

# THE MUSLIM COUNCIL OF BRITAIN

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

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## Muslim Council of Britain Weekly E-Newsletter

*15 Rabe'e ` al-Awwal 1424 AH Friday 16 May 2003*

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### Weekly Updates on Reports, Committees and Events: Issue 42

#### Reports and Events Update

- MCB's sixth AGM
- New census results
- Conservative Party organises Milad-un-Nabi celebration
- Loss of innocent civilian life cannot be condoned
- MCB arbitrates successfully
- PRC international conference
- Muslim Welfare House opens doors

#### Committees Update

- Media Committee (MC)
- Research & Documentation Committee (ReDoc)
- Social Affairs Committee (SAC)
- Education, Training & Employment Committee (ETEC)
- London Affairs Committee (LC)

#### New on the MCB Website

#### The Quest for Sanity Reviews

#### Events

- MCB Fund Raising Dinner
- Fundraising Dinner
- Media March
- Family Day Out

- Islam & Social Justice, before and after 9/11
- Charity Dinner for Iraq
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- Living Islam Family Camp

**Committee Contacts**

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## Reports and Events Update

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### MCB's sixth AGM

The Muslim Council of Britain held its annual general meeting on 26 April 2003 at the Islamic Cultural Centre, London. Following a welcome address by the Centre's Director General, Dr Ahmad Al-Dubayan, Secretary General Iqbal Sacranie and Treasurer Akber Mohamedali presented their reports at a business session. (For further details of the report see Press Release and full report on website). The chairs of MCB committees also highlighted their main activities and responded to questions. This business session was followed by a presentation by Dr Aziz Sheikh 'Empowering British Muslims - priorities and strategies'. The programme included an address by Sheikh Rashid Ghannoushi, the Tunisian Islamic thinker, on the challenges facing British Muslims and a panel discussion on the role of mosques in our society.

The Assembly called upon the British Muslim community not to be discouraged or daunted by recent events, urging that it continue to work towards building a society based on mutual trust and compassion; giving a sense of hope and direction to our young, strengthening the moral foundations of the family, and working for a just and fair political culture, to make people the real stake-holders in society. "Notwithstanding the hardships and hurdles in the short term, Islam is hope and courage, and that is how we go forward from here", said Iqbal Sacranie.

As one participant remarked: "Too often, these past few years, I had heard windy rhetoric from angry and arrogant activists in our town centre about the need for Muslim unity - but here it was, in technicolour, delegates from a record 380 organisations and mosques, quietly coming together under one umbrella to work for common goals. I know there are many groups that claim to be representative of Muslim opinion, but there was simply nothing to compare with what I was seeing here at the MCB's AGM."

### New census results

A press release issued by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on 7 May 2003 provides further details on the population's age breakdown and children's backgrounds. Britain's Muslim community has a very high proportion of young people - 33.8 % of Muslims are aged 0-15 (national average is 20.2%), and 18.2 % age 16-24 (national average is 10.9%).

54.5 % of population in the Pakistani ethnic group was born in England or Wales.

Many children live in 'workless' households with over two million (17.6%) in households where there are no adults in work. In Muslim households this is even higher with more than a third of children living in households where no adults has work.

Muslim children also experience much more overcrowding (more than two in five - 41.7 % - compared with

an average of 12.3 % ) and one in eight live in a household with no central heating compared with the average of 5.9 % - one in 16.

For further information please refer to the ONS website: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk>

## **Conservative Party organises Milad-un-Nabi celebration**

The Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain, Iqbal Sacranie, and a number of other senior members from the MCB and its affiliates from across the country including Tanzeem Wasti, Chair of the London Affairs Committee and Dr Abdul Raheem Khan, Vice Chair of Membership Committee, attended the Milad-un-Nabi function organised by the Conservative Party at the Central Office on 15 May 2003. The Chair of the Conservative Party, Theresa May, members of the shadow cabinet and a number of MPs including Muslim prospective candidates such as Ali Miraj, were present. This was the first time that such an event celebrating the birth of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, has been organised by a political party. The person behind this initiative was Sameer Mirza, a well known businessman.

Ali Miraj, the prospective Parliamentary candidate for Watford introduced the leader of the Party to the meeting. Mr Ian Duncan Smith emphasised the need for the Conservative Party to work closely with the Muslim community as they shared common values on a number of important issues. He said: "I'm grateful to the Muslim Council of Britain – its many membership organisations – and the many other groups that actively represent Britain's Muslims – increasing awareness of Islam throughout this country...Today's celebration is but a small step in what I hope will be an ever-deeper, and ever more friendly association between Conservatives and British Muslims....The sooner I have Muslim Conservative MPs, the sooner I will have a Muslim minister."

Speaking on the issue of Palestine he added "The spotlight of the world, though, is now moving once again to the nearer Middle East. Peace there, and peace in the wider region, is not going to come until a lasting settlement is reached between Israelis and Palestinians. I want to see a proper, viable Palestinian state; and I want to see a secure Israel living alongside it. Israel within its borders, safe and secure: Palestine as a viable country, living beside it."

Commenting on the recent moves by the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) to introduce stunning in all meat Mr Duncan Smith said: "Conservatives strongly support efforts to improve the welfare of farm animals but you can be assured that we will oppose any attempts by the Farm Animal Welfare Council to compromise religious freedom. "

The MCB Secretary General also spoke, expressing deep appreciation on behalf of all those present and thanked the Party and the organisers for this important event in the Islamic calendar. He stated this event marked a clear recognition of the very positive contribution the Muslim community makes to society. He appreciated the regular meetings between the Muslim community and the Opposition Party on a range of issues. He commended their stance on family issues and in particular the importance of the institution of marriage which forms the very foundation of our

society. He applauded their support of faith schools and the assurances given by Mr Duncan Smith to oppose the attempts by the FAWC to introduce stunning in all meat.

### **Loss of innocent civilian life cannot be condoned**

MCB Secretary General Iqbal Sacranie, speaking on Radio 4's Today Programme stated: "We cannot condone the loss of any civilian life whether it be Palestinian or Israeli. However, the Palestinian tragedy of occupation and oppression has been going on for too long with no positive result. The incident does not mark a growth of extremism within the British Muslim community, as the media has been projecting by giving undue prominence to the fringe elements in our community."

### **MCB arbitrates successfully**

Yousuf Bhailok, former MCB Secretary General, attended and chaired an arbitration to settle a dispute concerning a mosque and madrasa in Bolton. A number of internal problems with the operation and management of the Trust had arisen causing the temporary stoppage of building works. This has now Alhamdulillah been satisfactorily resolved and work on the new building has now recommenced. For further details regarding the availability of arbitration services provided by the MCB to facilitate the resolution of internal disputes amongst the Muslim community kindly contact the MCB Office.

### **PRC international conference**

On 23 April 2003, the MCB affiliate, The Palestinian Return Centre, held its second international conference on the topic of "Britain and the inalienable rights for the Palestinian people" at the Brunei Gallery in the School of Oriental and African studies of London University.

The underlying message of the conference was that if Britain is concerned about international legitimacy, UN resolutions and human rights, it ought to fulfil the obligation that has fallen into its responsibility years ago by rallying international corroboration to expel the Zionist occupation and mobilising its forces to dismantle the Zionist apartheid in Palestine as it did with Saddam Hussein.

The opening session, conducted by Mr Majed Al Zeer on behalf of The PRC, stressed that the Arab - Zionist conflict is not only about a dispute over land, but also related to the right of Palestinian people to return to their county. He also appealed for a settlement for this conflict, not on the basis of the existing military imbalance, but rather in the light of international law, the right of Palestinian people to return to their homeland and their rights of independence and sovereignty in Palestine.

The international conference went on to cover issues such as the legal meaning of the Palestinian mandate, international responsibility with regard to violating basic human rights and the legal and administrative role played by Britain in establishing Israel.

For further information please contact PRC, Crown House, North Circular Road, London NW10 7PN, UK, Tel : 0208 4530919 Fax : 0208 4530994 E-mail: [info@prc.org.uk](mailto:info@prc.org.uk) Website: [www.prc.org.uk](http://www.prc.org.uk)

## **Muslim Welfare House opens doors**

The MCB Affiliates The Muslim Welfare House, an Islamic centre based in Islington, is inviting its neighbours to learn more about Islam & Muslims. A two day event has been organised in an attempt to build bridges between Muslim communities and their neighbours living in the Finsbury Park area. The event is designed to increase communication within the local community, and help towards fostering a spirit of friendship and understanding.

"Only through getting to know one another on a personal level can people of different faiths or no faith, build bridges of understanding and tolerance", said Nurul Mudasar a local volunteer at the Muslim Welfare House.

The event is open to the general public. The main features of the programme include discussions about Islamic beliefs, tours, question and answer sessions, exhibitions and samples of food from around the Islamic world. The event is being held on 24 and 25 May 2003 (10am – 7pm) at the Muslim Welfare House, 233 Seven Sisters Road, London N2 (Nearest Tube: Finsbury Park Stn). For further information please contact Mujib Miah on 020 7263 3071.

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## **Committees Update**

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

#### **Article in the Daily Express**

On 2 May 2003, Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary of the MCB Media Committee, had an article published in the Daily Express entitled "Why do UK Muslims turn to terrorism?" The article urges the media to "resist indulging ... fringe groups and giving them the publicity they so obviously crave" and calls for "a genuine peaceful settlement in the Middle East."

For the full article please refer to the online MCB library, letters and articles section at [www.mcb.org.uk](http://www.mcb.org.uk)

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

#### **Redoc E-Newsletter**

The second issue of ReDoc's research e-newsletter (editor Shabana Khan) has been published and is available from the ReDoc committee's page on the MCB website.

#### **BBC Radio Asia Interview**

Aziz Sheikh, Chair of ReDoc, gave an interview to BBC Radio Asia on 8 May 2003 and spoke amongst other things about the work of the MCB's Research & Documentation Committee.

#### **Presentation at London Interfaith Centre**

Aziz Sheikh and Shadi Bashir, members of ReDoc gave a presentation entitled 'An introduction to the Qur'an' to clergy undertaking the Certificate in Interfaith Education at the London Interfaith Centre on 7 May 2003.

### **BMJ publications**

Aziz Sheikh had a publication in the British Medical Journal entitled 'Where worlds meet' published on 12 April 2003. A further item on 'Doctors and their faiths' was published on 19 April 2003. These are available on the MCB website and from:

[http://bmj.com/cgi/content/full/326/7393/809?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&author1=sheikh%](http://bmj.com/cgi/content/full/326/7393/809?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&author1=sheikh%20)

and

[http://bmj.com/cgi/content/full/326/7394/S135?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&author1=sheikh%](http://bmj.com/cgi/content/full/326/7394/S135?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&author1=sheikh%20)

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

### **Improving the Imams' Service to Prisoners**

Salah el-Hassan, Vice Chair of SAC, on behalf of The National Council for the Welfare of Muslim Prisoners (NCWMP) has, in collaboration with The Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations (CSIC) at the University of Birmingham, organised a seminar on "Improving the Imams Services to Prisoners". Thirty three imams from prison establishments in the North of England Participated in the event on 23 April 2003, including Moosa Gora, the Acting Muslim Prison Advisor. Speakers included Prof Jorgen Nielsen: Understanding the Diversity of Muslims in Britain in a session chaired by Prof Noibi; Dr Bustami Khir: Sources and methods of teaching religious knowledge and spirituality to Muslim inmates, session chaired by Dr Von Sicard; Dr Rasjid Skinner: Islamic Counselling, session chaired by Chair of SAC Shibani Akbar and a Group Discussion was held on 'Improving the Services of Prisons Visiting Imams', chaired by Salah el-Hassan.

A similar event was organised by NCWMP in collaboration with the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies on 9 April 2003 for prison imams in the South of England.

The NCWMP, an umbrella organisation that seeks to promote better understanding for the needs of Muslim prisoners, was founded in 1999. The MCB is a founding member of this body and is represented by Sr Shibani Akbar and Dr Abdul Raheem Khan

### **Volunteers Required**

The Social Affairs Committee is inviting volunteers to join and contribute to the work of SAC. If interested, please visit the SAC webpage: [www.mcb.org.uk/csp.html](http://www.mcb.org.uk/csp.html) and email [sac@mcb.org.uk](mailto:sac@mcb.org.uk) or write to MCB office for the attention of the Chair, Shibani Akbar. Kindly provide a few details about yourself and specify your availability and commitment. Induction will be given.

## **Education, Training & Employment Committee (ETEC)**

### **International Issues Seminar**

On 3 April 2003, Nawazish Bokhari, Vice Chair of the MCB Education, Training & Employment

Committee attended a seminar on international Issues. He gave a lecture which specifically related to Muslim issues. In response to the lecture, Kevin Boyle, Associate Professor of English at Elon University said: "He was a great speaker, he addressed all the questions my students had, and he was able to challenge the students without being confrontational. I personally enjoyed his talk very much, and the students did as well...What the world needs now, is more chances for interaction between people who come from different backgrounds."

## **London Affairs Committee (LC)**

### **Greater London Authorities Trade Union Reception**

The Greater London Authorities Trade Union Reception was held on 1 May 2003. The Chair of the London Affairs Committee, Mr SMT Wasti attended the reception in which the main speaker was the Secretary General elect of the TUC Mr Brendan Barber and the Deputy Mayor of the Greater London Authority.

Mr Wasti introduced the work of the MCB to the union leaders, including Mohan Dhamrait, a race and employment relations advisor, Mr Joseph Xavier, Director Malabar Coast Co Ltd and Dil Joshi of the Department of Trade and Industry. Suggestions were made to the MCB to instigate a committee from which they can contact Muslims representatives within the unions and provide assistance with the projection of Islam in local areas.

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## **New on the MCB Website**

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- **Library/Articles and Reports**  
2 May - Daily Express Why do UK Muslims turn to terrorism? by Inayat Bunglawala
- **Media/Speeches**  
13 March - ' The challenge of leadership in Islam: East and West' , speech by MCB Secretary-General at the Civil Service Top Management Programme Conference

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## **The Quest for Sanity**

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### **Letters of appreciation (cont'd)**

*A quick review leaves me in no doubt as to the contribution they will make to improving understanding between the people of different denominations. As we in the Royal Navy work hard to make our organisation better understood by those not traditionally attracted to life in the Armed Service, I welcome the chance to understand more about how others strive, in the same way as we do, to be a power for good.*

Admiral Sir Alan West KCB, DSC, ADC, Ministry of Defence

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*I will read this with interest and have noted the many complimentary comments already received.*  
Andrea Millwood Hargrave, Research Director, British Standards Commission

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*I have learnt a great deal from reading the essays and was particularly touched by the role played by Mr Hamdani who died saving others. Section two of the book is rightly concerned about 'a growing sense of anxiety within the Muslim Community' and impact of September 11 on community relations...I would like to congratulate MCB on the publication of this comprehensive book. I am sure it will go a long way to increase understanding of Islam and also the role your organisation plays in promoting the welfare of Muslims in Britain.*

Liz Meek, Regional Director, Government Office for London

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*In this troubled world "Quest for Sanity" could not have arrived at a more appropriate moment. It is the time for clear, calm thinking and understanding and respect between cultures...Such dialogue is even more important today and "Quest for Sanity" makes a valuable contribution to the debate.*  
Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne, MEP

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*Its arrival here was very timely - just as the war in Iraq broke out. In these difficult times the need for understanding is greater than ever. I think all people of good will share the same basic values, whatever their religious or cultural background, and I noticed how many contributors to the book emphasised that truth, justice, compassion and mutual understanding are promoted by Islam. If everyone who believes in these values could work together, they would provide a very helpful basis for the peaceful and mutually helpful resolution of conflict. Whatever can be done to increase mutual understanding is particularly valuable at present, and the publication of this book is a very good example.*

Ms S McCormick, Governor, HM Prison Service

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*"The Quest for Sanity" contains very interesting passages. I think that peace is not possible without considering the different points of view regarding the situation in the aftermath of September 11. Your book is undoubtedly an important contribution to peace and understanding.*  
Dr Hans Konberger, MEP, Vienna

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For the full listing of reviews please see the MCB website

To order copies of The Quest For Sanity (£12.75 each, plus P&P) please contact the MCB on 0208 432 0585/6 or order online at [www.mcb.org.uk/books](http://www.mcb.org.uk/books)

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## Events

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**Event: MCB Fund Raising Dinner**

Date: 5 July 2003

Held By: The Muslim Council of Britain.

Contact: email: [redoc@mcb.org.uk](mailto:redoc@mcb.org.uk)

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

**Event: Fundraising Dinner**

Date: 25 May 2003

Held By: Islamic Relief

Venue Kensington Town Hall, Hornton Street, London W8

Contact: Islamic Relief Central London Office 020 7722 4745

Information: In aid of the victims of war in Iraq. Speakers include Maher Abdullah of Al-Jazeera and Dr Hani El-Banna of Islamic Relief.

**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](mailto:akatme@hotmail.com) Website: [www.mediamarch.org.uk](http://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: Family Day Out**

Date: 1 June 2003

Held By: Human Relief Foundation

Venue Waltham Forest Theatre

Contact: Human Relief Foundation (HRF) [www.hrf.co.uk](http://www.hrf.co.uk) Tel: 020 7226 2125 or Noor Ul Islam Mosque Tel: 020 8923 7860,

Information: In aid of the needy in Iraq

**Event: Islam & Social Justice, before and after 9/11**

Date: 6 June 2003

Held By: The Islamic Foundation, in collaboration with The Citizen Organising Foundation and British Council

Venue British Council, 10 Spring Gardens (off Trafalgar Square), London, SW1A 2BN

Contact: Dilwar Hussain, The Islamic Foundation, Ratby Lane, Markfield, Leicestershire LE67 9SY, Tel: 01530244944, Fax: 01530244 946,

Email: [dilwar@islamic-foundation.org.uk](mailto:dilwar@islamic-foundation.org.uk)

Information: This conference aims to explore the important social justice dimension of Islam, especially among British and European Muslims. The key-note address will be given by Dr Tariq Ramadan, the respected scholar/activist based in Switzerland and author of the recent book, To be a European Muslim. He will be joined by Sarah Joseph from The Muslim Council of Britain, Zahid Parvez from the Islamic Society of Britain and Dr Hany El-Banna the founder and President of Islamic Relief. The conference will look at how local communities, mosques and associations in the UK are joining hands to work together on issues of common concern, for social change and social justice.

**Event: Charity Dinner for Iraq**

Date: 21 June 2003

Held By: Human Relief Foundation

Venue: Brondesbury Park Hotel, NW London.

Contact: website: [www.hrf.co.uk](http://www.hrf.co.uk)

**Event: Living Islam Family Camp**

Date: 31 July - 3 August

Held By: The Islamic Society of Britain and The Young Muslims UK

Venue: Lincolnshire Showground.

Contact: [www.LivingIslam.co.uk](http://www.LivingIslam.co.uk)

Information: Special Guest speakers will include Imran Khan and Jemima Khan along with several

renowned Islamic scholars. The popular American nasheed group Native Deen will also be performing at the Camp, insha' Allah.

