

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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Shariah-compliant financial products

In a keynote speech at the Islamic Home Finance Seminar in London on 27 March, the governor of the Bank of England, Sir Edward George, noted that progress in this area would be "a wonderful thing for the peace of mind of concerned members of the growing Muslim community in Britain". Eddie George also made the positive statement that such developments should lead to "the establishment of fully-fledged Islamic financial institutions" in the UK.

Iqbal Asaria, Chair of the MCB's Business & Economics Committee also speaking at the seminar told the conference, "This could lead to other products: savings products, insurance, family insurance, pension products and also possibly a fully Sharia compliant Isa,". He presented Malaysia as an example of a country with an English legal framework where there was a growing market for financial products which complied with Muslim law.

The full text of Sir Edward George's speech can be accessed at http://www.salaam.co.uk/news/displaynews.php?news_id=207791

Interactive essay

Sheikh Ibrahim Mogra, Chair of the MCB's Mosque & Community Affairs Committee has taken part in the BBC News online interactive essay on War in Iraq. He states: "When we speak to our congregation with regards to the war, we talk about the need for peace, the need for dialogue between different peoples of the world. We talk about justice. So we have to do everything possible to establish justice and to remove oppression...The essence of what the Koran says about war and what the Sunnah that is the tradition of the messenger, Mohammed, peace be on him (is) never to start a war as an offensive on your part. Always try to be at peace with one another and negotiate with difficulties in a peaceful manner."

Commenting on the remarks made by Sheikh Mogra, MCB Central Working Committee member AbdulWahid Hamid writes: "It is true that a stated objective of this war is to free the Iraqi people from the oppression of Saddam. But do you free people by bombing them with the most lethal and destructive weapons ever devised in human history? Do you free people after imposing sanctions on their country and causing hundreds of thousands of the most vulnerable - mothers and young children - to perish through disease and starvation? Do you free people after having yourself been responsible for installing the dictator in power and providing him with chemical, biological and other weapons and the means and facilities to do manufacture them?"

The United States, Britain and the limited 'coalition of the willing' cannot justifiably claim any moral credit for this war. There is no moral high ground in this war. It is probably more instructive to see this war in the context of geopolitics in the region and the perceived need of its major

military power for 'security' and unchallenged dominance."

Sheikh Ibrahim Mogra's excellent video contribution and responses to it can be found at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2861721.stm.

Human Relief Foundation Emergency Appeal

MCB Affiliate, the Human Relief Foundation has issued an emergency appeal for the People of Iraq. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has stated that in the current climate of crisis '30% of Iraqi citizens under the age of five are at risk from death resulting from malnutrition.' In real terms this means that over a million Iraqi infants are at immediate risk from starvation. For many of the Iraqi people the threat of malnutrition and infection are so manifest that they have fled their homes. The UNHCR estimates that 'up to 1.5 million Iraqi citizens will become refugees as a result of the current conflict.' Furthermore, the humanitarian emergency could be of 'proportions well beyond the capacity of our agencies.' The Iraqi people are desperately in need of mass humanitarian aid and support.

By Cheque: Payable to 'Human Relief Foundation' P.O Box 194, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD7 1YW. Donate to the Human Relief Foundation at Barclays Bank. A/C: 70554022 Sort Code 20-11-81. By Phone: Contact Mobeen Azhar at The Human Relief Foundation on 01274 39 27 27 or 07715 00 10 60 Email donate@hrf.co.uk website: www.hrf.co.uk

Muslim Aid urges UK Government to protect civilians in Iraq

A meeting held on Tuesday 24 March with the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Department of International Development (DfID), Sally Keeble and MCB Affiliate Muslim Aid stressed the importance of a real effort to protect civilians in Iraq and to rebuild the post-war Iraq beyond mere pledges. Despite DfID's latest £30 million pledge for humanitarian assistance to Iraq Muslim Aid's Chairman, Chowdhury Mueen-Uddin, urged the British Government to commit comparable amounts to the rebuilding of Iraq as are being spent on the military campaign. Muslim Aid also stressed the importance of the protection of civilians in the conflict, especially in the light of the looming humanitarian disasters in the Iraqi cities of Basra and Baghdad. Chowdhury Mueen-Uddin stated: "As a humanitarian charity we feel – whilst we will do our level best to help with our limited funds – that the moral obligation to support civilians in Iraq during and after the war lies very clearly in the hands of the coalition."

For further information please refer to www.muslimaid.org.uk

Response to Oriana Fallaci

A diatribe against Muslims and Islam by Oriana Fallaci appeared in the Wall Street Journal and the Sunday Times on 16 March. She also made an impassioned call for war on Iraq.

Iqbal Sacranie, MCB Secretary General, responded with an article published in the Sunday Times

on the same day, 16 March 2003; "Miss Fallaci, your views are an insult to peace loving Muslims". In it he stated: "In these depressing times, one of the most heartening developments has been the emergence of European Muslims taking a role in the anti-war movement. They have worked alongside their non-Muslim friends to organise massive demonstrations in every European capital city...You accuse the West of being blind to the threat of Islam. In doing so, you have crossed the line from legitimate criticism to Islamophobia. Your charges are unfounded and malicious...We are well-wishers of all peoples who want to live in peace with each other...You accuse the anti-war demonstrators of "never yelling at Saddam Hussein". The Muslim world has been vocally opposed to Saddam Hussein's odious regime since at least 1980 when he invaded Iran with the encouragement of some of your friends in the United States..."

For the full texts please refer to the Library Section
at www.mcb.org.uk and <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2092-611639,00.html>
<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2092-611663,00.html>

Christian and Muslim leaders plea for peace

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, the umbrella body for all major Christian churches, and The Muslim Council of Britain issued a joint statement on 20 March exhorting all those involved to weigh carefully the human costs and other likely consequences of war. The statement pleaded for the UN process to be respected in the interests of upholding international law, and counselled that another way of ensuring Iraq's compliance with UN Resolutions might be identified and agreed – while being firm in their abhorrence at the nature of the Saddam Hussein regime. Restating the desire to see military action ended as quickly as possible they underlined the need for caution to prevent opportunist elements from exploiting this state of affairs and for Christians and Muslim to maintain bonds of harmony with one another "In this time of crisis and deep disappointment, it is vitally important that, despite the occasional unhappy use of 'crusade' language by some American political leaders, none should see the conflict as one between faiths."

A black day in our history

On 18 March, The Muslim Council of Britain released a press statement voicing deep regret for the abandonment of peaceful efforts to resolving the crisis in Iraq. The failure of the US and the UK to persuade members of the Security Council points to a failure not in the United Nations system but a failure to convince the majority of the Security Council that there was a case for a legitimate war on Iraq. Commenting on the decision to withdraw the second resolution from a vote in the UN Security Council Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary General of the MCB said "It is obvious that our position is one without support at home; it is without support abroad and it is without legal justification."

Shortly after this, on 20 March 2003, as the conflict in Iraq commenced, the Muslim Council of Britain released a further statement saying "This is a black day in our country's history. All along, it has been evident, that the United States government was determined to go to war according to

a preset timetable regardless of the deliberations at the United Nations or the extent of co-operation provided by Iraq over disarmament. Our government should not have been a party to this conflict which has only undermined the United Nations, our own democracy and the rule of law."

For the full text of these statements please refer to the Press Release Section at www.mcb.org.uk

Batley peace meeting

On March 16 2003, over 500 people attended the peace meeting at the Zakaria Educational Centre in Batley Carr organised by Mike Wood MP and the MCB Affiliate the Batley Muslim Association. Mr Wood delivered the keynote speech and was presented with a Petition for Peace signed by 4,000 local people, which he has presented to the Prime Minister. The meeting, chaired by Sulaiman Kazi from the Batley Muslim Association, focussed upon the need for all people of faith and/or goodwill to re-double efforts to improve community cohesion at this highly charged time.

John Battle, MP for Leeds West, spoke on community cohesion; Peter Wrigley a lay preacher at Batley Parish Church, gave a Christian perspective; and Cllr Afzal Khan, a member of the Muslim Council for Britain, gave an Islamic perspective

For further information contact Batley Muslim Association (BMA), P.O. Box 111, Batley, West Yorkshire, WF17 6WU, England, Fax: 08701317243, Email: batleymuslimassociation@yahoo.co.uk

Speech at Baptist Church

Muhammad Aslam Ijaz, Secretary of the Membership Committee has made a number of speeches, including one held at the Baptist Church in Clapham Junction, London on 5 March 2003. His speech emphasised the position of the Council of Mosques and of its umbrella organisation, the Muslim Council of Britain. " We are in total solidarity with the millions and millions of people who have already marched, and who will continue to march, both in this country and across the globe in order to express their total rejection of a war which is nothing other than a poorly disguised attempt to impose a neo-colonialist world order and control the lives and resources of Muslim countries... Let us all pray that common sense will prevail and that nations will resolve their differences on the table and not on the battlefield."

Faith leaders meeting

At 3 pm on 12 March 2003, a Faith Leaders meeting took place at the Greater London Assembly. This was attended by MCB Deputy Secretary General, Dr Abdul Bari and Vice Chair of the MCB Membership Committee Dr Abdul Raheem Khan. The topics discussed included the question of poverty and other problems in areas across London, focussing on East London. The regeneration

funds allocated to these matters and the positive results achieved were discussed although issues relating to Health continue to cause concern.

Muslim Safety Forum meeting

On 12 March 2003, The Muslim Safety Forum met at New Scotland Yard and was attended by the Vice Chair of the MCB London Task Group Abdul Raheem Khan. Lord Filkin of the Home Office joined the forum to familiarise himself with its activities. The matter of the unjust linkage between Eid and terrorism was taken up and is to be pursued with the Prime Minister and Sir John Stevens. Additionally, the Muslim Safety Forum have begun preparations for dealing with the eventuality of any Islamophobic attacks on Muslims. The success of this initiative depends on the prompt reporting of every incident to the police. Its success depends on prompt reporting of every incident.

London Muslim Coalition meeting

The London Muslim Coalition met on 13 March 2003 to discuss the launch which is due to take place on 1 April 2003. MCB London Task Group Chair Tanzeem Wasti and Dr Abdul Raheem Khan attended the meeting.

Iraq: can the war be averted?

On Thursday 13 March a meeting entitled "Iraq: can the war be averted?" was hosted by Alice Mahon MP, Mohammad Sarwar MP and the Muslim Council of Britain. The meeting held at the House of Commons was attended by Unaiza Malik, MCB Assistant Secretary General, Mahmud Al-Rashid, Chair of the Legal Affairs Committee and Tanzeem Wasti, Chair of the London Task Group.

UK Roundtable Conference

Imam Abdul Jalil Sajid attended the UK Roundtable Conference on 14 March 2003 organised by European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia on the topic "A New Equality Framework for the UK?" The conference debates were of a high standard which were followed by two workshops and a question and answer session.

London Mayor meets Muslim leaders

On 17 March 2003, The MCB Affiliate the Muslim Association of Britain held an urgent meeting with major Muslim organisations and the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone who continued to show their continuing support against the war. A number of practical steps were discussed during the meeting and the Mayor's Office promise to pursue these issues further. Among the organisations that attended the crisis meeting were MCB affiliates: Federation of Student Islamic Societies, Islamic Human Rights Commission, Palestinian Return Centre, Muslim Welfare House and Islamic Cultural & Heritage Centre.

Council of Imams and Muslim leaders

On 19 March The Council of Imams and Muslim Leaders (London and Southern Counties), an organisation with over 300 members a number of whom represent bodies affiliated to the MCB, issued a statement on the eve of war on Iraq. They state "We deeply regret the abandonment of peaceful efforts via United Nations route to disarm Iraq as per the UN resolutions. UN Security Council is the sole authority competent to enforce its resolutions. No one should be allowed to take any military action outside the framework of the UN Security Council and UN Charter. War on Iraq will fuel frustration, extremism and fanaticism as well as creating further regional instability...We hope and pray that war on Iraq may not become a war on Iraqi people. Many poor Iraqi people were dependent on the UN Oil for Food programme. All UN staff have now left Iraq. A humanitarian catastrophe is waiting to happen as many will simply die of hunger. Our prayers are with innocent victims of the situation...The desire for a just and true peace in our world is passionate and universal amongst all people. We join together in heartfelt prayer and yearning that peace may come, and come soon."

MCB supports call for special prayers

A statement made the The Muslim Council of Britain on Thursday 20 March fully supported the call made by its affiliates and others across the country to offer special prayers of need - Salat al-Haajah - to pray for the safety and welfare of the Iraqi people, in all mosques on Friday 21 March after the main weekly congregational prayer.

The MCB appealed to the Imams of mosques around the country to focus their Friday sermon on the unfolding human tragedy in the Gulf and the consequent threat to world peace. Furthermore, they requested that British Muslims continue to play their legitimate role in solidarity with the national peace movement.

Committees Update

Media Committee (MC)

Radio 4 Debate

Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary of the Media Committee participated in a debate about the Iraq War on Radio 4's Sunday Programme on 23 March 2003. The other participants were Peter Selby, Anglican Bishop of Worcester and Rabbi Sidney Brichto, Senior Vice President of the Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues. The debate is available online at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/realmedia/sunday/s20030323e.ram>

Briefing with Al-Ahram journalist

Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary of the MCB's Media committee, met with an Egyptian journalist from the Egyptian daily al-Ahram who is on secondment to the Guardian newspaper, on March 11th 2003, to give an overview about the situation of British Muslims and the work of the MCB.

Article in The Times

MCB Media Secretary Inayat Bunglawala published an article in the Times on 25 March 2003 entitled "We won't forget the terrible things done in our name." His article explores the Muslim perspective on the Iraq War and its portrayal in the media: "Many British Muslims are now very sceptical about what they see and hear and are seeking other sources of information to find out what is really going on in Iraq in our name, but without our consent".

For the full article refer to <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/newspaper/0,,171-622775,00.html>

Research & Documentation Committee (ReDoc)

Census data

Dr Jamil Sherif (Secretary of ReDoc) has an article in the current issue of The Muslim News summarizing 2001 Census data in relation to British Muslims.

This can be found online at <http://www.muslimnews.co.uk/paper/index.php?article=1129>

Legal Affairs Committee (LAC)

UK Terrorism Legislation

Mahmud Al-Rashid, Chair of the MCB Legal Affairs Committee gave a talk on 17 March at the Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre, North Kensington to over 100 attendees. The topic covered was UK Terrorism Legislations and their consequences for Muslims. A lively question and answer session followed. A similar speech was given on Tuesday 25 March at the East London Mosque.

Women & Family Affairs Committee (WAFa)

WAFa Update

The Women and Family Affairs Committee (WAFa) of the MCB was formed six months ago. The Chairperson of the newly elected committee, Dr Reefat Drabu opened the membership to all, and in so doing voiced the concern that healthy and vigorous debate is needed between men and women on issues that touch every aspect of Muslim family life.

Sarah Sheriff, WAFa Committee member, attended a meeting organised by the Home Office on guidelines on forced marriages for the Department of Social Services in January. Jasmine Ansari, Vice Chair of the WAFa Committee and Dr Reefat Drabu attended a highly publicised and well attended conference organised by REUNITE at the Islamic Foundation in Leicester in February. WAFa has established contact with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and met with FCO representatives on 3 March to discuss the issue of forced marriages as it is a growing concern in many Muslim countries. They raised the concerns that the current strategy lacked parental involvement and faith values, these being essential to tackle the issue of forced marriages amongst Muslim families. A response is awaited and much work is needed in this area especially when girls returning to the UK face hostility and are ostracised by their own families.

The WAFa Committee application to the MARS project (Marriage and Relationship Support Grant) in October 2002 was unfortunately rejected, but WAFa intends to reapply for the grant next year.

WAFa remit covers a number of concerns and it has recently sent a mailshot to all MCB affiliates with the aim of gathering information regarding womens' organisations. Work in progress includes

organising a conference on a “burning issue” that women would like to discuss.

Health & Medical Committee (HMC)

Pork in "Halal" chicken update

Following a press release issued on 27 February 2003 - Pork in “Halal” Chicken - Dr Shuja Shafi, Chair of the MCB Health & Medical Committee, and Dr A Majid Katme wrote to Sir John Krebs, the Chairman of the Food Standards Agency on 7 March expressing serious concern over the large scale and systematic defiance by major suppliers of “Halal” meat to consumers. The letter addressed the need to achieve best practice within the food industry, and the need for an action plan with compliance, along with guidance to local authorities and consumers on what to look for when inspecting halal butchers.

Dr Shuja Shafi was interviewed on March 12 by BBC Radio WM. Dr A Majid Katme, spokesman on Halal meat and food for the MCB, has also given a number of interviews and talks on this issue. These include BBC radio Asia Network on 5 March, the Press Association on the 12 March, Al Arab daily newspaper and Channel Islam International on 28 February. He has also attended the Meat Hygiene Policy Forum held at the Food Standards Agency on 6 March in order to emphasise Muslim concern over this issue and pursue direct action, inspection and prosecution.

Dr Shafi states that the British Muslim community was shocked and distressed that meat sold to them as “Halal” has now been confirmed to be systematically and deliberately contaminated with pork which is specifically prohibited in Islam. The existing consumer protection and food safety legislation Acts should offer protection to the British Muslim consumer. The Muslim Council of Britain have asked for an urgent meeting with the FSA and related agencies so that appropriate advice may be offered to the community. In the interim, the Trading Standards Institute advise that consumers should avoid chicken with added water.

A dossier of information can be found at <http://www.mcb.org.uk/report-halal.html>.

New on the MCB Website

- Committees Section updates
- Links page update
- Library, articles and reports update
- Updated MCB Constitution and Standing Orders together with the affiliation form can now be viewed in the About MCB Section.

The Quest for Sanity

Letters of appreciation (cont'd)

I congratulate you and the contributors for a timely and thought provoking contribution to inter-faith understanding and tolerance

John Bowis OBE MEP for London

..thank you for these most interesting reflections...

Marie France Garaud, MEP

I would like to wish you every success with this publication and may you continue with your very important and valuable work.

Dana Rosemary Scallion, MEP

The book has an excellent collection of articles covering the width and depth of assessment of the impact of Islam and Muslims in Europe and beyond. Congratulations!

Bashir Khanbhai, MEP

I welcome contact with Muslims in this country and as a member of the European Parliament's Committee for Euro-Arab relations, I recognise the need for mutual understanding and co-operation..

Roy Perry, MEP

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: International Issues Seminar

Date: 3 April 2003

Held By: The Muslim Council of Britain

Venue: London

Contact: Nawazish Bokhari, Vice Chair of the Education Committee c/o MCB Office

email: admin@mcb.org.uk

Information: The seminar will include a lecture on international affairs specifically relating to Muslim issues.

Event: Intensive Advanced Seerah Seminar

Date: 7.00pm Friday 4 April till Monday 7 April 2003

Held By: The Islamic Society of Britain and the Islamic Foundation

Venue Islamic Foundation, Leicester

Contact: For an application form call 01924-500684 or 0151-

7269436 www.islamicworker.com Information: The lecturers will include AbdulWahid Hamid, author of the Companions of the

Prophet series; Adil Salahi , Translator of Sayyid Qutb's Fi Zilal al-Qur'an; Salim Kayani, scholar of the Qur'an and student of Mawlana Amin Islahi; Dr Manazir Ahsan, Director-General of the Islamic Foundation. The deadline for applications is March 9th 2003 - places are limited The registration fee is £45. Creche facilities are also available at £5/day.

Event: Conference of Independent Schools & Headteachers

Date: 7 April 2003

Venue Oxford University

Contact: Nawazish Bokhari, Vice Chair of the Education Committee c/o MCB Office
email: admin@mcb.org.uk

Information: The conference will cover education issues relating to September 11.

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

Event: Media March

Date: Saturday 31 May 2003

Time: 1.30 pm to 4 pm

Held By: Media Watch UK.

Venue Start at Tothill Street, opposite St James's underground, towards Parliament and congregate at Trafalgar Square for rally.

Contact: Dr A.Majid Katme Tel: 0208 345 6220 or Mobile :07944 240 62

Email: akatme@hotmail.com Website: www.mediamarch.org.uk

Information: March and petition to call for Britain's obscenity laws and related media regulations to be radically strengthened. Speeches will be made at Trafalgar Square by prominent speakers in the media and a representative from the MCB.

Event: MCB Fund Raising Dinner

Date: 5 July 2003

Held By: The Muslim Council of Britain.

Contact: redoc@mcb.org.uk

Information: Dinner to support the MCBDirect Project - a community information service and portal.
