concerns over the fact that the Today reporter discussed the 'response' which could be expected from the Israelis to this latest tragedy, as the use of the word response implies that the Palestinians are initiating the attacks which belies the fact that it is the Israelis that have been illegally occupying Palestinian land for over 35 years. Such concerns over use of terminology have also been raised by the Glasgow University Media Group's report concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Article in Daily Telegraph

MCB Media Secretary Inayat Bunglawala published an article in the Daily Telegraph on 21stJanuary 2003 entitled "We Muslims are also the victims of terror" His article voiced the concerns that the police raid on the Finsbury Park mosque in north London and the killing of DC Stephen Oake in Manchester have again turned the media spotlight on to Britain's 1.8 millionstrong Muslim community. He states that it is "crucial that the authorities either produce their evidence against the seven arrested men before a court of law or release them...Detaining the prisoners would serve to undermine the trust of Muslims in our judicial system and the rule of law." He added that British Muslims have repeatedly distanced themselves from the actions of fringe groups with minuscule support but the media machine have given their publicity-hungry leaders almost superstar status.

For the full article refer to the Media Section at www.mcb.org.uk

Finance and General Purpose (FGPC)

Sponsorship

The sales and sponsorships for the MCB publication "The Quest for Sanity, Reflections on September 11 and the Aftermath" are well supported. However the MCB are currently looking for sponsors to send copies to politicians and key policy makers in the USA. We are also looking for additional sponsorship for a book project on Muslims in Britain. Egal Ltd have been contracted to

assist in developing MCB fundraising strategy and action plans.

Research & Documentation Committee (ReDoc)

Interfaith Event

Ms Saddia Malik represented ReDoc as a panellist at an interfaith event where students explored the perspectives of faith communities on different ethical issues. The event was held at Kingsbury High School, London on 21 January 2003.

Engaging The British Muslim Community

Dr Jamil Sherif, Secretary of ReDoc represented the MCB at the launch of the report 'British Muslims and State Policies' co-authored by Professor M Anwar and Equalities consultant Mr Qadir Bakhsh on 6 February in London. Professor Anwar is an advisor to the MCB's Research & Documentation Committee. He is based at the University of Warwick's Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations.

The MCB was invited to make a brief contribution at the event. The report's findings validate the 1995/96 survey conducted by the National Interim Committee on Muslim Affairs (NICMU) during the consultation process for the launch of the Muslim Council of Britain. In 1995 as now, the priority issues for the community remain education, religious discrimination and political representation. The major change has been the recognition by both Muslims and non-Muslims of the increase in Islamophobia after September 11. As in the NICMU survey, Anwar and Bakhsh have found that Muslim respondents value coordination within the community. The authors report that their Muslim respondents expressed the need for "all Muslim groups to unite and stand on one platform and speak with one voice on common issues facing British Muslims". This is very much the raison d'etre of the MCB.

Contact Email

The Research & Documentation Committee can be contacted at redoc@mcb.org.uk.

Legal Affairs Committee (LAC)

Chairmanship

Mahmud Al-Rashid has been elected as the new Chair of the Legal Affairs Committee.

Education & Training & Employment Committee (ETEC)

Education Workshop in Hounslow

Hounslow's Muslim School Governors ran their fifth Education Workshop on Sunday 19 January at Hounslow Mosque after Maghrib salaat. Topics for discussion included a review of the MCB Ramadan Guidelines for Schools proposed for 2003. Further information can be obtained from Yusuf Hussein, Secretary of MCB's Education, Training & Employment Committee. Email:churchill house@hotmail.com

Social Affairs Committee (SAC)

Contact Email

The Social Affairs Committee can be contacted at sac@mcb.org.uk.

Vice-Chair Appointed

Salah El-Hassan has been appointed the new Vice Chair of the Social Affairs Committee.

SAC Meeting

The Social Affairs Committee meeting has been postponed. Members will be advised of the date for the next meeting after Eid insha'Allah.

SAC Issues

On 30 January, Muhammad Aslam Ijaz, SAC member, led a number of elderly Muslims from South London on a conducted tour of the British Library. This proved to be an eye opening experience for all and he recommended that others visit to experience the wealth of knowledge stored at this source of learning.

Mr Aslam Ijaz also attended the Ruiyat-Hilal Committee meeting on 4 February, hosted by the Newham North Islamic Association, London and is attending the London Mayor's reception for Asian Business people on 5 February at City Hall, London. Additionally he is meeting with the Lambeth Partnership Board at the Metropolitan Police in Streatham on 5 Feb to iron out local issues, particularly relating to the large Somali community, many of whom are homeless, unskilled and unemployed with nowhere to socialise. Through the Lambeth Partnership Board, Mr Ijaz has helped to organise a grant sanctioned for their use in order to engage the Somali community in a Training Scheme at a local church building. Further details will be provided at a later date.

The book is undoubtedly a valuable contribution to the current political debate and is a welcome addition to our library...

Prof Yusuf Ibish, Director Al-Furgan Islamic Heritage Foundation

There is much of interest here: not least an interesting draft social contract urging British Muslims to be 'faithful to the Islamic values of truth, justice, care and compassion', and desiderata for a relevant Islamic educational formation.....this book repays careful reading, not least for echoes of the anguished debates exercising reflective Muslims. Should Islam be depicted as 'ideology', or is this a betrayal of Sufism, the historic custodian of Islam's humanist and spiritual values? Among those who best articulate this concern are the few Muslim women whose voices can be heard in this collection.

Philip Lewis, Inter-faith Adviser to the Bishop of Bradford and lecturer in Peace Studies at Bradford University

I take this opportunity to commend your book 'The Quest for Sanity'. It is undoubtedly a major contribution towards the cause of the Muslim World at its critical juncture and to tell the rest of the world about the values and virtues of compassion and justice which we all need to internalise and uphold.

Muhammad Ismail, Group Captain, Directorate of Education, Peshawar

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

Events

Event: Don't Attack Iraq: International Day of Demonstration

Date: Saturday 15 February 2003 Start Time: 1pm (Assemble at 12.30 pm)

Held By: Muslim Association of Britain, Friends of Al-Agsa, CND and Stop The War Coalition

Venue Embankment Bridge, London

Contact: Tel: 020 7272 2888, Website: www.mabonline.net, Email: info@mabonline.net

Information: The demonstration will start at 1pm from Embankment Bridge and will end up as as

rally in Hyde Park. Everyone is invited to join.

Event: The History of Palestine

Date: Saturday 22 & Sunday 23 February 2003

Held By: Friends of Al-Aqsa

Venue Markfield Conference Centre, Markfield, Leicestershire, LE67 9SY

Contact: Friends of Al-Aqsa, P.O. Box 5127, Leicester, LE2 0WU, E-mail: info@aqsa.org.uk Information: Two day seminar with lecturers to include Dr Azzam Tamimi, Dr Daud Abdullah,

Anas

Takriti, Ismail Patel, Ataullah Sidiqui, Dr Adil Salihi, Hasan Patel,

Event: Britain and the inalienable rights for the Palestinian people

Date: 23 April 2003 Time: 9 am to 7 pm

Held By: The Palestinian Return Centre

Venue Conference Hall, Brunei Gallery, SOAS, London University.

Contact: PRC, Crown House, North Circular Road, London NW10 7PN, U.K.

Tel: 0208 4530919 Fax: 0208 4530994

E-mail: info@prc.org.uk Website: www.prc.org.uk

Information: International Conference covering issues such as the legal meaning of the

Palestinian

mandate, international responsibility with regard to violating basic human rights, the legal and administrative role played by Britain in establishing Israel. Fees to attend the conference are £30, £20 for students. Closing date for registration 14 April 2003.

Event: MCB Annual General Meeting

Date: Saturday 26 April 2003

Held By: The Muslim Council of Britain

Venue London

Contact: MCB Office Tel: 020 8903 9024, email: admin@mcb.org.uk website: www.mcb.org.uk

Information: All day event

Committee Contacts

MCB Committee	Position	Name	
No. all	Chair	Mr Iqbal Sacranie	
Media	Secretary	Mr Inayat Bunglawala	
	Chair	Dr Aziz Sheikh	
Research & Documentation	Vice Chair	Ms Shabana Khan	
	Secretary	Dr Jamil Sherif	
Finance & General Purpose	Vice Chair	Dr Akber Mohamedali	
Committee	Secretary	Mr Jamil Versi	
	Chair	Mr Mahmud Al-Rashid	
Legal Affairs Committee	Vice Chair	Mr SabahAl-Mukhtar	
	Secretary	Mr Khalid Sofi	
	Chair	Mr Ahmed Sheikh Mohamed	
Membership Committee	Vice Chair	Dr Abdul Raheem Khan	
	Secretary	Mr Mohammed Aslam Ijaz	
Casial Affaira Carrentife	Chair	Ms Shiban Akbar	
Social Affairs Committee	Vice Chair	Mr Salah El-Hassan	

	Secretary	Mr Babak Zadeh Amin	
Health & Medical Issues	Chair	Dr Shuja Shafi	
Committee	Vice Chair	Dr Abdullah Shehu	
Europe & International	Vice Chair	Mr Tanzeem Wasti	
Affairs Committee	Secretary	Mr Zymer Salihi	
	Chair	Mr Hussein Shefaar	
Youth & Sports Committee	Vice Chair	Ms Basma El-Shayaal	
	Secretary	Ms Raihana Naseem	
Public Affairs Committee	Chair	Mr Sher Khan	
	Chair	Mrs Karima Mustafa	
Education / Training & Employment Committee	Vice Chair	Mr Nawazish Bokhari	
	Secretary	Mr Yusuf Hussein	
Mosques & Community	Chair	Mr Ibrahim Mogra	
Affairs Committee	Vice Chair	Mr Ayyub Laher	
Business & Economics Committee	Chair	Mr Iqbal Asaria	
Women & Family Affairs	Chair	Dr Reefat Drabu	
Committee	Vice Chair	Mrs Abdul Wahab	

	Secretary	Mrs Jasmine Ansari	
	Chair	Mr Joseph Ahmed-Dobson	
Regeneration & Renewal	Vice Chair	Ms N Majid	
	Secretary	Mr S Butt	
	Chair	Mr Tanzeem Wasti	
London Task Group	Vice Chair	Dr Abdul Raheem Khan	
	Secretary	Mr Harun Rashid Khan	

Eid Mubarak to our newsletter readers