

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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Thursday 14 August 2003

Weekly Updates on Reports, Committees and Events: Issue 46

Reports and Events

- Guantanamo Bay justice
- Demonstration against Gujarat Chief Minister visit
- UKREN AGM
- Caux International Conferences, Switzerland
- Living Islam Event
- EMF Bursary for M.Sc in Migration
- The Experience Corps appoints Muslim Faith Advisor
- MYH Wins AOL Innovation in the Community Award

Affiliate News

- Lunch for Al-Yarmook
- PRC Conference, London
- MAB Demonstration

Committees Update

- Media Committee (MC)
- Research & Documentation Committee (ReDoc)
- Health & Medical Committee (HMC)
- Masjid (Mosque) & Community Affairs Committee (MCAC)
- London Affairs Committee
- Social Affairs Committee

New on the MCB Website

Events

- Pakistan Independence Day
- Summer Islamic Studies Course
- "Freedom for Palestine" and " End the occupation of Iraq" March

Committee Contacts

Reports and Events

Guantanamo Bay justice

The MCB, which has repeatedly raised the issue of the British detainees at Camp Delta with the Foreign Office and other officials, is now utterly dismayed with the Government's acquiescence to a US military trial for Moazzem Begg and Feroz Abbasi.

The Muslim Council of Britain regards the US decision to waive its capital punishment statutes against the first two Britons due to face a military tribunal as wholly insufficient. In a press statement released on 23 July Mr Sacranie, MCB Secretary General stated: "It seems our government is quite prepared to see a miscarriage of justice take place against our citizens in the United States rather than to risk them coming home to face a fair trial in our own country."

The MCB has sent an urgent letter to the Attorney General seeking a meeting to discuss the British government's position on this matter and also to receive an update after his recent discussions with US officials.

Please refer to www.mcb.org.uk for the full press statement.

Demonstration against Gujarat Chief Minister visit

MCB Affiliates The Indian Muslim Federation and the Indian Muslim Council have informed the MCB that Mr Narendra Modi, The Gujarat Chief Minister, who is known as the butcher of Gujarat, is visiting the UK and will be holding a conference on Sunday 17 August at 5 pm at the Wembley Conference Centre in association with Friends of the BJP, UK. Narendra Modi, a member of the ruling Hindu extremist party the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), was responsible for inciting hatred against Gujarat's Muslim population that resulted in the slaughter of at least 2500 Muslims (including three British Muslims) in March 2002, the raping of hundreds of Muslim women and over two hundred thousand Muslims made homeless in the mass riots that accompanied the pogrom.

The Indian Muslim Federation is arranging a demonstration beginning at 3.00 pm, should efforts for its cancellation not prove successful, and encourage maximum participation from all over UK, if it goes ahead. For further details contact the Indian Muslim Federation UK, Tel: 020 8558 6399 Fax: 020 8558 4192, Email: info@indianmuslim.org.uk

The Muslim Council of Britain has expressed their serious concerns to both the Home office and the Foreign Office regarding the impending visit which they believe is not conducive to good community relations in the UK.

UKREN AGM

Imam Abdul Jalil Sajid, representing the MCB, attended the UK Race and Europe Network (UKREN) Annual General Meeting in London on 15 July 2003.

Caux International Conferences, Switzerland

Between 26 July and 30 July 2003, an international conference on the topic of "The Spiritual Factor in Secular Society: Can religions be partners in peace building?" took place in Caux, Switzerland organised by Initiatives of Change in association with the World Conference on Religion and Peace. The conference dealt with initiatives taken by representatives of religions and other people of humanitarian commitment and explored inter-religious fears and faith in order to support one another.

Imam Abdul Jalil Sajid attended the conference on behalf of the MCB. Speaking on the subject of European Muslims, Dr Tariq Ramadan said: "Islam is ... both a simple and very demanding way of life which requires from the Muslim that he does his utmost to be better tomorrow than today and to choose, at any price, the way of generosity, honesty and justice.... Together with members of other religious communities and all men and women of good-will, they must participate in the necessary debate about faith, spirituality and values in the modern and post-modern era."

A further conference, also attended by Imam Abdul Jalil Sajid took place in Caux between 2 and 8 August on the topic of Peace-building initiatives. The conference put forward an Agenda for Reconciliation offering an opportunity to explore the implications of peace-building in the context of globalising responsibility. The themes covered included peace building in a complex and violent world, methods and skills for building peace, personal qualities of a peace builder, women and conflict transformation, the process of trust building, and reasons for hope . Attendees included representatives from over 60 countries.

Living Islam Event

The largest Muslim residential event of its kind, organised by MCB affiliate the Islamic Society of Britain and its youth wing The Young Muslims UK, was held at the Lincolnshire Show Ground, Lincoln between 31 July and 3 August. The event was attended by over 3500 people and featured internationally renowned guest speakers, such as Imran Khan, Dawud Wharansby Ali, Professor Jamal Badawi, Shaykh Abdullah Hakim Quick, 'Native Deen,' (a North America Muslim Rap group) and many more. With live entertainment, careers fare, sporting tournaments and a maze of bazaars the event exceeded all expectation.

On Saturday 1 August 2003, in front of a packed audience of more than 3000 at the camp, the Secretary of the Media Committee, Inayat Bunglawala, gave a presentation on 'The State of British Muslims Today'. He also drew attention to the MCB publication The Quest For Sanity describing it as 'a vital UK Muslim contribution to the worldwide debate of terror and its causes'.

Dr Sangheeta Dhami, of the MCBDirect team attended, saying "the Living Islam experience far outlived my expectations. This was an original display of how vibrant, exciting and enriching Islam can be. This was a real glimpse of the holistic nature of Islam and has set new standards in Islamic events. And to top it all, the young men and women, who had so obviously spent many months planning this event and can barely have slept throughout the four days, were throughout courteous, helpful and genuinely interested in looking after my needs. These inspired human beings inspired me and for this I am truly grateful. "

EMF Bursary for M.Sc in Migration

A Masters Degree which is ideally suited to those working with ethnic minorities in the voluntary sector and which is supported by the Ethnic Minority Foundation is currently offered. To this end, the Foundation is providing a bursary specially intended for an applicant in the voluntary sector.

For further information contact the Programme Director, Dr Anne J Kershen, Department of Politics, Queen Mary, University of London, London E1 4NS, Tel: 020 7882 5003, Email: a.kershen@qmul.ac.uk

The Experience Corps appoints Muslim Faith Advisor

The Experience Corps has recently appointed Osman Sheikh as a Muslim faith adviser. He joins a dedicated team of specialist faith advisers who already work within the Hindu, Sikh and African Caribbean communities. Osman Sheikh has an interest in community development, particularly in areas of healthcare, advocacy, fundraising and diversity. The role of Muslim faith adviser at The Experience Corps will involve developing relationships between the voluntary sector and the Muslim community, and promoting the contribution of volunteers from the Muslim community especially in the fields of health and education. Osman Sheikh will also be responsible for drafting the third in a series of booklets highlighting the contribution that faith communities make to British society. Profiling the Islamic contribution will acknowledge the efforts of men and women who already give of their time in the Muslim community.

Osman said of his new role, "Since 9/11 British society has questioned the part British Muslims can play in the community and it has also made the Muslim community itself question its place and perception in Britain. My role will not only include the faith communities in issues that affect society but will break down barriers, promote community cohesiveness and deliver some very practical results for people living locally. This will involve working closely with national, and regional networks"

The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) was involved jointly with the TEC in developing proposals for work with Muslim Communities. Commenting on The Experience Corps' decision to appoint a specialist Muslim faith adviser the MCB said, "The Experience Corps' attempt to engage the Muslim communities and other faiths within neighbourhood renewal is an exciting development and one which we will actively promote within the Muslim communities of UK."

For further information contact Gill Ohlson, Tel: 020 7981 2571 or see www.experiencecorps.co.uk.

MYH Wins AOL Innovation in the Community Award

Earlier this month, MCB Affiliates, Muslim Youth Helpline, were chosen from hundreds of applicants nationwide to receive an AOL Innovation in the Community Award of £2,000. The awards scheme was set up to help community groups and charities across the UK make the most of the Internet. The Muslim Youth Helpline is a confidential helpline for young Muslims who often have nowhere to turn because family traditions make it difficult to discuss certain issues. The group plans to use the award to set up an online forum where they can go to their peers for advice and support. The forum, which will be managed by young people, will also celebrate the heritage of British Muslims and encourage identity cohesion, good citizenship, access to education, and community integration.

Yasser Madani of the Muslim Youth Helpline said: "Although the majority of the British Muslim community is under the age of 25 years, young Muslims often feel socially excluded. The AOL Innovation in the Community award means that we can set up an online forum run by young people for young people, providing crucial support and helping them to break through barriers in areas such as education and careers. At the same time, we hope to transform the wider community's perception of the social problems facing this group."

Affiliate News

Lunch for Al-Yarmook

MCB Affiliate, the Human Relief Foundation, raised £30,000 for the 'Rebuilding Humanity in Iraq' campaign during the 'Lunch for Al-Yarmook,' held in Bradford on Sunday 3 August. The event brought together community representatives and members of the public in an effort to raise money specifically for the Al-Yarmook Hospital, which HRF is currently sponsoring. The event was attended by members of the Hindu, Sikh and Christian communities, prompting one HRF representative to comment 'It is beautiful that people from different backgrounds have united for a common cause. With unity comes strength and with this strength comes progress.'

Please make your donations payable to 'Human Relief Foundation' and send them to HRF, FREEPOST BD 3125, P.O Box 194, Bradford, BD7 1YW. UK, Tel: 08700 117 112, Email: donate@hrf.co.uk, website: www.hrf.co.uk

PRC Conference, London

MCB Affiliate, the Palestinian Return Centre (PRC) held a conference on Saturday 19 July at Conway Hall, Central London. The conference was attended by a large audience in the presence of a number of diplomats and representatives of the Foreign and Arab embassies in Britain, in addition to

prominent Palestinian figures such as Dr. Haidar Abd al-Shafi (Gaza), Professor Nassir Arouri (USA) Dr. Salman Abu Sitta and Bilal al-Hassan. Participants expressed their firm commitment to return to the homes out of which they had been driven, as a fundamental individual and collective right acknowledged by international conventions and laws.

A full report with photos and papers presented is available on PRC's website: www.prc.org.uk or send an e-mail to: info@prc.org.uk.

MAB Demonstration

MCB Affiliates, the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) in association with the Stop the War Coalition, CND and Friends of Al Aqsa are planning a massive demonstration to take place on 27 September 2003. The "Freedom for Palestine" and "End the occupation of Iraq" March will renew the commitment to creating a just and peaceful world.

Committees Update

Media Committee (MC)

Letters to the Times & BBC

On 27 July 2003, MCB Secretary General, Iqbal Sacranie wrote to the Times regarding an article by correspondent Helen Rumbelow on the Qadiyani movement. His letter refutes the claim that there are an "estimated 200 Million" Ahmadis (Qadiyani) worldwide, as a figure of much less than 10 million is closer to the reality. Mr Sacranie also pointed out the failure to mention the underlying theological difference between the Muslim Community and the Ahmadis' central belief that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was a prophet. Islamic belief holds that the Prophet Muhammad was the last Prophet, therefore the Ahmadi community are regarded as non-Muslims. The letter makes it clear that Muslims worldwide believe that the founder of the Qadiyani movement is an imposter.

A further letter was written on 27 July by Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary of the Media Committee, regarding a BBC News 24 item aired on Saturday 26th July, raising similar issues and expressing surprise at the wide coverage given to the cult who are outside the fold of Islam.

For the full texts please refer to www.mcb.org.uk, media/letters to editor/producer section.

Spooks Update

Following numerous complaints made to the Broadcasting Standards Commission regarding the episode of Spooks which the majority considered to be Islamophobic, containing offensive racial stereotypes and likely to incite violence and hatred, the commission's report "acknowledged that for some within the community, this programme had appeared to be an affront to their faith and dignity. It also acknowledged the concern felt by many British Muslims at the excessive emphasis on the tiny minority advocating violence in the name of Islam and the dearth of wider representations of Muslims in broadcast output". However in concluding, the Commission considered that the programme had "been clearly presented as a drama" and that "whilst the Imam of the mosque was shown to be a corrupt character, the drama also contained sympathetic Muslim characters. The Commission accordingly did not consider that the programme was calculated to encourage Islamophobia, or suggested that followers of Islam were prepared to resort to violence to further their own ends." Furthermore the Commission stated that the drama content had not exceeded acceptable bounds and therefore the complaints made were not upheld.

For the full text refer to the MCB Media Section, Letters to the

Editor/Producer. www.mcb.org.uk/letter40.html

Research & Documentation Committee (ReDoc)

MCBDirect Community Information Officer

ReDoc are delighted to report that Shargil Ahmed has taken up post as MCBDirect Community Information Officer on 28 July and is based at the MCB's office in Stratford. He has taken charge of the MCBDirect section of the MCB website. Shargil was previously Policy Officer at the Department for Education & Skills. He can be contacted for enquiries on British Muslims and Islam on: mcbdirect@mcb.org.uk

MCBDirect Website

The MCBDirect website is now live and running www.mcb.org.uk/mcbdirect. To advertise events and conferences, jobs and volunteer opportunities please email Shargil Ahmed on: mcbdirect@mcb.org.uk

Religion in UK Comments

On behalf of the MCB, ReDoc has commented on the draft chapter on Religion in UK 2004, the Official Yearbook, published by the Office for National Statistics. The MCB was also invited to comment in preceding years (UK2002 and UK2003) and many of the suggestions made in the past have been taken on board by the editors at the ONS.

Health & British Muslims

Aziz Sheikh, Chair of ReDoc, appeared on PTV on Sunday 20 July 2003 for a 20-minute interview discussing the MCB and issues relating to researching the health of Britain's Muslim population.

London Muslims

Aziz Sheikh led a discussion on 'London's Muslims' for a group of 40 visiting US students from Vanderbilt University on 29 July 2003.

Palliative Care Needs

Aziz Sheikh and Professor Gatrad have had an editorial on the 'Palliative Care Needs of Minority Communities' published in 'The Good Death' theme issue of the BMJ 2003;327:176-177 (26 July). Full text is available from: <http://bmj.com/cgi/content/full/327/7408/176>

Children and Young Families

Aziz Sheikh and Professor Gatrad have had a chapter on 'Children and young families' published in 'Ethnicity health and primary care' (edited by Joe Kai, published by Oxford University Press, July 2003).

Copies can be purchased from: <http://www.oup.co.uk/isbn/0-19-851573-1>

Health & Medical Committee (HMC)

FSA Meeting

On behalf of the Muslim Council of Britain, Dr Shuja Shafi, Chair of the MCB Health & Medical Committee and Dr A.Majid Katme attended the quarterly meeting of Muslim Organisations Working Group at the Food Standards Agency on 30 July 2003. The meeting discussed the Farm Animal Welfare Council Report and Muslim organisations were united in confirming emphatically that the current legislation which allows for the practise of the religious method of slaughter, ie exemption from stunning, should stay as it is. The meeting was also advised that similar views had been expressed at a seminar held recently at the Islamic Cultural Centre (Regent's Park Mosque) following which Muslim organisation and Jewish representatives signed a Joint Alliance Declaration. A copy of the Declaration sent to the Prime Minister and Minister for Animal Welfare was also given to the FSA.

The issue of pork in chicken was debated. The FSA reported that enforcement action by the local authorities, planned following survey results published in February 2003 is in hand. Communications between the authorities (EU Commission & Dutch authorities) and the FSA are still ongoing. An update was provided on the Food Hygiene campaign which is progressing well. The need for suitable

literature in different formats and several languages was stressed in order to educate the Muslim community. Educational seminars are planned for the Islamic Cultural Centre which may be extended to other mosques and centres.

Forum on Food & Health

Dr A Majid Katme attended the NGO Forum on Food & Health Action Meeting on behalf of the MCB on 28 July 2003, held at the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health. Over 30 representatives of food and health organisations attended.

Dr Katme discussed the issue of Muslim dietary requirements and the need to raise awareness of these needs in schools, hospitals and prisons so that nutritional and health needs are met. Criticising the increasing prevalence of junk food, he asked for the return to natural wholesome, fresh and healthy food and the need for further study and research into the diet of the Muslim community coupled with an appropriate education campaign.

British Hajj Advisory Group calls for GPs

Each year the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), in partnership with the British community organises a delegation to Saudi Arabia to provide medical support to British Hujjaj. The British Hajj Advisory Group is responsible for the organisation of this British Hajj Delegation.

The British Hajj Advisory Group is calling for applications from 'committed, organised, energetic General Practitioners for temporary appointment as members of the British Hajj Delegation 2004. Applications will provide primary medical care to British Pilgrims, manage resources including medicines and other equipment and maintain accurate medical records. Interested medical practitioners are asked to make applications direct to the FCO c/o Daniel Painter, Head of Community Liaison Unit, G55, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Old Admiralty Building, London SW1 2PA, Tel: 020 7008 0151

Meat Hygiene Policy Forum Meeting

Dr A Majid Katme, on behalf of the MCB, attended a Meat Hygiene Policy Forum meeting on 17 July at the FSA. The issue of pork in chicken and food labelling was discussed. Dr Mark Wolfe, from the FSA, spoke on the issue saying that the FSA had been in touch with Holland and the EU. The FSA have asked for a reduction in water content in chicken imported from Holland from 30% to 15% thus decreasing the need for the hydrolysed protein which keeps water in, discovered to be extracted from beef or pork. Dr Katme voiced his preference for no water addition to chicken and emphasised that any ingredients added to the chicken should be clearly labelled, and furthermore not labelled as Halal if it contained hydrolysed protein. A further meeting has been arranged for 19 August.

Masjid (Mosque) & Community Affairs Committee (MCAC)

National Mosque Open Day

Ibrahim Mogra, Chair of the MCB Mosque & Community Affairs Committee (MCAC), along with members of the MCB MCAC committee have been working towards planning an Annual National Mosque Open Day. You are invited to urgently forward your suggestions, experiences, thoughts and ideas to him for circulation and incorporation. It is provisionally planned to be held insha'Allah on the last Saturday of August from 2pm to 6pm. Dignitaries, mayors, political leaders, head-teachers, NHS staff, police, fire service, religious leaders and others will be invited to the official launch. A series of presentations are planned on the broad aspects of Islam, worship, and the use of masjid, madrasah. Refreshments and literature will be provided to the guests. For further information, kindly contact Ibrahim Mogra, The Muslim Council of Britain, email: admin@mcb.org.uk, Tel: 0208 432 0585/6.

London Affairs Committee

Respect 2003

To commemorate the 10th anniversary of the murder of Stephen Lawrence, Respect 2003 was organised by the Greater London Authority on 16 July 2003. Its main element was a panel discussion on racism and discrimination. The MCB was represented on the panel by the Chair of the London Affairs Committee Mr Tanzeem Wasti. Also on the panel was the Deputy Mayor of London, the Deputy

Commissioner of Scotland Yard, two MPs and a representative of the Lawrence family. The hall was full and a lively discussion ensued.

Mr Wasti put forward Islam's view on racism and discrimination, stating that it is not allowed in Islam to discriminate against anyone on the basis of their race, colour, religion or creed. He gave the example that all human beings originate from Adam and Eve, and that our multicultural, multi-race, multi-colour society is really one society, emanating from the same source and are all brothers and sisters, quoting the Prophet Muhammad's last sermon: "There is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab and for a non-Arab over an Arab; nor for white over black nor for the black over white except in piety. Verily the noblest among you is he who is the most pious." Mr Wasti assured the Lawrence Family of the MCB's continued support. Mr Wasti congratulated the Lawrence's on their dedication and the manner in which they had campaigned and sought justice for their son.

GLA Seminar

In a meeting with the Advisor to the Mayor, Mr Redman O'Neil, it was agreed that there will be a joint programme between the Muslim Council of Britain and the Greater London Authority. This Seminar will be attended by between fifty and sixty representatives from London based Muslim organisations that are members of the MCB. This half day seminar shall be held on 27 September 2003. It will be attended by senior staff and advisors to the Greater London Authority, in which they will introduce the policies and service delivery responsibilities of the Greater London Authority, especially with regard to the Muslim community in London. Similarly representatives from the MCB will address the seminar and outline the benefits and importance of their member organisations can gain through improved contact and working with the Greater London Authority through the London Affairs Committee.

Youth Conference

A youth conference will be held on 2 October 2003, organised by the Greater London Authority. The Muslim Council of Britain will help the Greater London Authority in inviting youth from the Muslim youth organisations across the country.

Social Affairs Committee (SAC)

BBC Asian Network interview

Shiban Akbar, Chair of the Social Affairs Committee, participated in a live radio interview with BBC Asian Network on 10th June and gave the Islamic perspective on stunning animals prior to slaughter.

The Times interview

Following the recommendations made by The Independent Advisory Group on Teenage Pregnancy that Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) should be made compulsory in primary schools for children, Shiban Akbar was interviewed by The Times. Her comments were featured in the article "Five-year-olds may have classes on where babies come from" published on Friday 11th July. For more information see <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/printFriendly/0,,1-2-741901,00.html> .

Multi Faith Group launch

Shiban Akbar and Dr Shuja Shafi attended the Launch of the Multi-Faith Group for Healthcare Chaplaincy hosted by Mr Peter Bottomley MP in the House of Commons on 25 June 2003. The event was launched by David Lammy, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health.

Transport requirements

Haleema Aslam from the Social Research Associates, commissioned by the Department for Transport to look into the transport requirements of faith communities, contacted MCB with a view to talk to women who wear the face veil.

Shiban Akbar arranged for her to visit North London Muslim Community Centre (NLMCC) on 10 June. Haleema interviewed a group of women about their experiences of using public transport. None of the women had ever been refused access. However, they suggested a number of measures which mainly included training public transport ground staff on why women wore the veil and promoting the idea of a second identity card.

The following suggestions were made for DETR and public transport providers to follow: (a) Publish leaflets in main community languages that can be placed in buses, stations, supermarkets and mosques and community settings and schools which state that it is acceptable for these women to show two acceptable forms of identity. (b) Training and guidelines should be established on a national basis for frontline staff that could be incorporated into Equal Opportunities training. This training should explain why women wear the niqab and it should also be emphasised that the women have chosen this themselves and have not been forced into it.

Action Research Project

Shiban Akbar was invited by Julie Mellor, Chair, Equal Opportunities Commission for consultation on their "Proposal for an Action Research Project in Bradford and Glasgow" as part of "Women Connecting Communities: promoting positive images and models of good practice". The consultation meeting took place on 1 July 2003.

New on the MCB Website

- **Media/Press Releases** - 23 July 2003, British Detainees At Guantanamo Bay Must Be Repatriated
- **Media/Letters to the Editor** - 27 July, letter to the Times regarding outrageous claims of the Qadiyani movement
- 27 July, letter to the BBC regarding coverage of Ahmadi convention
- **Committees Section** - The password-protected Discussion Forum in the Committees section is regularly updated with minutes of committee meetings - most recently meetings of the Membership and ETEC committees.
- **The Muslim Council of Britain** has moved its offices to Suite 5, Boardman House, 64 Broadway, Stratford, London E15 1NT, New Telephone: 020 8432 0585/6, New Fax: 020 8432 0587, Email: admin@mcb.org.uk, Web: www.mcb.org.uk
Please contact us if you would like to be removed from our database.

Events

Event: Pakistan Independence Day

Date: Thursday 14 August 2003

Time: 10.30 am

Held By: London Borough of Newham

Venue: Newham Town Hall, East Ham

Contact: Stephanie Nunn, Tel: 020 8430 3328, stephanie.nunn@newham.gov.uk

Information: Newham Council will be marking Pakistan Independence Day with the raising of the Pakistan National Flag. The ceremony will involve a brief welcome speech and photos before raising of the flag.

Event: Summer Islamic Studies Course

Date: 15 August to 25 August 2003

Held By: Islamic Society of Britain and Young Muslims UK

Venue Markfield Conference Centre, Leicester

Contact: www.isb.co.uk email: info@knowledgeseekers.co.uk; Tel: 0151 726 9436 or 07939 096 464

Information: This fourth annual ten day Islamic Studies Course is to take place this summer.

Event: "Freedom for Palestine" and " End the occupation of Iraq" March

Date: Saturday 27 September 2003

Held By: Muslim Association of Britain (MAB), Stop the War Coalition, CND, Friends of Al Aqsa

Venue London

Contact: MAB email: info@mabonline.net website: www.mabonline.net Tel: 0207 272 2888

Information: This massive demonstration is being organised to renew the commitment to creating a just

and peaceful world.

