

MCB

The Newsletter of The Muslim Council of Britain

PO Box 52 Wembley Middlesex HA9 0XW

The Common Good

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Be conscious of God

At all times, and at this time especially, Muslims and others need to remain conscious of God. We need to seek His guidance and grace and protection from all evil.

Muslims must remain true to the Qur'an and the example of the noble Prophet, peace be on him. They encourage all that the pure human conscience recognises as good and virtuous and condemn all that is vile, vicious and unjust. 'Verily, Allah commands justice and benevolence...and He forbids obscenity, evil deeds and oppression. He cautions you that you may take heed.'

Muslims condemn the killing of innocents whether done by individuals or states of coalitions. Muslims feel sorrow and anguish at the suffering of any human being and naturally respond with sympathy and care for those who lose loved ones. No Muslim rejoices in the slaughter of innocents or condones criminal acts.

Anyone who has not committed an evil or aided and abetted a crime or act of evil should not be made to feel responsible for 'no person bears the burden of another'.

Muslims must not be cowed down in the face of abuse and oppression. They must maintain their dignity with calmness and courage and stick to their civilised values and behaviour.

Muslims must care for their neighbours and friends, for their colleagues at school or at work. We have a duty to maintain the security and stability of society for the common good of all.

We pray in the words of the noble Prophet: O God, make us recognise the truth as true and enable us to propagate and follow it; and make us recognise falsehood as false and enable us to distance ourselves from it. Guide us and guide others through us.

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For justice and the rule of law

"Muslims are and must be seen to be firm upholders of justice and the rule of law, and so must governments and coalitions who have declared a 'war on terrorism'," said Khurshid Drabu, barrister and human rights expert, at a special meeting of the Central Working Committee of the MCB (Saturday 22 September) called to consider the appalling atrocities in the United States of America on 11 September and the

loss of thousands of innocent lives, many of whom were also Muslims.

On behalf of Muslim imams and ulama, Dr Suhayb Hassan also quoted verses of the Qur'an to highlight the uncompromising Islamic concern for justice:

"O ye who believe! stand out firmly for Allah,

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'Building Communities, Building Bridges'

MCB hosts one day conference in Manchester



Rashidah Butt delivers the conference's keynote address

The MCB hosted a one-day conference in Manchester entitled 'Building Communities, Building Bridges' on Saturday August 4th at Manchester Town Hall. The conference was one of the many initiatives undertaken by the MCB in its attempt to highlight the underlying causes of communal tension in northern England that erupted in civil disobedience and disorder this summer. The conference aimed to bring together young persons, Muslim community workers and other experts, to discuss practical measures and to promote good practices in an effort to prevent a recurrence of such events.

Young Muslim men and women from Bradford, Burnley, Oldham, Manchester and Stafford attending the conference spoke of their experiences and concerns with eloquence and forthrightness. Their audience included the police and local politicians.

Richard Leese, leader of Manchester Council opening the conference stressed the need to hear the voice from the grass roots. Yousuf Bhailok, Secretary General of the MCB welcomed the guests and Ms. Rashidah Butt, Chair of Regen 2000 in Bradford, presented the keynote address on behalf of the MCB.

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What the MCB has done

Shocked and anguished at the killing of innocents, the MCB has grasped every opportunity to convey its abhorrence at the atrocities that have claimed thousands of innocent lives from every part of the world, including several hundred Muslims, among them young British Muslims.

Condemnation

A statement issued within hours of the atrocity stated unequivocally that 'whoever is responsible for these dreadful, wanton attacks, we condemn them utterly'. The MCB endeavoured to express its grief at the loss of life in word as well as action, through media interviews, articles and letters in the press, and participation in condolence meetings. Mr Blair himself went on record on 12 September noting 'the very strong statement of condemnation from the Muslim Council of Britain, echoing that of the American Muslim Council'. From the outset we urged our Prime Minister to use his influence so that the crisis was not worsened through knee-jerk reactions and presumptions of guilt.

Misrepresentation of Islam

From the dark hours of that Tuesday morning, the MCB has tried its best to correct the dangerous misrepresentations of Islam and Muslims that were beginning to be aired in some sections of the world media even before the dust was settling, and to alert the authorities to unjustified revenge attacks on the life and property of British Muslims. Though the sanctity of life is one of the paramount values of Islam, the power of the media was such that by Tuesday 7.30 pm the MCB had received its first hate mails with bizarre references to 'Islamic terrorism' and 'Islamic violence'.

Spokespersons

The MCB spokespersons led by the Secretary General Yousuf Bhailok with support from many colleagues including Iqbal Sacranie, Mahmud Al-Rashid, Inayat Banglawala, Sarah Joseph, Tanzim Wasti and Khaled Anees, have worked round the clock to present the Muslim point of view and to urge the world to proceed along the path of justice rather than revenge. (See box for MCB statements).

Hate mail and goodwill

This effort has created new bridges and friends for British Muslims, because for every hate mail there have been over five messages of goodwill and tolerance.

All the messages have been published on the MCB web site <http://www.mcb.org.uk>. A Muslim community leader, Brother A K Gheewala, has found something of personal significance in the web site: "I have spent more than five hours in reading emails posted on this subject. Fortunately, letters with positive views outnumber the letters projecting total ignorance towards Islam and Muslims. As a Chair of Muslim Welfare Trust, and as an active member of many other voluntary/community groups I wish to thank all those who have either been sympathetic to us or have written against the racist/prejudiced remarks—on behalf of all of us, perhaps on behalf of the entire Muslim Community. I will only make a request to other friends to be familiar with Islam, its philosophy and its teaching before arriving to any conclusion. On reflection I consider it as my fault in failing to

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as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety: and fear Allah. For Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do."

"On that account: We ordained for the Children of Israel that if any one slew a person - unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land - it would be as if he slew all humankind: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all humankind. Then although there came to them Our messengers with clear signs, yet, even after that, many of them continued to commit excesses in the land."
Surah al-Ma'idah, verses 8 & 32

The meeting expressed appreciation for the remarks of the Prime Minister, leaders of other political parties and heads of churches cautioning people against blaming Islam and all Muslims for the acts of wanton terrorism.

Everyone however was disturbed by the way in which the campaign to smoke out, hunt down and eliminate the perpetrators of terrorism seems to be turning into a 'crusade' against Muslims and Islam. Horror was expressed that individuals and states whose reputation and position were built on terrorism on a monumental scale - such as Vladimir Putin of Russia and Ariel Sharon of Sabra and Shatila fame were active partners in the American and European led coalition against terrorism. Concern was also expressed at the way in which rage was being vented against individual Muslims, particularly women and the targeting of mosques and Islamic schools.

Integral part of society

At the meeting, Iqbal Asaria, Chairman of the MCB's Business and Economics Committee, in dealing with questions of loyalty and citizenship said that more than 50% of Muslims in Britain were born in Britain and Britain is their only home. We must all realise that citizenship carries rights as well as obligations, he said. 'We Muslims are the West,' he said, 'and we must adopt the principled stance that the rule of law is inviolable. Muslims have a duty to participate in the society and they have a responsibility to add value to the whole society. Otherwise, Muslims are in danger of being ghettoised communities and run the risk of being put in concentration camps. Such camps are not unknown in recent European history.'

Muslims are citizens and an integral part of nearly every state in the

world. Concern was expressed about the possible questioning of the loyalty of Muslims as minority citizens in these states and also the dilemma Muslims will face if they see predominantly Muslim lands violated or occupied by foreign forces. Such a question on loyalty would be an insult and as deeply offensive to Muslims as it would be if put to people of other faiths. Muslims holding on to or advocating Islamic principles of truth and justice and the clear rules for the conduct of war or the treatment of criminals should, ipso facto, be working for the common good and welfare of any country in which they live. Problems would only arise if Muslims in the services are called upon to combat innocent people including other Muslims.

Hani al-Banna of Islamic Relief said that loyalty to Allah - upholding virtue and discouraging vice - is the best guarantee of excellent citizenship.

Breeding grounds of terrorism

Several participants at the special meeting of the CWC of the MCB warned that the root causes and the breeding grounds of terrorism have been the years of tyranny and oppression practised by repressive totalitarian regimes that have been hoisted on populations in various parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America and armed and financially supported by western democracies. The regime of the last Shah in Iran and various Middle Eastern regimes including the Zionist entity in Palestine are examples of such repressive states.

Millions of people in the world live a life dominated by fear, tyranny, poverty, hunger, and disease. The largest number of refugees in the world are Muslims. Often when people need food, clothing, shelter, education and the bare necessities of life, they are supplied with sophisticated arms and weapons by the industrialised countries and arms merchants of the world who need conflict and suffering to peddle their wares and make their profits. If the major western democracies are serious about spreading democracy and civilised values, they need to think more of human worth and dignity and less of power and profits. In contrast, when the noble Prophet Muhammad entered the city of Yathrib soon to be called Madinah after the hijrah and thirteen years of persecution in Makkah, his first instruction to the Muslims was: Spread peace and feed people food.

One participant at the MCB meeting recounted how he felt a shiver running down his back when he heard President Bush talking about 'If you are not with us, you are against us.' This was the language of the repressive regime in the Middle East under which he lived and which stifles not only all dissent but all discussion and makes everyone guilty of suspected treason.

convey the correct message of Islam.” The MCB web site also provides the full text of all MCB press releases and includes this Newsletter too for on-line viewing or downloading.

Press briefings

On 13 September the MCB organised a press briefing and, with the cooperation of other institutions in the UK, provided journalists representing the overseas media in particular an opportunity to gauge the depth of outrage and indignation felt by British Muslims over the evil and criminal acts of 11 September.

Statement to MPs

On the occasion of the special debate in Parliament on 14 September the MCB prepared a statement that was sent to each MP. It noted that “a historic burden of responsibility lies with our elected representatives to demonstrate the supremacy of the rule of law by seeking just means to counter the great injustice that is terrorism”. It also alerted the House of Commons to the worry of the British Muslim community that a climate of intolerance and revenge was emerging, directed at them. The father of the House, Tam Dayell MP, and MEPs, including John Bowis, the MEP for London, responded with words of support. The Foreign Secretary, Rt Hon Jack Straw, also took the initiative to improve community relations. In a newspaper article he recognised how the Muslims viewed the US tragedy: “It’s a sense of shock and loss which, I know, is strongly shared by the Muslim communities here in Bradford and across our country...blaming Islam for what has happened would be as wrong as blaming Christianity for sectarian attacks in Northern Ireland”.

Meetings with faith groups, police and others

The MCB’s media work was complemented by meetings with political leaders, other faith groups and the Police. The MCB appreciates the rapid response from the country’s police forces to contain potential trouble. On 12 September, Mr David Westwood, Chairman of the Race and Community Business Group of the Association of Chief Police Officers, sent a message to the MCB, “I assure you that the British Police service is sensitive to the potential of victimisation or even demonisation of the Muslim community”. There have unfortunately been a number of incidents of verbal and physical abuse and mosque desecration, that are being centrally logged in a database by the MCB. The MCB also has a helpline at its office at which it can be contacted by anyone in distress (the telephone number is 0800 389 1282).

Foreign Secretary, Mayor of London and Home Secretary

MCB representatives, often as part of delegations including other Muslim organisations, held meetings with the Foreign Secretary on 17 September, with Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London and Trevor Phillips, chair of the GLA on 19 September, and the Home Secretary David Blunkett on 20 September. These meetings tackled such problems as hate crimes and the victimisation of Muslim schoolchildren by both teachers and peers. The MCB asked Ken Livingstone to issue guidelines to head teachers in a city that has half of Britain’s ethnic minority. At the meeting with the Home Secretary, the need for the introduction of legislation to deal with incitement to religious hatred was stressed as well

as the need to expedite the enacting of the law against discrimination on religious grounds.

The MCB itself issued a letter of guidance on 19 September to community organisations on issues of personal safety and mosque protection.

Letters of support

The MCB has received letters of support from several faith groups and has taken steps to reach out where appropriate. Dr Fatima Amer attended a meeting of the Sikh community on 20 September, and Ajmal Masroor, member of the executive of the London Civic Forum, has worked to bring together the faith communities in London on 3 October on an interfaith event, ‘Standing together against Intolerance’.

The MCB has received numerous messages of support from the Churches and Christian bodies and individuals, most notably perhaps from members of the Quaker community. Yousuf Bhailok, Iqbal Sacranie, Tanzim Wasti, Dr Fatma Amer and other Muslim representatives, including the Director General of the Islamic Cultural Centre, Dr Ahmed Al-Dubayan, visited the US Embassy on 13 September to sign the condolence book. On 18 September, a delegation including ulema such as Maulana Miftahi met Ambassador Farish to convey the community’s condolences personally. The MCB Secretary General and colleagues also met the High Commissioner of Pakistan, HE Abdul Qader Jaffar on 19 September, and a meeting of Muslim ambassadors has been agreed upon.

Groups inflaming passions

In an important issue of policy the MCB has also taken a public stand to confront groups within the community that not only misrepresent the values of Islam but cause ill-will through foolish statements and quixotic

behaviour. The MCB has urged TV producers and newspaper editors not to offer a high profile to such people, who not only do not represent how the mainstream community thinks and feel, but who indirectly inflame passions and spread hatred.

Special meeting of the CWC

The MCB convened a special meeting of its Central Working Committee on Saturday 23 September, attended by the Director General of the Islamic Cultural Centre and other distinguished Muslims, including religious scholars. A purpose of the meeting was to consider the work accomplished by the MCB thus far, in the words of Dr Mughram Al-Ghamdi, “in a spirit of constructive criticism”. The meeting considered how events might unfold in weeks to come and the issues that this would raise for the community.

A time for cool heads

The aim of the MCB is to serve the community and seek the common good of society as a whole. It will work to safeguard the security of British Muslims and for our Government to pursue moral and just policies, both at home and abroad. British Muslims need to face the future with perseverance, a cool head and sagacity. We are, and will be, confronted with unjustified hostility, abuse and attack. Our sisters are particularly vulnerable, because in their hijab they are the most visible element of the community. This is the time we can seek inspiration from British history too - we need the Dunkirk spirit in this dark hour. We need to remain conscious of Allah, in times of comfort or adversity. “Be sure we shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits (of your toil) but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere - who say, when afflicted with calamity: “To Allah we belong, and to Him is our return.” (Qur’an 2: 155-156)

SOME MCB PRESS STATEMENTS

MCB expresses total condemnation of terrorist attacks (11.9.01)

On the day of the attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and the plane crash in Pittsburgh, the MCB was the first Muslim organisation to express its condemnation of the terrorist attacks and to voice the wider concern of possible victimisation of Muslims by association.

British Muslims’ consensus (13.9.01)

48 hours after the attacks and with divergent voices being raised as to the position of the Muslim community on the attacks in the US, the MCB hosted a press conference in London in conjunction with Islamic Cultural Centre, London; Al Khoie Foundation; Muslim College; the Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism and the Association of Islamic Schools to convey the majority Muslim view on the atrocities in the US. The MCB, along with the other Muslim organisations, made clear Muslims’ condemnation of terrorism and the indiscriminate loss of innocent lives that result from such acts.

Justice with Responsibility (14.9.01)

On the occasion of the convening of a special session of the House of Commons following the terrorist attacks, the MCB sent a specially prepared Parliamentary Statement to the Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Tony Blair MP; the Foreign Secretary, Rt. Hon. Jack Straw MP; the Home Secretary, Rt. Hon. David Blunkett MP; the Leader of the Opposition, Iain Duncan Smith MP and the Leader of the Liberal Democrats, Charles Kennedy MP, as well as to individual Members of Parliament.

The statement called on MPs to deliberate carefully on their response to the attacks in the US. It emphasised the need to act justly and not revengefully; to demonstrate and uphold the rule of law and not frivolously abandon the principles of reason and justice.

British Muslim leaders visit US embassy to express horror and sympathy (18.9.01)

To inform the media of Muslim leaders’ meeting with the US Ambassador William S. Farish on the afternoon of 18 September the MCB issued a brief statement.

British Muslims urge Justice not Vengeance (19.9.01)

With an emerging international coalition headed by the US in its ‘War against Terrorism’ and imminent military strikes on Afghanistan, the MCB issued a press release cautioning against the loss of further innocent lives. It urged governments to seek a legal solution to the problem of international terrorism and not be swayed into responding militarily though this may satisfy those bent on rancour and retribution.

Our social contract

Faithful to the Islamic values of truth, justice, care and compassion, Muslims should have nothing to hide and fear and remain open and transparent as we go about our daily lives.

While further upheaval and devastation is being visited on Muslim communities, and the fires of civil war are being stoked up in Muslim lands, it is natural to feel pain and anguish especially when injustice is being done and the misery of starving and destitute populations is compounded over and over again.

As British Muslims we have the right and the duty to use wise counsel and all our powers of argument and persuasion to impress on our government the duty to uphold the rule of law and follow ethical policies both at home and abroad.

As citizens of Britain, we have a social contract to maintain the peace and stability of this country. No one must be tempted to commit any criminal or subversive activity.

One of the immediate results of the atrocities of 11 September is that the phenomenon of 'Islamophobia' has been released anew on an unprecedented scale. Terms such as Islamic terrorists are being bandied about not only by the media but by security agencies and people in government. Much of this may be quite deliberate. Islam as a religion has nothing to do with terrorism.

However, there is a lot of confusion and ignorance about Islam and Muslims and a dominant image of Muslims is often that they are extremists. We have a duty to set the record straight.

At these times especially, everyone including Muslims should be especially vigilant for their own safety and that of their neighbours. People must be careful how they respond to acts of provocation, misinformation and disinformation which tend to proliferate especially in times of war. We must not act on the

basis of heresy. The instructions of the Qur'an are clear:

"When a mischief-maker comes to you with some news, check it out lest you cause injury to someone out of ignorance."

"When ignorant people address them, worshippers of God Most Gracious reply, 'Peace!'"

A time for wise counsel and action

Imams and khateebis at Jumu'ah Prayer must give sound and carefully considered advice to their congregations.

In Canada, mosques have had open days to meet members of the public, talk about Islamic beliefs and values, and build confidence in local neighbourhoods and communities.

Muslim parents and community leaders should visit schools to meet headteachers and teachers to ensure the safety of children and talk about Islamic beliefs and values.

Local communities should have more interaction with and among Muslim youth, provide guidance and arrange stimulating activities.

The Muslim Council of Britain is collating information on incidents of verbal abuse, attacks and mosque desecration in a national database. Please forward reports to the MCB office.

The MCB has a national helpline to assist Muslims in distress. The number is 0800 389 1282 (Freephone)

Good Practice examples

Letters to neighbours

An Islamic centre in South London responded to the events of 11 September by hand-delivering hundreds of letters to neighbours making clear their stand on the tragedy. The centre also appointed one spokesperson, local GP Dr Akber Mohamedali, to field enquiries. Dr Akber observed that "everybody feels deep sympathy and grief here. We have already received a positive response from some of our neighbours to the letter".

Extracts from the letter sent by the Hyderi Islamic Centre, Streatham are presented below, as an example of an initiative to foster good community relations:

Dear Neighbour,
Assalaamu Alaikum (peace be on you)

On behalf of the community of Hyderi Islamic Centre, I would like to take this opportunity to communicate to you, as our neighbour, our stand on the terrible and atrocious events that took place in the USA on 11 September. We have like all the people of Britain and the rest of the world been deeply shocked and stunned by these terrorist acts that have taken away thousands of innocent lives.

Like the vast majority of Muslims, we share the same understanding of Islam, that the sanctity of human life is paramount. For us to take the life of an innocent person is not only a crime against the individual but against the whole of humanity. I am enclosing a copy of the article, as published in The Observer on Sunday 16 September by Ziauddin Sardar, whose views we share.

The World Trade Centre was an international building and the people who lost their lives were of various nationalities and faiths. The

response to the tragedy has similarly been international and multifaith. We have been informed that the Islamic Medical Association of USA has recruited 100 volunteer doctors who are assisting with the rescue effort and treating the wounded. We would similarly like to do the same here in our small way, by offering our assistance to any neighbour who has indirectly or directly been affected by these sad events.

I will be arranging a meeting with the local residents in the very near future and will be writing to you again with details.

With kind regards
Yours sincerely
Liaket Dewji
President

A number of residents have responded to the letter and are keen to meet the Muslim community. These include an American family who expressed their desire to address the community.

Contact with local education department, Exeter

Mr Shabbir Ahmed, Trustee of the Islamic Centre of the Southwest, has been in contact with the local education department to alert them to problems facing students at school. He has informed the MCB that "they have agreed to circulate a document to all heads of education to highlight the need for proper education of their children to tolerate and understand Muslims".

Leaflet on Islam against terrorism, Nottingham

The Karimia Institute (Director General Dr Musharraf Hussain) has prepared a leaflet to explain why Islam is against terrorism. Copies may be obtained from 512 Berridge Road West, Nottingham NG7 5JU.

Messages of goodwill

Bruce Doering

I understand that your organisation has probably received numerous apologies from concerned Americans, and probably many more attacks on you because of your religion. This may be mere words but I would definitely like to apologise that my countrymen have been sending you hateful e-mails. We may have differences in politics, we may have differences in religion, and we may have differences in many other lifestyles, however we all are human and we all realise that the people lost in this accident are humans just like us. Thank you for your support.

Chris McLeod

I know you're getting a lot of hate e-mails. They represent a sick minority view of a sad element of the British people. I know I speak for the majority of wasp Britain in saying that the vast majority of Moslems in the UK are good Britons who have put a lot into this country. There are plenty of us out here who won't stand by if you get picked on. I thought your leader gave a very good speech and this is a time for us all to keep cool heads but also come out fighting the real enemy of terrorism.

Derek Johnson

As a white, English male studying in Canada I want to express my distaste for the hate mail that you have received. I hope that people will avoid leaping to conclusions. Violence begets only violence and rash accusations simply inflame the situation. Regardless of whom the perpetrators turn out to be no nation, group or religion should be condemned because of the actions of a few maniacs. Peace, in these difficult times.

Bill Yates

Bis m'illah ar rahman ar raheem.
Although I am a Christian I had the privilege of working in Saudi Arabia for 18 months. I am so saddened by the events in New York and the effect this will have on Westerners' perception of Islam and Muslims. I pray to God that damage done to the religion of Islam is small and soon repaired. I will also pray that, by some unfathomable means, some good will come from the nightmare and that Christian, Muslim and Jew can live together in mutual respect and understanding.

Paula

I heard yesterday of the hate mail you have received via the internet. I write now to thank you for your press statement. It is all too easy for the forces of ignorance and hate to gather against people of faith when those who believe in the sanctity of life remain silent. Terror can silence people. I am about to write an article - about the internet- for our church magazine and will use part of your press release and recommend your web pages. It may only be a whisper for peace but it's all I can do and even a whisper is better than silence. Peace be with you and yours.

Tracy Neil

I am a Roman Catholic and just emailing to say that I hope all the Muslim people here in the UK are safe; I hope there is no backlash and racism following the dreadful terrorist attack in America.

Ian McWilliams

I felt compelled today to call your offices and express my disgust at the disgraceful treatment that is being meted out to British citizens whose roots are in Asia, by the small minority of thugs and bully boys who are strangers to the notion of living in harmony.

I am just an ordinary bloke who is not religious and I can assure you that the vast majority of people like me wish you no ill will. It is little consolation, I know, that over the years to come, things will gradually get better. Improvement in race relations is incremental and in my observation, relationships have, on the whole, gradually improved over time in this country. I wish I knew how we could rally together other brits to express to you the goodwill they undoubtedly feel.

Richard

Dear Muslim brothers,
I am writing to support you all in these troubled times. I see terrible news stories of the abuse and threats, which you are suffering and my heart goes out to you all. My family is a practising evangelical Christian family but we bear you no grudge whatever and we know that you share our horror at the events of Sept 11. This is a time for all people of any faith to stand together for justice with peace and not to fight amongst ourselves.

Brian Bethel

Like all right thinking people I deplore the attack on innocent people from wherever it comes. I also deplore the jumping to conclusions that because those who attacked the WTC are Muslims it follows that all Muslims are terrorists or terrorists-in-waiting. I believe the Muslim faith to be one of justice and mercy. I send you my regards and hope that people of your faith sees this present crisis through with patience and understanding. My best regards to you all.

Fraser Marshall

I realise there is little that I can achieve with a few words, but I thought it was important to let you know that this kind of thing is repellent to most people. Even if the blame is found to lie with a Muslim, there is no excuse for painting all Muslims with the same brush. In the course of both work and private life I have met many Muslims and I have found the vast majority to be fine people of the highest moral calibre. I would like you to know that many people will find your message on your webpage a fine statement that no right thinking person can disagree with. Let us hope, as you say, one appalling disaster does not lead to another.

James Ridgway

It is sadly inevitable that the Muslim community in Britain and around the world will suffer added persecution and retribution for the recent tragic events in America. I would like to offer my support to all Muslims around the world in helping to counter-act prejudice and misunderstanding of the Muslim faith. I know that Islam is a peace loving religion and the people that carried out this criminal act can not call themselves true Muslims. I hope that people come to understand your position and that all faiths can work together to help stamp out this evil in the world.

Sharon Robinson

Following in the wake of the attack on the US cities, I watched Sky News and saw a person who I believe was your representative speaking for the Muslim communities.
I was very impressed and wished to register my thanks for his words of peace. As English born Christian, I wish for peace for the world, not only for Christians, but for followers of all religions.

Alison Draper

I was greatly saddened yesterday to hear on Radio 4 that your organisation has been receiving hate mail in the aftermath of the attacks in the US. I don't think I am the only non-Muslim who would like to express my concern and support for the British Muslim community at this time. I could not agree more with your statement that "terror on this scale must not be compounded by knee-jerk reactions that would make victims of other innocent peoples of the world".

Michael A. Sheppard

May I express my disgust and shame at the nature of the e-mails that you have been receiving and the behaviour of people in the community as a result of the action of a small number of yet to be properly identified people in the United States. Those who behave in this way are clearly unable to distinguish the difference between terrorists and the vast majority of Muslims. I can only think this is based around racial prejudice and ignorance of their fellow human beings and of the Islamic faith, but this in no way excuses their behaviour. Please accept our apologies and intentions of support,

Tom

Please know that not all non-Muslims harbour any ill feelings towards any Muslims in Britain. I am saddened to hear of the horrendous bigotry and abuse that you have had to put up with over the last few days. I am sure that these fools are using the attacks in America as some kind of sick justification of their racist beliefs. I am a white, British Christian and I am happy that our country has a rich mix of cultures, do not be disheartened by these bigots, the vast majority of people understand that Islam had absolutely nothing to do with these horrors and we welcome you.

Abdullah

Keep up the good work MCB. There may be millions of people who have no knowledge or understanding of Islam yet are ready to pronounce hatred against it and it's followers, but don't give up. Your voice may seem to be a lone one fighting to present the true Islam which as a word actually means peace, but there are millions of Muslims out there, myself included, who appreciate your work. Don't give up. Thank you.

'Building Communities, Building Bridges' - continued from page 1

Other speakers and representatives included Tony Lloyd MP (Manchester Central); Sally Keeble MP, Minister at DTLR; Martin Pagel, Deputy Leader of Manchester Council; Councillor Azhar Ali, leader, Pendle Council; Shahid Malik, CRE Commissioner; Asst. Chief Constable Alan Bridges, Greater Manchester Police, Superintendent Keith Bentley, Sub-Divisional Commander at Oldham and Brian Pearce, of the Inter Faith Network. Other representatives included Duncan Edward of the GMB trade union who emphasised the importance of tackling poverty and unemployment and Maqsood Ahmed, the Muslim Prison Advisor, who spoke on support services for Muslim prisoners.

In her keynote speech Rashidah Butt aptly spoke on the failure of government to act judiciously in solving problems in these troubled and deprived areas. "The cure to our ills are not water cannons or quick economic fixes", she said, "but a renewal of values". She argued that the Islamic culture promoted decent behaviour and that the youngsters engaged in uncivil and violent activity were not the same as those that frequented the mosques. Though this point was well received, the subject of mosque reform did not escape attention. Sheikh Ebrahim Mogra spoke eloquently of the need for mosques to do more for the community than just provide prayer facilities. He stated that mosques needed to 'connect' with young people.

Local politicians, the police and the press also came in for scathing criticism with speakers oft-repeating the hostile and negligent attitudes of all towards Muslims. Local politicians were denounced as heedless. "They would not even give us the time of day", remarked one participant. Shahid Malik, CRE Commissioner and the only Muslim member of the Labour Party's National Executive Council, argued that the media too had behaved in an 'irresponsible' manner fuelling racist tensions with their sensationalist reporting and coverage of ethnic minority news. The police, in turn, were reproached for their insensitive and delayed responses to cries for help.

Many of the comments made during the conference echoed feelings that were previously related to members of the MCB's fact-finding commission that visited Bradford on July 13th. Feelings of alienation, misapprehension, overt racism and condescension were repeated as younger members of the local Muslim community took to the stage to convey their concerns. "Nobody is listening to the youth" was the distressed cry of the youngsters.

Suggestions for improvement included youth councils and greater consultation and accountability of local bureaucrats responsible for regeneration budgets. It emerged during the course of the conference that regeneration funds intended for the purpose of helping youngsters from these communities never actually reached them and was instead squandered on plush offices and bureaucracy.

Summing up the conference proceedings MCB Deputy Secretary



Youth leader Monrez Khan from Bradford and Police Superintendent Keith Bentley meet over lunch

General Mahmud Al-Rashid stated that the event had been successful in attracting a wide variety of key people, especially the young, and that the challenge now for government and local communities was to tackle the root causes of the disturbances, regenerate the towns and cities and restore trust and co-operation between the different communities in Britain.

The conference concluded with three messages. To the political leadership and opinion formers in the UK the message was that Muslims had to be seen and appreciated as an integral part of British society, that the recent disturbances were not just an Asian or Muslim problem but a society-wide one



From right to left: Brian Pearce, Director Interfaith Network; Cllr. Azhar Ali; Shahid Malik, CRE Commissioner; Mohibur Rahman, Chair MCB Public Affairs Committee and Superintendent Keith Bentley of Oldham



From left to right: Martin Pagel, Rashidah Butt, Cllr. Afzal Khan, Yousuf Bhailok, Fawzia Ahmed

which warranted societal co-operation. Second, a reminder to the Muslim community itself, the conference emphasised the importance of rising above narrow self-interest and iterated that Islam stood for the seeking of the 'common good'. It also mentioned the need for mosques to be more involved with their communities and to do more than act as places of worship. Finally, the third message was directed to the youth itself exhorting them to aspire and focus their huge energy towards excellence and achievement.

MCB Calls Emergency Press Conference

The MCB, in conjunction with the Islamic Cultural Centre, London, Association of Muslim Schools, Al Khoei Foundation, Muslim College and the Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism, organised a press conference in London on September 13th.

The conference was held to convey a consensus of Muslim opinion on the terrorist attacks in New York, Washington and Pittsburgh. The MCB and other organisations spoke to the media on the need to remain objective and restrained in their reporting of events unfolding across the Atlantic. Yousuf Bhailok and Iqbal Sacranie asked that the media exercise "responsible journalism" and not unwittingly fuel religious and social anxieties in the aftermath of the attacks. Michele Messaoudi of FAIR mentioned recent incidents involving Muslim schoolchildren and women in headscarves. She said that the Muslim community was being targeted and singled out for abuse and harassment. Yousuf Bhailok emphasised the importance of media co-operation in this matter by requesting that the media refrain from fielding and broadcasting the opinions of those that did not represent the majority.

The press conference gave the Muslim community in Britain the opportunity to express its concerns and fears following media speculation on the identity of those responsible for the attacks. The conference was well attended with representatives from the Guardian, Associated Press, BBC Breakfast News, Radio 5 Live, Zee TV, ARY Digital, India Weekly, Saudi Press Agency, Muslim News and Q news present. Zee TV and ARY Digital later interviewed both Yousuf Bhailok and Iqbal Sacranie.

PEOPLE

MCB offers its congratulations to members of the community who have recently attained public recognition for their work and have been assigned new responsibilities:



■ In the Queens Honours List 2001 Mohammed Ajeeb (pictured above) received a CBE for services to Local Government in Bradford, West Yorkshire. Mr Ajeeb was the first elected Muslim Mayor in Britain, and is active in the Bradford Council of Mosques.

■ Nawazish Bokhari, Chair of the Education, Training and Employment Committee of MCB, was awarded an OBE for services to Education. Mr Bokhari has been working in various educational institutions for the last 33 years. Mr Bokhari became the first Muslim Deputy Head of an LEA maintained secondary school in 1975 later going on to become the first Muslim Headteacher. He is currently Principal of Ernest Bevin College in Tooting, London.

■ Dr Fatma Amer, Chair of Families and Women's Support Committee, participated in an important consultative committee of women to advise the Mayor of London on Domestic Violence and other matters.

■ Basil Mustafa, member of the MCB's Central Working Committee and Nelson Mandela Fellow in Educational Services at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, was appointed to the Inner Cities Religious Council (ICRC) in May. The ICRC was created in 1992 and comprises of representation of five of the largest faith communities in England. The ICRC, part of the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions provides a forum where government and faith communities can work together on urban renewal and social inclusion.

■ Ajmal Masroor, member of MCB London Task Group has been elected to serve on the Executive of the London Civic Forum (LCF). The LCF is a membership organisation comprising of private businesses, public services and insti-

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EVENTS

MCB REGIONAL MEETING IN BIRMINGHAM



Secretary General Yousuf Bhailok addresses the regional meeting with Dr Hany El-Banna looking on

The MCB regional meeting was held on July 1st in Birmingham, attended by over a hundred Muslim community leaders and activists. The meeting was the result of a concerted effort by the Muslim Education Consultative Committee (MECC) and the Muslim Doctors & Dentists Association (MDDA), with the support of Islamic Relief. The MCB West Midland zonal representative, Khurram Bashir introduced the event and the session was chaired by the host, Dr Hany El-Banna, Managing Director and founder of Islamic Relief.

The event provided an opportunity for MCB office bearers and committee chairmen to outline the scope of the organisa-

tion's work, its purpose and to invite new affiliates. Amongst distinguished attendees were Dr Ibrahim Surty, Councillor Muhammad Afzal and Dr Muhammad Naseem, all veteran Muslim personalities in the West Midlands. Brief presentations were given by Yousuf Bhailok, Misdaq Zaidi, Dr Abdur Raheem Khan, Dr Mujahid Qureshi, Dr Shameem Qureshi, and Dr Jamil Sherif. A prominent young Birmingham-based businessman, Muhammad Zulfiqar, delivered the opening and concluding remarks. The meeting included a question-and-answer session on the MCB and there was opportunity for more informal discussions over dinner.

CIRCUMCISION CLINIC SET UP BY FMO IN LEICESTER

Muslims have often been faced with numerous obstacles in meeting the religious requirement of circumcision for boys. These range from inadequate facilities, a lack of care for the children and a lack of training support and nursing support for the consultants carrying out the operations. In a move to ensure that circumcision is provided in a safe and hygienic environment the Federation of Muslim Organisations (FMO) in Leicester joined forces with the Leicester and Rutland NHS Trust to open the first 'circumcision service' for Muslims. The clinic was launched last year and has been successfully running for over a year. A surgeon assisted by two members of staff performs the operation, which costs £60 (to cover administration costs), fortnightly at St. Peter's Health Centre. For more information please call: 0116 251 6663 (direct) or 0116 253 8031 (reception). For more information on setting up similar clinics, please contact FMO on 0116 211 5250.

AMR will be holding a Community Careers Fair on October 10th from 11 - 6 pm at the College of North West London. Contact AMR for more details: careers-fair@amrnet.demon.co.uk

ISLAMIC RELIEF'S 'REACTING TO POVERTY' BOOKLET LAUNCH

The GCSE publication 'Reacting to Poverty', by Islamic Relief, is a noteworthy initiative that challenges stereotypical images of Muslims and provides an Islamic perspective on charity.

The MCB was pleased to support Islamic Relief by attending the booklet launch on May 23rd in Westminster, London, with Secretary of State for International Development, Rt. Hon. Clare Short MP, as guest of honour. Ms. Short commenting on the booklet said that it was written in "simple fashion" and provided a touching stance "on what real charity is". "It's a lovely piece of work", she said.

MCB Secretary General Yousuf Bhailok attending the launch noted the importance of the booklet serving as it will as a guide in the teaching of GCSE Religious Education.

If you are an affiliate body of the MCB and have some good practice projects/initiatives you would like covered then please contact the MCB on 020 8903 9650 or email: media@mcb.org.uk

MCB and ISB host Question Time Forum

In the run up to the June 7th General Election, the MCB spearheaded a national campaign to encourage members of the Muslim community to participate more fully in local and national elections. As part of this campaign the Islamic Society of Britain (ISB), in conjunction with the MCB, organised a televised panel discussion to raise issues of concern and interest to the Muslim community. This initiative, the Question Time Forum, was started in April 1999 by the ISB to provide Muslims an opportunity to interact with prominent public figures and to pose questions of relevance to the community. Guests since its inception have included senior politicians, media practitioners and academics. This particular forum however, was the first time the debate had been televised.

The panelists featured Rt. Hon Jack Straw MP, (now Foreign Secretary); Rt. Hon Gary Streeter MP, (Shadow Secretary of State for International Development); Rt. Hon Simon Hughes MP, (Lon. & Home Affairs Spokesperson for Liberal Democrats); Iqbal Sacranie, (Chairman of Muslim Aid); Mahmud Al-Rashid, (Deputy Secretary-General of the MCB); and Merryl Wyn Davies (Writer and Broadcaster). The event was convened and chaired by Sher Khan (ISB). The audience comprised members of the Muslim public as well as representatives from various MCB affiliate organisations.

The topics of discussion included the necessity for the government to introduce legislation outlawing religious discrimination, the new Prevention of Terrorism Act 2000, and the government's foreign policy objectives in Palestine and Kashmir.

The meeting concluded with a joint call by all the participants for increased Muslim representation in the mainstream British political parties. All the



From left to right: Jack Straw, Iqbal Sacranie, Gary Streeter, Sher Khan, Merryl Wyn Davies, Mahmud al-Rashid, Simon Hughes.

speakers agreed that more needed to be done but added that the Muslim community too needed to become more involved.

The whole Question Time Forum session was recorded by ARY-Digital and broadcast on ARY-Digital, Prime TV, Bangla TV, Al-Jazeera and MBC in late May. Estimated viewing figures for the UK were 400,000 with an estimated global audience of 1.5 million.

BBC Islam UK season

BBC2 transmitted around 12 hours of documentaries in August 2001 as part of its first ever Islam UK Season. In addition, the BBC also publicised a huge range of off-air activities organised by Islamic organisations all over the country during August/September 2001 to help non-Muslims become more aware of the Islamic faith and its practices.

Members of the MCB's Media Committee were active participants of the BBC Islam UK season advisory committee ever since its inception earlier this year and also prompted the BBC to benefit from the skills of Merryl Wyn Davies in the preparation of the official BBC Islam UK season booklet. The MCB also provided the BBC with a list of all its affiliate organisations, many of whom the BBC later contacted to arrange activities in support of the Islam UK season.

The MCB sent a letter of appreciation to the producer of the Islam UK season, Ruth Pitt and the BBC Director-General, Greg Dykes.



This specially commissioned full-colour booklet to accompany the BBC TWO season of programmes, Islam UK, provides a wealth of accessible information and explanation introducing the British Muslim community - its identity and history; and Islam - religion, principles and values that shape Muslim identity. Introducing the historic legacy of Muslim peoples, this booklet is beautifully illustrated with examples from contemporary Islamic and British Muslim art. Includes suggestions for useful contacts and further reading. To order please write with your name, address and quantity of copies required, enclosing a cheque for £4.95 per copy (inc. p&p) payable to 'BBC Factual and Learning', to: Islam UK, PO Box 7000, Manchester M60 3HE.

Meeting with Press Complaints Commission

On July 25th a delegation from the MCB met with the Chairman of the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) Lord Wakeham, and the Director of the PCC, Guy Black to discuss concerns over the negative stereotyping of Muslims in the British media.

Lord Wakeham said he fully appreciated the MCB's concerns and vowed to work with the MCB to ensure that coverage of Muslim issues were handled more sensitively in the future.

The MCB delegation consisted of Iqbal Sacranie (Deputy Chair, MCB Media Committee), Ahmed Versi (Editor, Muslim News), Zahoor Niazi (Editor, Daily Jang) and Inayat Bunglawala (Secretary, MCB Media Committee).

Recent MCB Press Releases

- 6th August** National Conference Listens to Young People
- 31st July** Louis Farrakhan
- 16th July** Briefing Paper for discussion on Muslim Delegation's Meeting with Home Office Minister Ms. Angela Eagle
- 16th July** The Bradford Disturbances 7-9th July, 2001
- 16th July** MCB Calls for a Commission of Inquiry
- 12th July** Racism, Delinquency and Islamophobia - Muslim Leaders to Meet Home Office Minister
- 27th June** The MCB deplores Sharon's visit to Downing Street
- 16th May** BBC Religious Discrimination Policy Against Muslim Journalists
- 27th April** Religious Affiliation Counts in the Census
- 26th April** International Conference on Palestinian Intifada
- 3rd April** Animal Welfare of Animal Warfare?

Foreign & Commonwealth Office

MCB MEETS FCO UNDERSECRETARY OF STATE

The newly appointed Undersecretary of State, Ben Bradshaw, invited MCB Secretary General Yousuf Bhailok and a number of other prominent Muslims to an informal gathering on July 11th. The meeting, attended by Iqbal Sacranie, Tanzeem Wasti, Dr Abdur Raheem Khan, Dr Zaki Badawi and Dr Hany al-Banna, amongst others. This meeting continues the consultative initiatives of previous Undersecretary's of State, the late Derek Fatchett and Peter Hain.

Mr Bradshaw invited the Muslim delegation to discuss foreign policy issues of concern to Muslims. The issues discussed included the Middle East Peace Process, Kashmir, Chechnya and the general contribution the Muslim community could make to foreign policy formulation. The Secretary General spoke to the Undersecretary of State of the need for 'genuine consultation' with the British Muslim community.

Home Office

MCB DELEGATION CALLS FOR COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

A delegation from the MCB pressed for the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry into events in northern England in its meeting with Home Office Minister Angela Eagle MP on July 16th.

The delegation called for the inquiry to inspect the police's handling of the situation in light of television footage in which a peacemaker, Shahid Malik, CRE Commissioner, member of the Labour Party's National Executive Committee and son of the deputy Mayor of Burnley, was beaten by police officers in full view of the camera. The incident 'served to underline the lack of co-ordination between the Police and the community', said Yousuf Bhailok.

The delegation also reiterated its demand for legislation on religious discrimination and to tackle incitement to religious hatred, citing the events of recent weeks, in particular the provocation from the BNP, as apposite proof of the severity of the situation. Legislation had become 'all the more urgent' they told Angela Eagle.

HAJJ ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Hajj Advisory Committee took place in London under the Chairmanship of Baroness Amos.

The Committee was urged to speed up its deliberations given the time constraint imposed by the commencement of next year's Hajj season. Work yet to be done by the Committee included selection of medical and non-medical personnel to accompany British Hujjaj as part of the Hajj delegation.

Guidelines were also introduced at the meeting to instruct the Advisory Group on how to conduct its business. These guidelines were discussed and approved by the Committee.

It was agreed that Lord Adam Patel would serve as Chairman of the committee for the next three years and that the committee's

administration would ultimately be passed to the Islamic Cultural Centre in London. The MCB's position in the committee was recognised as being supervisory, offering continuity and helping co-ordinate all affairs affecting and relating to the British Hajj delegation.

Greater London Authority

'WOMEN IN FAITH' EVENT

Dr Fatma Amer, Chair of the Families and Women's Support Committee, attended a meeting hosted by the Mayor of London's Policy Adviser on Women's Issues at Romney House in London on July 2nd.

The event was organised to provide women from a wide range of faith organisations the opportunity to meet and discuss how women from these organisations relate to the Mayor of London and the Greater London Authority. The event was part of the consultation process and the views of participants on the proposals for consultation on the Mayor's Domestic Violence Strategy will be included in the final version of the Domestic Violence Strategy to be published in November 2001.

It was agreed that all participants would be kept informed of any further development.

Department of Health

MULTI-FAITH JOINT NATIONAL CONSULTATION

The working committee formed to produce the final draft of the NHS Chaplaincy-Spiritual Care National Guidance document met in Leeds on June 20th with Carol Dawson from the Department of Health in attendance. Chowdhury Mueed-Uddin and Maulana Shafiqur Rahman represented the MCB at the working committee's meeting. The draft document produced at this meeting was discussed at the full committee meeting held in London on July 24th. The final round of discussions took place in London on August 29th and a draft has been submitted to the Department of Health.

It is worth pointing out that the document referred to above is 'Document 2' of the original draft prepared at the beginning of the consultation process. Other sections of the overall draft are yet to be considered.

Metropolitan Police Authority

LONDON TASK GROUP

The activities of the London Task Group (LTG) have in the last few months centred around the Metropolitan Police Authority. The LTG held a meeting with David Venes in connection with the Muslim community's anxieties regarding organisations proscribed by the Terrorism Act 2000. The LTG at this meeting emphasised that the Metropolitan Police should be mindful in its policing of this act to ensure that it did not result in harassment of Muslims.

The LTG brought to the Metropolitan Police Authority's (MPA) attention two such cases of harassment as examples of the Muslim community's fears and to counsel that these not become regular and common practices.

The LTG has also voiced its concerns to the MPA on the ongoing case of Superintendent

Dezai, a senior police officer currently under investigation. The LTG informed the MPA that the investigation must be conducted in fairness and transparency. The LTG was assured that this would indeed be the case.

Dr Abdur Raheem Khan of the MCB held a preliminary meeting with one of the two Muslim members of the Metropolitan Police Authority, Mr. Reshard Auladin JP, who is also Deputy Chair of its Finance, Planning and Best Value Committee.

Civil Service

MEETING WITH SIR RICHARD WILSON

On July 2nd MCB Secretary General Yousuf Bhailok, Vice Chair of the Media Committee Iqbal Sacranie and Museji Takolia, Senior Advisor Diversity Strategy and Equal Opportunities at the Cabinet Office, met with the Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Home Civil Service, Sir Richard Wilson. Sir Richard convened the meeting to provide the MCB with an opportunity to inform the civil service of its role in the Muslim community and to build relations with Whitehall. Sir Wilson assured the delegation that greater consultative links would be established between the MCB and government departments.

HM Treasury

MCB ATTENDS HM TREASURY SEMINAR ON ERADICATION OF POVERTY AND THIRD WORLD DEBT

Secretary General Yousuf Bhailok attended a breakfast seminar on poverty and debt hosted by the Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown, and the Secretary of State for International Development, Clare Short. The seminar, held prior to the G7 Finance Ministers meeting, was organised to discuss the development agenda for that meeting and dealt with the government's aims to eradicate poverty, especially child poverty, and to grant debt relief to poorer states.

The Secretary General applauded the government's activities in this area stating that the government was nationally and internationally supportive of programmes designed to eliminate poverty and reduce Third World debt. Issues that were placed on the agenda for the forthcoming G7 meeting included human rights, tackling (child) poverty, conflict resolution, debt relief and the global health bond.

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

The outbreak of foot and mouth disease had profound repercussions on the celebrations for Eid ul-Adha, for the Muslim community in Britain. As a member of MAFF's Muslim Working Group, the MCB's Dr Abdul Majid Katme and Dr Jafer Qureshi participated in a meeting at which it was announced that the number of animals available for sacrifice was drastically reduced. The MCB issued a press release to express its concerns on the policy of mass cullings.

Due to prevailing circumstances the MCB advised Muslims in the UK to delegate their Qurbani overseas through Muslim relief organisations in Britain.

Community Affairs Committee:

STUDENTS WIN THE RIGHT TO PRAY: UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

In June 2001 UCL Islamic Society contacted the MCB after a frustrated two-year negotiation process with the College failed to result in a prayer room for Muslim staff and students. UCL had maintained during these negotiations that offering Muslims prayer facilities was incompatible with its position as a 'secular institution'.

Dr Jafer Qureshi, Chair of the Community Affairs Committee, writing to the College stressed the importance and wider significance of the case. Dr. Qureshi, on behalf of the MCB, urged the College to re-think its policy and ease the difficulties being experienced by Muslim staff and students.

Following a lengthy debate UCL reviewed its policy and has now granted a room for Muslim students and staff to pray in.

Social Policy, Welfare and Regeneration Committee

UN'S RECOGNITION OF 'ISLAMOPHOBIA' AS FORM OF RACISM

Imam Dr. Abduljalil Sajid, Chair of Social Policy, Welfare and Regeneration Committee (SPWRC), has contributed to a successful campaign for the inclusion of Islamophobia as a form of racism in the UN's Draft Declaration and Programme of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

The European Employment Directive that came into being this year is one of the most important pieces of legislation to date. It compels all European member states' governments to enact legislation that protects faith communities against direct and indirect forms of discrimination in employment on grounds of religion. These measures, though welcome, remain deficient because their scope is limited only to employment and do not extend for example, to health and education, where instances of discrimination are also prevalent.

In this context it is worth noting two recent publications in this area, a report by the University of Derby on Religious Discrimination in England and Wales and a report by the University of Cambridge entitled 'Tackling Religious Discrimination'.

MUSLIMS IN PRISON

The Prisons subcommittee of SPWRC was established to ensure that the religious, cultural and pastoral needs and concerns of Muslim inmates were being met. The subcommittee has been active during the last few months with various initiatives. These have included assisting the Board of Visitors in their drive to increase members from ethnic minorities and co-operating with the Muslim Advisor (through representation on the National Council for the Welfare of Muslim inmates) in the drafting of the Muslim Imam's job contract.

HOSPITAL MATTERS

The SPWRC has continued, through its membership of the Multi-Faith Joint National Consultation Hospital Chaplaincies Council (MFJNCHCC), to push for the adoption of guidelines and policy recommendations on the spiritual needs of patients and staff for distribution to NHS Trusts. The MCB is supportive of the draft document that has been prepared by the MFJNCHCC and hopes that the guidelines become an official mandatory circular.

INTER-FAITH NETWORK FOR THE UK

Imam Dr. Abduljalil Sajid, chair of SPWRC, was elected onto the Executive Committee of the Inter-faith Network for the UK at their Annual General Meeting held in Birmingham on July 2nd. Imam Sajid is joined by Dr. Fatma Amer, also elected onto the Executive Committee and Dr. Manazir Ahsan who currently serves as Vice Chair of the organisation.

REGENERATION AND RENEWAL

The Regeneration and Renewal subcommittee of the SPWRC was formed as a steering group for the 1st year of a three year Department of Environment Transport and Local Government (DETL) funded project to encourage Muslim-focused groups (Muslim community organisations, mosques etc) to become involved in various government neighbourhood regeneration initiatives. Year 1 is to be focused specifically on London and will then move to other areas of the country between 2002-2004. In the first quarter of the year, 37 organisations in London have been supported by MCB to submit funding applications either individually or as members of consortia for UK and European funds. These applications have yielded almost £750,000 for Muslim organisations in London in this year alone. This is another example of MCB supporting "front-line" organisations, including affiliates, to access funding to help meet needs of local Muslim communities.

Later in the year the project will be offering awareness-raising seminars and training sessions for other affiliates and Muslim organisations in London who wish to learn about funding opportunities and how to access them. As part of the project, the subcommittee is planning to work with other faith groups and host a seminar in the Autumn to which key decision makers in local and regional government will be invited. The aim is to "sign up" these decision makers to a charter guaranteeing equal treatment for faith groups in consultation and funding as relates to regeneration and renewal initiatives. A European funding bid has been submitted to provide further funds for this initiative in London from 2002-2005.

Health and Medical Committee

HMC MEETS WITH CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

Dr. Mujahid Qureshi, Chair of the Health and Medical Committee (HMC), met with the Chief Medical Officer, Professor Liam

Donaldson, on July 24th to discuss provisions for reducing the numbers of pilgrims infected by strains of the Meningococcal virus.

Following the increase in the number of deaths of Muslims returning from Hajj and instances of infection amongst members of family, the MCB and the Government have agreed a programme of action designed to inform intending Hajjis of the risks posed and the vaccines required to safeguard against infection.

The points discussed at the meeting to prevent Meningococcal infection include an improvement in the campaign to increase awareness, with some emphasis placed on those regions which have recorded a higher concentration of reported cases, and an improvement in the uptake of the quadrivalent vaccine which protects against A, C, W135 and Y strains. Both objectives rely upon a sustained effort by the government, health authorities and Muslim organisations to inform Muslims to seek inoculation and to make more freely and readily available the appropriate vaccine.

The Government, in co-ordination with the Health and Medical Committee, the MCB's affiliate organisations and the Muslim Doctors and Dentists Association, proposes to disseminate this vital information to the British Muslim community through distribution of leaflets in Urdu, Punjabi, Gujarati and Bengali and advertisements on local and Ramadan radio stations. The government hopes to get the project underway by October to meet the demands of Muslims travelling to Saudi to perform Umrah during Ramadan and of course, in preparation for Hajj.

PROVIDING THE MUSLIM VIEWPOINT ON MEDICAL ETHICS: ORGAN RETENTION

Dr Alam Ara Khan on behalf of the Health and Medical Committee attended the consultative meeting of the Commission on Retained Organs held in London on July 7th. The meeting was organised to discuss a suitable method of disposal of retained organs and to create guidelines for NHS Hospital Trusts following outrage over disclosed practices of hospitals retaining organs without familial authorisation.

The Commission invited comments and suggestions from members of ethnic and religious groups stating that 'Trusts should operate within the context of a multi-cultural framework.' The Draft Guidance document adds that 'contact should be made at an early stage with representatives of a range of faiths,..., to gain an understanding of the specific issues for particular faiths...'

ANTI SMOKING CAMPAIGN AND FUNDING BID

The HMC has submitted an application for funds set aside by the Department of Health (DoH) for the financing of health projects and initiatives directed at ethnic minority and faith communities. Dr. Mujahid Qureshi, Chair of the HMC, explains that while other faith communities have taken full advantage of the funds available, the Muslim community has

lagged behind in terms of identifying key projects and seeking financial assistance from the DoH where obtainable. In light of this, the HMC has submitted a grant application to the Health Department's Anti-Smoking Campaign.

Research findings on smoking and its related illnesses reveals that the South Asian population is disproportionately affected in relation to the British population in general. Statistics show that the rates of cardiovascular diseases (angina, heart attack, stroke, diabetes, murmur and high blood pressure) are 60-70% higher among Pakistani and Bangladeshi men than amongst men in the general population. Rates for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are 40% higher than for women in general.

The Committee awaits a decision by the Department of Health.

SHIPMAN INQUIRY

Dr Sadaf Alam, on behalf of the HMC (and Medic Concern), expressed the Muslim viewpoint on matters arising from the Public Inquiry set up to investigate issues pertaining to the criminal activities of Dr Harold Shipman.

Dr Alam's response touched upon the sensitive issues of death certification and post mortems. He stated that the Islamic injunction to bury one's dead as soon as possible was often contravened due to the difficulties posed by the lengthy, time consuming death certification process. He urged the inquiry to pay heed to this point and push for change.

On the latter point, Dr Alam iterated that though post mortems were necessary where death was sudden and its cause unknown, the inquiry should refrain from encouraging the widespread use of post mortems by doctors seeking protection against charges of misconduct or negligence.

Finally, Dr Alam advised the inquiry to resist tarring all single-handed surgery GPs with the Shipman brush. He argued that this would disproportionately affect Muslim GPs, who by and large practice in single-handed surgeries. He argued that the controversial issue of whistle-blowing risked damaging doctors' credibility and dignity.

SUBMISSION TO GMC ON WITHHOLDING AND WITHDRAWING TREATMENT

Dr Hassan Irfan of the HMC submitted to the General Medical Council an account of the Muslim opinion regarding Euthanasia and the deliberate withholding of food and treatment in the case of patients diagnosed as being in a Persistent Vegetative State (PVS).

Dr. Irfan wrote that Muslims could not support or condone any attempts to end life voluntarily by acts of commission or omission and that along with Jews and Christians, Muslims were totally opposed to the legalisation of killing or the hastening of death by any artificial means. He added that neglect of food and fluid was inhumane and would only increase suffering at a time when patients

were most in need of relief.

Dr. Irfan disputed the probability of discerning PVS with accuracy stating that in some cases, for example drowning, hypothermia, head injury, poisoning and post-anaesthesia, diagnosis was often difficult. He argued that while Muslims did not agree with the unnecessary prolongation of the process of death, they were vehemently opposed to any attempts, however well-intentioned, to give doctor's license to cause death by denying patients sustenance.

Education, Training and Employment Committee

ENSURING THE PROVISION OF RELIGIOUS FACILITIES FOR MUSLIMS

A key objective of the Education Training and Employment Committee (ETEC) is to ensure there is a basic provision of religious facilities for Muslim teachers and students. Currently arrangements vary across the country so that religious leave for Eid and Friday prayer allowance, for example, is provided for in some localities but not others.

For the ETEC to effectively pursue this project details are needed of policies where the local authorities or governing bodies have approved these facilities as part of their official policies.

If you would like to contribute to this campaign or for more information about this project please contact the MCB on 020 8903 9024

International Affairs Committee

INTERNATIONAL INTIFADA CONFERENCE

On April 24-25th Secretary General Yousuf Bhailok attended an International conference on the Palestinian Intifada. The conference, organised by the Islamic Republic of Iran and held in Tehran, brought together personalities from all over the Muslim world, including Heads of State, members of parliaments and leading political, scientific and cultural scholars.

In his conference address Yousuf Bhailok said the MCB showed complete solidarity with the Palestinian struggle. "The MCB had repeatedly conveyed to the British Government that a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict could not be achieved without fair acknowledgement of Palestinian rights", he said. The MCB had also repeatedly called on the British Government to take forceful action by imposing economic and political sanctions on Israel for her brutal and excessive use of force and continued violation of UN Resolutions, he added.

The MCB Secretary General went on to demand less rhetoric and more action saying that 'conferences now and in the past have made declarations and resolutions but the international community has not had the will to find a just solution to this enormous human tragedy'. He further demanded that Britain

and the EU use their economic leverage over Israel to urge it to dismantle its illegal settlements and withdraw from the occupied territories.

Families and Women's Support

Dr Fatma Amer, Chair of the Families and Women's Support Committee, attended the AGM of the 'Family and Youth Concern' on June 23rd delivering a short speech on the history, aims and objectives of the MCB and the role of the Family Committee. The speech was published in the Family and Youth Concern newsletter and a good relationship was established with other members of this group. Dr Amer also delivered a talk entitled 'Women in Islam' at Burford Priory on May 22nd.

Dr Amer attended a conference on the 19-20th May at the Islamic Cultural Centre in Geneva on 'The Challenges Facing the Institution of the Muslim Family in Europe'. Dr Amer presented a paper on the educational challenges faced by Muslims.

Research and Documentation Committee

The MCB is collaborating with the Department of Sociology, University of Bristol on a PhD project that will yield benefits to the Muslim community. This is research in the field of Muslim social statistics, under the supervision of Professor Tariq Modood. The post was advertised in various academic channels and the Muslim press (The Muslim News and Q-news) in the summer and five applicants were shortlisted for interview. The successful applicant, Ms Serena Hussain, will take up her post in October, insha Allah. Ms Hussain has recently completed her first degree in Sociology and Comparative Religion at the University of Manchester. She was a speaker at the recent MCB conference 'Building communities - Building bridges'. She attended the UN Conference on Racism in Durban as a member of the official UK government delegation, and also a delegate of the NGO 'Show Racism the Red Card'.

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.



The MCB's Business and Economics Committee, chaired by Iqbal Asaria, has been instrumental in the publication of booklet 'Target 2015 - halving world poverty' by the Department for International Development (DFID). The booklet will be formally launched by Secretary of State

Clare Short at an MCB event on 10th October at the House of Commons. The booklet includes cut-out postcards for contacting the MCB, Islamic Relief, Muslim Aid and DFID for further information on the campaign to eliminate global poverty.

MCB on the Net <http://www.mcb.org.uk>

CONGRATULATIONS!

The MCB would like to congratulate Sobayha and Attikha Valli, on their GCSE and 'A' level results. Sobayha, student at Bolton Muslim Girls' School scored 7 A's, an A and a B in her GCSEs and Attikha, student at Bolton Girls' School, earned 3 grade A's in her 'A' levels.

Students at Blackburn Girls' School also attained high grades in GCSE examinations this year with 75% of students returning grades A-C.

MCB Secretary General Yousof Bhailok praised the students' achievements stating that parental encouragement was an indispensable ingredient in helping youngsters apply themselves to their education. 'Making mention of instances of achievement was necessary not only to give credit where credit is due, but also to encourage other parents and students to take note', he said.

Sobayha will continue her education taking A levels in Maths, Economics, English Literature and IT and Attikha begins her degree in Law at the London School of Economics this October. The MCB wishes them both the best.

CHANGES TO MARRIAGE LAWS

The General Register Office has in recent months invited comments and responses from religious organisations in the UK with a view to changing marriage laws. The proposed changes will introduce greater flexibility as to when and where marriage ceremonies can take place and would permit the ceremony to be conducted by a celebrant of the couple's choosing.

Presently marriages are required to take place in a building such as a register office, an approved premise or registered building, between the hours of 8am and 6pm, and there has to be a registrar or Authorised Person present. One option for change is to appoint religious and civil celebrants who, if agreeable, will perform the ceremony at a place chosen by the couple, at any time of day or night, at a place of worship or outdoors. The changes would also negate the need for a registrar or Authorised Person to be present. Muslims could therefore, appoint Imams to conduct the ceremony in a mosque, according to these proposals.

Consultation with religious bodies has yielded positive results with organisations expressing strong support for changes to current laws on marriage. Though these changes will take time to introduce the initiative and its endorsement by faith communities in the UK is a favourable step forward for Muslims.

APPEAL

The MCB's purpose is to serve the community. It needs to be financially independent. Your contributions are essential at this time. Please donate generously to safeguard yourself, your family and British Muslim generations to come. Donations should be made payable to 'The Muslim Council of Britain', Account Number 11227408, Branch sort code 40-46-10, HSBC, Wembley Park Branch. *JazakAllah khairan.*

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UN WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM by Serena Hussain

I was asked to attend the World Conference Against Racism, xenophobia and related intolerance with the UK official delegation. I was pleased that I would be going to the conference in Durban (Aug. 31st - Sept. 7th) as I had already attended the European conference last October in Strasbourg as preparation for this and it felt good that I was now able to carry through the work that I had started.

The conference was actually made up of three conferences: the Youth Summit, the International NGO Forum and the UN World Conference against Racism. I was disappointed at how few Muslim youth organisations were attending the youth summit but pleased at how much support the Palestinian youth delegates were attaining from the vast majority of young people at the summit.

This support continued throughout the NGO conference. Israel was being described by many International NGO's as an apartheid state due to the treatment of the Palestinians. Other issues that gained NGO support were the recognition and inclusion of Caste in the declaration, in particular, support of the Dalits (untouchables) of India, and the plight of the Roma in Europe. It was inspiring to witness the sheer level of support for the Palestinian cause even though 'bully' tactics had been prescribed in attempts to remove the Palestinian issue from the agenda.

The NGO document was not officially endorsed by the UN due to some of the 'language' contained in it. The argument was that it was contradictory to UN language. Many NGO's felt it would be far more productive to recognise the NGO document as a source of information and reference on what the international NGO community's position is on certain issues. Whether the NGO document is accepted as such remains to be seen. This was perhaps one of the most disappointing outcomes of the conference, many NGO's had put years of preparation into the forum.

My experiences of Durban proved to be far more fruitful than the conference itself. I was fortunate enough to visit some of the townships and local schools. One of the largest problems South Africa faces post-apartheid is HIV and Aids and there seemed to be reminders of this everywhere: I'm sure this is purposely done. I also had the opportunity to meet with local Muslims, both individuals and organisations, and to visit the oldest and once largest mosque on the Southern hemisphere.

Many aspects of the conference were inspiring and I am grateful of the experience. I was able to become involved in various projects and hope to continue to get involved in developing these further and seeing them take shape particularly in the area of youth work.

Travelling for Umrah? MENINGITIS IS A REAL RISK

Ask your GP to administer the 'quadrivalent' Meningococcal vaccine before you travel.

People - Continued from page 7

tutions, voluntary and community organisations, black and ethnic minority communities and faith communities. The LCF aims to represent London's many diverse groups and engage them in debate and consultation with the Mayor and Greater London Assembly to promote better governance and decision making.

■ The MCB congratulates Dr Magdi M Yaqoob for being conferred a Professorship in Nephrology in August 2001. Professor Yaqoob is Academic Head, Lead Consultant Nephrologist at the Department of Nephrology, Experimental Medicine and Transplantation, St. Bartholomew's & the Royal London School of Medicine and Dentistry and Queen Mary's College, London. He is a world expert in his field and graduated from Karachi University, Dow Medical College, in 1982.

The MCB also extends its congratulations to the following who received MBEs:

Salim Ismail Kholwadia, of HM Board of Customs and Excise; Mohammed Monir for serving the community in Rotherham, South Yorkshire; Mrs Shaheen Choudary, for services in community relations; Tanweer Saif Chowdhury of the Metropolitan Police Service for services to the police; and Tarique Ghaffur, Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service, also for services to the police.