

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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Monday 9 June 2003

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MCBDirect Launch: tickets and sponsorship opportunities

The Muslim Council of Britain will, God willing, be launching a new Muslim community information service on 5 July 2003. This promises to be an important high profile event in the British Muslim calendar. Compere for the evening will be Sarah Joseph and the Chief Guest for the dinner is Trevor Phillips, Chairman of the Commission of Racial Equality. Abdullah Trevathan, Head Teacher at Islamia School, will be the Auctioneer of works of Islamic art and other memorabilia. This promises to be a wonderful evening of good food and entertainment in the splendid setting of London's The Porchester Hall. To obtain tickets and details of sponsorship opportunities please email: redoc@mcb.org.uk or visit the MCBDirect website: www.mcb.org.uk/mcbdirect The event will be televised by ARYDigital.

BBC drama programme 'Spooks'

The MCB has contacted Ms Lorraine Heggessey, the Controller at BBC1 to convey numerous complaints from British Muslims who saw the episode of the BBC drama programme 'Spooks' which was broadcast on BBC3 Digital on 2 June 2003, and is due to be broadcast on BBC1 at 9.00 pm on Monday 9 June. The episode will only serve to reinforce many negative stereotypes of British Muslims. The MCB note to the BBC states that "this episode of 'Spooks' panders to grossly offensive and Islamophobic caricatures of Imams, Muslim students and mosques" and also refers to specific scenes.

In response, Ms Heggessey has stated "The 'bad Imam', Muhammad Rashid, is depicted as exactly that, a dangerous extremist, perverting traditional teaching and so the programme does not suggest that mosques are a breeding ground for terrorists, more that as the character Harry Pearce says 'every religion has its crooked priests'."

Detailed discussion between the MCB Secretary General and the Controller of BBC 1 took place this morning of Monday 9 June. In spite of serious concerns expressed, particularly in view of the timing of the programme, the BBC have insisted that the programme will be aired this evening, but have made it clear that as a preamble to broadcast, it will be stated that this is a fictional programme which does not in any way reflect a real event. A further meeting has been arranged between the BBC and a delegation from the MCB later this week regarding the consideration of Islam within broadcasting. For the full letter and response, please refer to the media section at www.mcb.org.uk.

Review of coroners' work

A report prepared by a special committee, 'The Independent Review of Coroner Services' published on 4 June calls for fundamental changes to improve efficiency and increase public confidence in death

certification, death investigation and delivery of service issues. The Muslim community has raised issues relating to post mortem procedures and death certification. The coroner's review was chaired by Tom Luce, former Head of Social Care Policy Department of Health. Muslim representation on the Review was made through Iqbal Sacranie, MCB Secretary General. Other review team appointees include Mr Anthony Heaton-Armstrong, Barrister; Professor Sir Colin Berry, Professor Emeritus of Pathology, Queen Mary University, London; Mrs Elizabeth Hodder, Public Accountability Consultant, former Deputy Chair of the Equal Opportunities Commission and Mrs Deirdre McAuley, a solicitor and chair of the local Peace and Reconciliation Partnership. Further details of the report 'Fundamental Review of Death Certification and Coroner Services' can be found at www.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm58/5831/5831.htm

Kosovo conference

Tanzeem Wasti, Vice Chair of the MCB Europe & International Affairs Committee, attended a 3 day conference in Kosovo between 23 and 25 May 2003. The conference debated the topic of media and literature in the past, present and future, from an Islamic point of view. Discussions focussed on the need to disseminate knowledge in order to create the distinction between Mankind and other creation. Attendees of the conference included a number of intellectuals, leaders and imams from throughout the international Muslim community.

MCB Cabinet Meeting

On Tuesday 13 May 2003, a meeting of the MCB Cabinet was held at the Islamic Cultural Centre, London. The meeting was attended by the MCB Office Bearers and Committee Chairs. The agenda reviewed the Annual General Meeting Report 2002/03 and discussed the MCB's position on the Middle East crisis, along with priority issues from MCB Committees.

50th anniversary of The Queen's Coronation

On 2 June 2003, a service of thanksgiving was held at Westminster Abbey to mark the 50th anniversary of The Queen's Coronation. The hour long service, led by the Dean of Westminster, The Very Reverend Dr. Wesley Carr, was also attended by representatives of different faith communities in the UK including MCB Assistant Secretary General Dr Daud Abdullah. The service was structured around four themes: commitment to God, to the service of others, to responsibility and to respect. The 2,250 guests also included politicians and people who witnessed in person the 1953 ceremony.

Meeting with Karachi Mayor

On 28 May 2003, Tanzeem Wasti, Chair of the London Affairs Committee, met with the Chief Mayor Nazim of Karachi, Mr Naimatullah Khan and introduced the activities of the Muslim Council of Britain.

Global Fund Open Letter

An open letter has been sent to Prime Minister Tony Blair calling on the G8 to commit new funds to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB & Malaria, on which the MCB was a signatory. The letter states that "In 2001, the G8 meeting in Genoa announced the creation of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria....Since then, the Fund has granted over US\$1.5 billion to projects which will bring 2 million people onto DOTS treatment for TB, protect 30 million African families from malaria, and increase the number of Africans with access to antiretrovirals by six-fold....Yet the Fund is now facing a critical financial shortfall for the upcoming round of grants...The hopes of people living in the poorest countries have not been matched by the actions of the richest countries. We cannot allow the Global Fund to be yet another cruel trick played on people whose lives and countries are being devastated by AIDS, TB and Malaria. Please make sure that the G8 show leadership and determination to help people in the poorest countries."

The letter was delivered to Downing Street on Thursday 29 May. Dr Shuja Shafi, Chair of the MCB Health & Medical Committee, liaising with the Massive Effort Campaign writes "We believe this important effort is in pursuit of common good and global benefit. The MCB is happy, therefore, to be associated with this cause." For more information on the Fund, visit <http://www.fundthefund.org> and <http://www.MassiveEffort.org>

Media March

On 31 May 2003, Mediamarch a branch of MEDIAWATCH-UK led a march in London rallying at Trafalgar Square and collecting signatures for a petition to tighten the laws on censorship in the media to be presented to the Prime Minister.

Dr A Majid Katme attended the MediaMarch and gave a speech on behalf of the Muslim Council of Britain. "We British Muslims are not only objecting to immoral sex and violence on media channels on the grounds of our religious belief but also because there is accumulating health, social, criminal and economic evidence showing the link between harm and suffering resulting from exposure to an immoral and violent media." Dr Katme was later interviewed and provided comments to the United Christian Broadcast, a satellite radio channel for Europe and Al Arab, the daily Arab newspaper.

Other speakers at the March included Denise Pfeiffer, Publicity Officer; Eileen Harrild, the school teacher who miraculously survived being shot four times at Dunblane Primary School; Bop Pull, representing the Metropolitan Police's Christian Police Association along with organisers Miranda Suit and Pippa Smith.

For further information and to add to the petition, please contact the Muslim Coordinator Dr A.Majid Katme on 07944 240 622 and refer to the MediaMarch website www.mediamarch.org.uk

Meeting with Sri Lankan Muslim organisations

On Sunday 18 May, Daud Abdullah, MCB Assistant Secretary General, met with the representatives of seven Sri Lankan Muslim organisations. Dr Abdullah provided an overview of the origins, organisational structure and activities of the MCB, noting specifically community service work, engagement with the media, campaigns on legislation, and da'wah activities. The organisations will be affiliated with the MCB.

Committees Update

Media Committee (MC)

Letter to the Jewish Chronicle

Iqbal Sacranie, MCB Secretary General, wrote a letter to the Jewish Chronicle, published on 20 May 2003, regarding the Jewish Chronicle focus on British Muslim-Jewish relations entitled 'British Muslims - Faith and Rage', (9 & 16 May 2003). Mr Sacranie made the point that contrary to the encouraging reportage from Jenni Frazer : "no matter the situation in the Middle East and the 'extremists', Jews and Muslims meet and live together 'at grassroots level' on 'a human-to-human basis' " ; most of the opinion pieces published by the JC took a very different angle. Mr Sacranie stated in his letter "British Muslims are being subjected to a steady stream of hateful comments by newspaper columnists and we are witnessing regular attacks on our places of worship and cemeteries. The media in general and the JC in particular could be more helpful in this regard".

Mr Sacranie also wrote "Jews and Muslims have an obligation to a civilised and peaceful co-existence. This is notwithstanding some well known differences over political issues, especially the occupation of the Holy Land."

For the full letter please refer to www.mcb.org.uk

Research & Documentation Committee (ReDoc)

MCBDirect: Vacancy

Applications are invited for the new post of MCBDirect Community Information Officer / Web Editor. Pay is £25,000 - £30,000 and closing dates for applications is 15 June 2003. The job advert and description are available from the MCBDirect website: www.mcb.org.uk/mcbdirect

Circumcision

Dr Shuja Shafi (Health and Medical Committee) and Dr Aziz Sheikh (ReDoc) attended a meeting with the Circumcision Working Group of the Jewish Board of Deputies and agreed to a joint approach to working to ensure the right to religious male circumcision. This followed the launch of a recent document on this issued published by the Ethics Unit of the British Medical Association. The MCBs response to this document, 'The law and ethics of male circumcision' can be obtained from <http://bmj.com/cgi/eletters/326/7393/782/e#31772>

Promoting Blood Donation amongst British Muslims

Professor AR Gatrad (Adviser to ReDoc) and Dr Aziz Sheikh have published a paper in the 24/5/03 issue of the BMJ on their experiences of promoting blood donating amongst West Midlands large Muslim community. The article is available in full from: <http://bmj.com/cgi/content/full/326/7399/1152>

Professor Gatrad Promoted

ReDoc are delighted to report that Professor AR Gatrad (Adviser to ReDoc) has been promoted to the post of Senior Examiner for the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health's Diploma of

Child Health examination. Our congratulations to Professor Gatrad.

Health & Medical Committee (HMC)

Stunning prior to slaughter unacceptable

On 17 May 2003, the MCB issued a press release stating the stunning of animals prior to slaughter is unacceptable to UK Muslims. This statement was made in the light of reports that the Farm and Animal Welfare Council intends to recommend that the Government outlaws the religious Islamic and Jewish method of slaughtering animals, despite current legislation exempting prior stunning of animals before slaughter on religious grounds.

"Numerous medical studies have shown that stunning leads to the retention of a significant amount of blood in the meat and is the cause of death in some animals before slaughter. The consumption of blood and the meat of animals which have died before slaughter is clearly prohibited in Islam as it is harmful," said Mr Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain.

Dr Shuja Shafi spoke on this issue on 3D, the Sky News debate programme. In a letter to the Times, the Parliamentary Under Secretary responsible for Animal Welfare has given assurance that the religious requirement and sensitivities will be taken into consideration and wide consultations will take place.

Conference on HIV & AIDS

Dr A Majid Katme, member of the MCB Health & Medical Committee, attended a conference in Malaysia on HIV and AIDS, as a Muslim Campaigner.

Care of the Dying

Dr Hasan Irfan, member of the MCB Health & Medical Committee, attended a seminar in the House of Lords, on the subject of the care of the dying, organised by Lord Ashton.

British Muslims alarmed by Panorama findings

British Muslims were horrified to learn again from The Panorama programme "The Chicken Run" shown on BBC1, 22 May 2003, that some Dutch processors who supply vast quantities of frozen and processed chicken add pork and/or beef protein to 'bulk up' their products with excess water. It would appear that the practice has been ongoing for the past 10 to 12 years.

Even more disturbing is the revelation that protein manufacturers will continue to add cow and pig protein to chicken in a way that the regulators or consumers cannot detect. Thus it will not be possible to find out the animal source of the protein. A large amount of imported chicken that is widely distributed as "Halal" to restaurants, hospitals, schools and food outlets may therefore contain pork protein (prohibited in Islam) and beef protein (which may be BSE - contaminated) even when tests prove negative. This is very alarming.

The Muslim Council of Britain has called upon the enforcement authorities and the Food Standards Agency to effect urgent investigations and prompt action to restore consumer confidence and food safety by removing the suspect products from the food chain. The MCB advises the Muslim community to check the labels carefully before using frozen or processed chicken or if in doubt, avoid it for the time being.

For further information on this subject please refer to the MCB Dossier on the contamination of Halal meat found at <http://www.mcb.org.uk/report-halal.html>

Business & Economics Committee (BEC)

BBC Radio Interview

Committee Chair M Iqbal Asaria was interviewed by BBC Radio Scotland on 30 May 2003 on the topic of Islamic Banking.

London Affairs Committee (LC)

London Muslim Centre

Tanzeem Wasti, Chair of the MCB London Affairs Committee, attended a meeting on 3 June 2003 regarding the launch of the London Muslim Centre to discuss the future of its constitution, infrastructure, brochures and a number of outstanding matters.

New on the MCB Website

- **'About MCB' section** - Secretary General's speech at 2003 AGM
- **'Affiliates' section** - updated list showing recent joiners and also providing affiliates' web site addresses
- **'Committees' section** - Halal Meat Dossier updates <http://www.mcb.org.uk/halal-report.html>
- **'Library' section** - article by Professors Aziz Sheikh and AR Gatrad on blood donors
- **Media/Letters to the Editor** - 20 May, letter to Jewish Chronicle by Iqbal Sacranie
- 6 June, letter to BBC regarding "Spooks" by Inayat Bunglawala.
- **Check out**
<http://www.mcb.org.uk/mcbdirect> for fundraising dinner and job vacancy details and
<http://www.mcb.org.uk/tragedy.php> for emails to the MCB in the aftermath of the Iraq invasion and other recent developments

The Quest for Sanity

Letters of appreciation (cont'd)

It is indeed my own view as well that, for all the pain and suffering the events of September 11 have caused, they certainly do not justify the rise of Islamophobia and the various forms that persecution of Muslims have taken in the past months. I therefore congratulate this effort you have made to expand the dialogue that these tragic events have initiated, in order to make the voice of Muslims heard and thus promote understanding among peoples. I sincerely wish you the best of success in your effort. Once again, thank you for keeping me informed.

Anna Karamanou, MEP and President of the Committee of Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities

I have read several of the valuable contributions in the book with great pleasure and find the descriptions after September 11th very interesting. The book has given me another perspective which I can use in my work as a parliamentarian in the European-Parliament.

Christian Rovsing, 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 432 0585/6 or order online at www.mcb.org.uk/books

Events

Event: MCB Fund Raising Dinner

Date: 5 July 2003

Held By: The Muslim Council of Britain.

Contact: email: redoc@mcb.org.uk

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

Event: FOSIS Annual Conference 2003

Date: 19 - 22 June 2003

Held By: The Federation of Student Islamic Societies in The UK & Eire

Venue: University of Nottingham

Contact: FOSIS: 38 Mapesbury Road, London NW2 4JD, Tel: 020 8452 4493,

Fax: 020 8208 4161, Email: info@fosis.org.uk, Website: www.fosis.org.uk

Information: Conference topic: the role & responsibility of Muslim students in the 21st century. Speakers include Shaikh Anwar Al-Awlaki, Dr Tariq Ramadhan, Dr Kamal Helbawy, Imam Abdur Rashid, Sr Sarah Joseph, Dr Azzam Tamimi, Shaikh Sohaib Hassan, Dr Zahid Parvez, Shaikh Ibrahim Mogra, Br. Ismael Patel, Shaikh Haytham Tamim, Br. Anas Altikriti, and many more. The programme will consist of sports activities as well as practical-based talks, seminars and forums. The camp is an excellent opportunity to meet and share experiences with fellow Muslim students from around the UK.

Event: Charity Dinner for Iraq

Date: Saturday 21 June 2003 at 3.00pm

Held By: Human Relief Foundation

Venue: Brondesbury Park Hotel – 233 Willesden Lane, London, NW2

Contact: Human Relief Foundation – London Office, Tel: 020 – 7226 2125,
Email: donate@hrf.co.uk, website: www.hrf.co.uk

Information: This special event is in aid of the needy families in Iraq. Chief Guest: Lord Nazir Ahmed, other prominent guest speakers include Dr Ahmed Al-Dubayan, Director of London Central Mosque; Br Muhammad Afzal, President of UK Islamic Mission; Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari, IFE, Deputy Secretary General of MCB & Chariman of East London Mosque; Sheikh Khalid Yaseen, Director of the Islamic Teaching Institute; Dr Muadh Al-Douri, Medical Relief Group/HRF; Br. Ajmal Masroor, Islamic Society of Britain.

**Event: Conference for Palestinian Communities in Europe
in Defence of the Right of Return**

Date: Saturday 19 July 2003

Time: 3.00pm - 8.00pm

Held By: Palestinian Return Centre

Venue Conway Hall, South Place Ethical Society, 25 Red Lion Square, London
WC1R 4RL

Contact: Enquiries to PRC: Tel: 0208 453 0919, e-mail: info@prc.org.uk, Website:
www.prc.org.uk

Information: Given the grave threats presently overshadowing the Palestinian right of return, the Palestinian Return Centre invites all Palestinians residing in Europe and Palestinian institutions to participate in a popular conference to reaffirm adherence to their individual and collective right of return. Guests include Dr. Haidar Abdul Shafi' A Palestinian Leader, Gaza; Dr. Salman Abu Sitta, President Palestinian Land Society UK; Prof. Naseer Aruri, Palestinian Academic, USA; Mr. Bilal al Hasan, Palestinian journalist, France; Dr. Muhammad Akram Adluni, Director, Al Quds International Institute, Lebanon

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

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.

