

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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Weekly Updates on Reports, Committees and Events: Issue 49

Reports and Events

- Eid Mubarak
- Istanbul bombings condemned
- MacShane attempts to repair damage
- MCB presses Attorney General on detainees
- MCB Seeks explanation for scholar's Heathrow detention
- New Employment Regulations relating to Religious Discrimination
- Stasi consults the MCB
- History of Punishment
- Tate Gallery
- Khidmah Book Launch
- Mayor's 'Respect' Conference
- Radio Australia Interview
- Analysis of post war Iraq
- Islamophobia Report
- MCB's Leadership Programme Lectures
- GLA Eid Reception
- London Conference
- "Respect not Racism" Week
- Government Officials Urged To Refrain From Prejudicing Any Future Sajid Badat Trial
- MCB explores Islamic astronomy programme
- International Symposium on Cultural Diversity

Affiliate News

- HRF Establishes New Offices in Mozambique and Azerbaijan

- Interpal Launches its 10th year Anniversary Celebrations
- Islam Awareness Week
- Public protest on Middle East situation
- Nasheed Extravaganza Tour 2003
- Muslim Youth Helpline Launches Extended Freephone Service
- "Islam's Contribution to Western Civilisation"

Committees Update

- Media Committee (MC)
- Research & Documentation Committee (ReDoc)
- Education, Training & Employment Committee (ETEC)
- Social Affairs Committee (SAC)
- Health & Medical Committee (HMC)

New on the MCB Website

New on the MCBDirect Website

Events

Reports and Events

Eid Mubarak

The Muslim community celebrated Eid-ul-Fitr on Tuesday 25 November. Eid Mubarak and *Taqabbal Allahu minnaa wa minkum*. In an Eid-ul-Fitr message from the Secretary General of the MCB, Iqbal Sacranie notes that " It is in our own growth that future generations take shape. And it is our own philosophy that challenges and stirs us afresh to work together for a more just and peaceful world. A challenge that is achievable only through our unpretentious faith in God. It is on this day - the day of Eid - that we celebrate the culmination of a month of devotion, sacrifice and sharing with others in the hope that Ramadan has inscribed in our spirits as human beings precepts that will strengthen our efforts to that end. I pray that by the grace of God we may be able to rise to the task of promoting peace in our isles and beyond our shores."

Istanbul bombings condemned

The MCB condemns the twin bombings in Istanbul on 20 November which has killed at least 27 people including the British Consul-General, Roger Short, and injured over 400 people. The MCB press release issued on 21 November states that "Our thoughts are with families of all the victims of this atrocity, including our fellow British citizens" and calls for the root causes behind the dreadful phenomenon of terrorism to be addressed.

MacShane attempts to repair damage

In press releases issued on 22 and 29 November, the Muslim Council of Britain called on Foreign Office Minister Denis MacShane MP to make a full and public apology to the British Muslim community for his deeply offensive and insulting remarks last week to his constituency party in which he called on British Muslims to choose between the "British way" of political dialogue and non-violence and the "way of the terrorists".

"The widespread feeling of hurt and anger among British Muslims has not abated and is not going to be abated until Mr MacShane admits he was wrong to imply that British Muslims sympathised with terrorist actions. British Muslims have consistently condemned all forms of terrorism and indiscriminate slaughter, whether perpetrated by individuals, groups or states," said Mr Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the MCB.

In response, Mr Denis MacShane MP has expressed his regrets in the Sheffield Star "The huge success of the European Union including for the 15 million European Muslims is that we have replaced the politics of violence by the politics of rule-of-law, respect for human rights, and democratic non-violent means of achieving political change. I sought to make some of these points in the political report I give each month to my Labour Party colleagues in Rotherham Labour Party. But these

comments were over-shadowed by other remarks I made. In that report, I acknowledged that the Muslim community and their local and national representatives were as appalled as any other at the terrible terrorists atrocity in Istanbul ten days ago. However, I accept that I could have chosen some of my words more carefully, and I apologise to anyone who felt that I suggested that British Muslims sympathise with such terrorist actions. That was certainly not my intent.”

For the full press release and MacShane’s response please refer to www.mcb.org.uk

MCB presses Attorney General on detainees

The MCB met with the Attorney General Lord Goldsmith in September, prior to his visit to the US, and called on him to secure the return of Muslim detainees to the UK to face any possible legal action. The MCB again wrote to Lord Goldsmith in November calling for action to ensure the process of law is upheld. The AG has now written back, stating the Government's intention was to ensure that "the detainees should be returned to the UK" if it is not satisfied of a fair trial by the US authorities. The correspondence is online at <http://www.mcb.org.uk/akm.pdf>

MCB Seeks explanation for scholar's Heathrow detention

The MCB has expressed its outrage at the police harassment of an eminent Islamic scholar on Tuesday 11 November 2003 when Shaykh Yusuf Motala, former Rector of Islamic seminary in Bury, Lancashire and one of the most highly respected religious leaders, was travelling to the Holy city of Makkah, Saudi Arabia. He was detained and questioned by police at Heathrow Airport for almost seven hours causing him to miss his Ramadan pilgrimage. Neither the Police nor the Home Office have provided an explanation.

The MCB has sent a letter to the Home Secretary demanding an explanation for this unacceptable behaviour, noting “There is a very real concern that Muslims are now being singled out for profiling and discrimination in the name of fighting terrorism.” The letter calls for the implementation of a consultative procedure in order to avoid misunderstanding and distress and bring in more efficiency in dealing with the crime of terrorism. The MCB press release of 15 November points out that this case is just one of many that highlights the greatly increased level of suspicion and prejudice that British Muslims now have to encounter almost every day. It is not only demeaning to the community but is eroding their trust in the police and security agencies.

New Employment Regulations relating to Religious Discrimination

The MCB, in collaboration with its affiliate Muslim Directory, The Muslim News and the British Muslim Research Centre with support from the Department of Trade & Industry has initiated a project to increase awareness in the community of the new Employment Regulations relating to Religious Discrimination that have come into force on 2 December. Briefing sessions are being organised for Muslim employees and employers, commencing with Bradford on 11 December between 10.30 am - 12.30. The venue will be Thornbury Centre, Leeds Old Road, Thornbury, Bradford BD3 8JX.. For

further information contact legal@mcb.org.uk.

Stasi consults the MCB

The veteran French MP, Bernard Stasi, Head of the 'Stasi Commission' charged by President Chirac for reporting on Secularism and Religion in France (to be submitted on 11 December) met an MCB team at the French Embassy on 3 December 2003.

Mr Stasi and his colleagues were particularly interested in discussing the 'headscarf in school' issue with representatives from the MCB's Education and Women & Family Affairs Committees, a matter currently much exercising the French. The two-hour meeting provided an excellent opportunity for the MCB to commend the approach that has been adopted in the UK not just in schools but also institutions such as the Metropolitan Police on Muslim head dress. The MCB team urged Mr Stasi that a law to ban the headscarf in schools would be oppressive and cause further alienation. There was also a spirited discussion on the need to distinguish between Islamic values and cultural practices.

Mr Stasi informed the MCB team - comprising Dr Reefat Drabu, Chair of the Women & Family Committee; Tahir Alam, Chair of the MCB Education, Training & Employment Committee; Daud Abdullah, Assistant Secretary General and Jamil Sherif, Secretary of the Research & Documentation Committee - that if a law was promulgated in France to ban Muslim girls from donning the head scarf then the visible religious symbols of all other faiths too would be proscribed. The MCB welcomes this opportunity to participate in Anglo-French dialogues.

History of Punishment

The Media Committee of the MCB has been contacted by Amber Books following objections to the portrait of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, in 'The History of Punishment' by Lewis Lyons. The company's representatives have said that the portrait was unwittingly reproduced, without the realisation that it would cause offence. Amber Books placed a statement on its website. "Amber Books Ltd unreservedly apologises for any offence that might have been caused by the inclusion of an illustration of the Prophet Muhammad in The History of Punishment. The use of this illustration was an unacceptable oversight. Amber Books Ltd at no time intended to offend the Muslim community or insult the Prophet Muhammad. Amber Books Ltd has removed the offending illustration and it will not appear in any future editions of the work".

Amber Books have been informed that there is no question of any compromise on this issue and only the pulping or removal of the page in question will be acceptable to the MCB. Amber books have however responded that this will not be done. On the request of MPAC they have made a donation to charity.

Tate Gallery

The Tate gallery has informed the MCB that after receiving complaints from many individuals and

organisations regarding a portrait displayed at the Tate by the Victorian painter Valentine Prinsep. The Gallery have looked into the authenticity of the wall label which suggested that the portrait was a representation of the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) wife, and have come to the conclusion that the portrait origin was in fact an unsubstantiated suggestion derived from speculation made in their picture records some decades ago.

The Tate Gallery greatly regret that this unfounded speculation was repeated on the wall label. "Prinsep's portrait may be best understood as a response to the widespread Victorian taste for "exotic" subject matter drawn from life in the Middle East. He may have chosen the name Ayesha because of its wider associations with traditional poetry, but may also have had in mind a more specific literary source. In the same year that the painting was publicly exhibited, 1887, the book *She* by Ride Haggard was published, it included the fictional character of Queen Ayesha, a "a tall and lovely woman, instinct with beauty in every part". In light of this new research, the accompanying label has now been re-written so that there is no reference to Hadhrat Ayesha, Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) wife.

Khidmah Book Launch

A book launch, held at the House of Commons on 15 October 2003, was jointly organised by the MCB and Experience Corps for the new publication "Khidmah : Selfless Service for the Elderly". The booklet was officially launched by Rt Hon John Battle MP, Faith Adviser to Prime Minister who spoke of his admiration of the voluntary work carried out by people in faith communities and his desire to see more integration across different beliefs. He said: "The work that people give voluntarily fills the gaps left by paid-for services. This whole country would collapse if all the people that gave their time walked away. In particular the contribution of the faith communities needs to be recognised and told to the wider community to inspire others and to encourage people to give their time outside of their immediate circle. We all need to think locally and globally at the same time."

MCB Treasurer Dr Akber Mohamedali also spoke at the launch at which he voiced the need to "change our view as a Muslim community. When we first came here we were insular, because we had to be, but now second and third generations need to see a bigger picture. They need to see our community centres are a place for all around us, not just for those who attend congregational services. They need to see how they can be a part of the wider community or we will lose them. When I first heard about The Experience Corps and its work I thought brilliant – here is an organisation that encourages something we stand for – for example, 98 per cent of the work in our community centres is carried out by volunteers. Encouraging people to give their time for the good of others fits in with Islamic values and it is wonderful that you can join hands with the Muslim community to celebrate Khidmah." The launch was attended by over 90 people.

The Khidmah booklet has been published in partnership with the Muslim Council of Britain and its launch was supported by coverage on major Radio Ramadan stations across the country, features in the Ramadan special edition of The Muslim News, e-shots to 30,000 individuals, and banners on key Muslim websites. The booklet has been distributed throughout the 800 Mosques in England as well as

to 600 organisations and institutions, 100 Muslim educational establishments and 2,000 Muslim businesses.

Mayor's 'Respect' Conference

Unaiza Malik, MCB Assistant Secretary General spoke at the 'Respect' conference held on 6 November 2003 at the Greater London Authority. Mrs Malik took part in the session entitled "Engaging Communities in the Democratic Process" which was followed by a very interactive question and answer session. The panel of speakers also comprised Kashmir Singh, General Secretary of the British Sikh Federation; Mahmud Hasan, Chair of the Consortium of Bengali Organisations and Simon Woolley, Director of Operation Black Vote.

All community leaders emphasised the need to use places of worship and community centres to underline the importance of community participation in the democratic process and using the right to vote to influence change in small increments. In order for any organisation to truly reflect the community it serves, it must have as broad and representative a mandate as possible. To ensure that this is achieved efforts must be made to engage all sectors of the community in the democratic process and in policy development and service delivery.

Radio Australia Interview

Unaiza Malik was interviewed on 6 November by ABC Radio, Australia. The interview topic was the MCB, its aims and the work it is carrying out for British Muslims. The interview was broadcast in Indonesia, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore and Australian radio stations and is available on the ABC Radio website.

Analysis of post war Iraq

Dr Basil Mustafa, MCB Central Working Committee member, made a presentation on post-war Iraq at a Fringe Meeting chaired by Stephen Timms MP during the Labour Party Conference on 1 October 2003. The presentation covered issues of peace and security, religious leadership, establishing the rule of law; modernising the education system and the economic re-building of Iraq. The presentation is available online in the Media/Speeches section at www.mcb.org.uk.

Islamophobia Report

The Muslim Council of Britain has responded to the draft Runnymede Commission on British Muslims; and Islamophobia. For further details and to read the MCB submission, refer to <http://www.mcb.org.uk/Islamophobia.pdf>

MCB's Leadership Programme Lectures

The MCB's first leadership development programme is hosting a dinner and lecture event on 6th

December at Sundridge Park, Bromley. Iqbal Asaria, Chair of the MCB's Business & Economics Committee will speak on 'Parameters for a Muslim role in the UK and Europe'. THE UK Academic Dr Mona Siddiqui of the University of Glasgow has been invited to present her ideas on the topic of Gender discourse in Islam - imagining a new vision, which is an area in which she specialises. The programme is chaired by Dr Basil Mustafa.

The Leadership Development programme comprises two three-day residential modules, four single days of training, and a six-month follow-up. Participants of this first course - 7 women and 11 men - are professionals with a commitment to community work.

A similar evening event was organised on 11 October, chaired by Judge Drabu, at which guest speakers were Lord Bhatia and Iqbal Sacranie. The course organiser is the MCB Treasurer, Dr Akber Mohamedali, who can be contacted at admin@mcb.org.uk

GLA Eid Reception

On 1 December 2003, the GLA held an Eid Reception attended by over 250 people from all walks of life. Representatives from a number of communities including Somali, Pakistani, Turkish and Nigerian along with Ambassadors and their representatives attended the Reception. Mayor Ken Livingstone spoke at the event in support of the British Muslim community. Dr Abdul Bari, MCB Deputy Secretary General thanked the GLA for supporting Muslims and highlighted areas of future development with the GLA. Further speakers included Dr Aziz Pasha, UMO and Kamal El-Helbawy on behalf of the MCB affiliate, the Muslim Association of Britain. An ISB Islamic exhibition was also launched at the GLA which will be there for a month. This exhibition is displaying posters on a number of Islamic issues.

The MCB's London Affairs Committee were actively consulted on all issues in the preparation of this event. They have provided advice on a number of matters, from advising the Mayor on his speech to arranging the reception and eid cards.

London Conference

The Mayor's third London Conference, held at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in Westminster on 29 November 2003, was attended by about 1100 people. It provided an opportunity for Londoners to put their views to the Mayor and to take part in informed debate with key policy-makers including top public sector managers, business leaders, community representatives and trade unionists. In his keynote address the Mayor made the case for further national investment in London and outlined his vision for the future development of the city. The programme included sessions on a wide range of topics, ranging from housing and transport to tourism and the Olympics.

Dr Abdul Bari, MCB Deputy Secretary General took part as a panellist in a session entitled 'War in Iraq - the impact on London' emphasising the negative impact of the war on London in economic and other terms. He underlined the fact that Muslims have been at the forefront of the peace movement,

working toward social harmony. Also on the panel were Kate Hudson, CND and John Ross, the Mayor's economic Advisor. The session was chaired by Lee Jasper, the Mayor's advisor.

Government Officials Urged To Refrain From Prejudicing Any Future Sajid Badat Trial

On 29 November 2003, the MCB issued a press statement, following Thursday's arrest of Mr Sajid Badat, 24, from Gloucester, urged government officials to refrain from making public statements that could serve to prejudice any future trial, as echoed by the Attorney General Lord Goldsmith this morning who will be examining Mr Blunkett's remarks on this matter.

"It is crucial that if Sajid Badat is to be charged with any offences by the police, then he should receive - and be seen to receive - a scrupulously fair trial. Any attempt by the government or its officials to seek to influence the outcome of the trial by publicly prejudging Mr Badat's guilt or otherwise would be wholly unacceptable." said Mr Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the MCB.

To hear the Radio 4 interview of MCB Media Committee Secretary Inayat Bunglawala on 23 November please go to <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/realmedia/sunday/s20031123b.ram>. For the full press release please refer to www.mcb.org.uk

"Respect not Racism" Week

On Thursday 27 November, Mohibur Rahman, MCB Central Working Committee member, took part in a panel discussion at the LSE Student's Union, as part of their 'Respect not Racism' week on "Anti-racist priorities today." Mr Rahman spoke on the topic of Islamophobia. Other speakers at the event included Harry Cohen MP and representatives from the GLA and the National Assembly Against Racism.

MCB explores Islamic astronomy programme

The MCB's Research & Documentation Committee has commenced discussions with a premier UK astronomy institution in the planning of a programme on the theme of Islamic astronomy. The ReDoc representative is Dr Usama Hasan, himself a keen amateur astronomer and member of MCB affiliate AMR (Association of Muslim Researchers). He is establishing a network of Muslim experts and enthusiasts in the field and can be contacted via the MCB office.

International Symposium on Cultural Diversity

Imam Abdul Jalil Sajid attended an International Symposium on Cultural Diversity on the subject of the quest for common moral ground and the public role of the media. The symposium was held between 8 and 9 November 2003 in Vienna, Austria. The symposium was organised by the Institute for Human Sciences, financed by the European Commission and supported by Austrian Foreign office. The proceedings commenced with an opening by the Austrian Foreign Minister Benita Ferrero-Waldner

and the Austrian Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Over 250 participants attended the sessions, at which Imam Abdul Jalil Sajid presented a speech on the moral basis of intercultural understanding, prepared with assistance from MCB ReDoc members.

Affiliate News



HRF Establishes New Offices in Mozambique and Azerbaijan

The Human Relief Foundation has established new offices in Mozambique and Azerbaijan. Projects supervised by the new offices are set to commence some time in December 2003, as proposals are currently being considered.

Dr El-Amin, the newly appointed Head of International Relations at HRF, explained: 'the offices are still in the primary stages of establishment. We have many projects to consider but healthcare, education and development are a priority.'

Interpal Launches its 10th year Anniversary Celebrations

The Palestinian Relief and Development Fund (Interpal) launched its 10th year anniversary celebrations on Wednesday 22 October, at the Islamic Cultural Centre, Regent's Park, London; sponsored by the Muslim Council of Britain and Muslim Association of Britain.

For the last two months, Interpal has had to defend itself against baseless allegations of terrorist links; resulting in investigations by the Charity Commission. On the 10th Anniversary of the charity, they proudly looked at their contribution to the Palestinian orphans, widows and the wider victims of Israeli occupation. It was also a moment to reflect on the Charity Commission's realisation of Interpal's innocence.

Mr Ibrahim Hewett, the chairman of Interpal, stated, "This milestone in Interpal's life comes at a very significant time, in the wake of yet another clean bill of health from the Charity Commission. The situation in Palestine is a humanitarian crisis unfolding before our eyes and we must all - NGOs, charities and individuals work together for needy Palestinians, wherever they may be." Dr Abdul Bari, MCB Deputy Secretary General spoke at the event in praise and support of Interpal's work.

Among the many guests, were Lib Dem MP Sarah Teather, the family of Tom Hurndall, representative of Mayor of London Ken Livingstone, local Councillors and representatives of various Muslim organisations. All gave their whole hearted support to Interpal's tireless work to alleviate the Palestinian people's suffering.

Islam Awareness Week

MCB affiliates, the Islamic Society of Britain, ISB, began Islam Awareness Week on Monday 3 November 2003 with a launch at the House of Commons attended by, amongst others, Dr Munir Ahmed, President, Islamic Society of Britain; Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General, Muslim Council of Britain; Dominic Gieves, Education Spokesman, Conservatives; Charles Clarke, Secretary of State for Education; Phil Willis, Education Spokesman, Lib-Dems and Trevor Phillips, Chairman, Commission for Racial Equality.

This year's Islam Awareness Week saw the launch of the Virtual Classroom accessible by anyone on the internet which reveals how much of a debt we all owe to early Muslim scientists and thinkers. The virtual classroom, a website devised and operated by Muslim educators and academics, is a major new initiative to make information on Muslim heritage available to schools around the country. Its aim is to contribute to the national curriculum and show how Muslims in history and today can contribute to the exchange of knowledge and information. "I congratulate everyone involved in the development of the Virtual Classroom and look forward to working with you to ensure that we get the widest possible understanding of what it can offer to schools and teachers in every part of the country," Charles Clarke, said in launching the website: www.thevirtualclassroom.net.

At the launch, Iqbal Sacranie said "It is a demonstration of how British Muslims are eager to reach out to their fellow Britons to build a more inclusive Britain. Further still, the positive reaction of 40 LEAs and countless schools across the country is proof that the ordinary people of this country are able and willing to learn about one another and to build a tolerant and peaceful society."

For full details go to the ISB's dedicated IAW website at www.iaw.org.uk and see the MCBDirect review of the virtual classroom at www.mcb.org.uk/mcbdirect.

Public protest on Middle East situation

President Bush's visit prompted hundreds of thousands of protestors once again to assemble in Central London and voice their opposition to US-led policies in Iraq and the full-support it receives from PM Blair. In a rousing address, Anas al-Takriti of MCB affiliate The Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) - responsible for the march in collaboration with Stop the War Coalition and CND - declared that the protest was neither anti-American nor anti-Jewish: its numbers included US war veterans and it had the support of Israelis opposed to the oppression of Palestinians.

Nasheed Extravaganza Tour 2003

MCB affiliates Islamic Society of Britain and The Young Muslims UK are organising their highly successful Nasheed events in a number of UK cities: London (Dec 5), Birmingham (Dec 6), Manchester (Dec 7), Bradford (Dec 8) and Glasgow (Dec 9). These will be enjoyable family events featuring leading artistes such as Sami Yusuf and Dawud Wharansby Ali. For further information see www.isb.org.uk

Muslim Youth Helpline Launches Extended Freephone Service

Britain's only helpline targeting the young Muslim community launched its extended freephone service on 25 October 2003 for Community Service Volunteers (CSV) Make a Difference Day, the UK's biggest day of volunteering in the community to coincide with the Muslim month of Ramadan. Created and run by volunteers aged between 18-25 year old, the Muslim Youth Helpline offers confidential telephone counselling and e-mail enquiries service for young people in need, providing support on a range of social issues, including drugs, family problems, relationships, sexuality, bullying, education and employment. For CSV Make a Difference Day on Saturday 25 October 2003, a new freephone number is being introduced and 14 newly trained volunteer peer-counsellors will enable the Muslim Youth helpline to operate five days a week instead of two.

For further information please contact the MYH Office on 0870 774 3518 or e-mail info@myh.org.uk, Helpline: 0808 808 2008, Fax: 0870 774 3519, Website: www.myh.org.uk.

"Islam's Contribution to Western Civilisation"

On Saturday 8 November, MCB affiliates the Islamic Society of Britain and Young Muslims UK organised an Islam Awareness Week 2003 Conference in London. Guest speakers included Prof. Salim Al-Hassani, Irma Hussain, Sarah Joseph, Dr Munir Ahmed, Baroness Pola Manzila Uddin and others.

Committees Update

Media Committee (MC)

Article in The Times

Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary of the MCB Media Committee wrote an article for the Times published on 1 November 2003 on the subject of the month of Ramadan entitled "Ramadan tells us that abstinence makes the heart grow better". He describes the month of fasting as an exercise which "creates a sense of global unity, a potent reminder to Muslims of their constituting a single faith community ..With the passing of each successive Ramadan the Muslim character ought to develop, mature and enhance." Inayat traces the precepts and historic roots of fasting from the old and new Testament to the Qur'an and traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

For the full article please refer to media/articles section at www.mcb.org.uk

Letter to the Guardian

The Secretary of the Media Committee wrote to the Reader's Editor at the Guardian on 23 October requesting a suitable correction, having noted that the leader column referred to Sudan's "Christian

South". This statement is factually incorrect as the majority the southern population practice animism Accordingly, on Friday 24 October the Guardian published the following statement: "In pointing to the Christians in the south of Sudan as one of the reasons the Bush administration has shown an unexpected interest in the affairs of the country, we may have unintentionally given the impression that Christians are in the majority in the secessionist area (Southern comforter, page 27, yesterday). The population of Sudan comprises: Sunni Muslim 70% (in the north); Christian 5% (mostly in south and Khartoum); other non-Muslim and non-Christian beliefs 25%."

Letter to the BBC

The Secretary of the Media Committee, Inayat Bunglawala wrote to Stephen Whittle, BBC Controller of Editorial Policy, on 25 November regarding an item on the PM programme on Radio 4 aired on 24 November about the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon and his interview to EUpolitix.com. Sharon voiced the opinion that Europe's Muslim population is 'endangering the life of the Jewish community'. In a subsequent interview with the Israeli Ambassador to the UK he makes a number of allegations concerning the manner in which Muslims incited to hate Jews. These remarks were allowed to pass unchallenged and there was no input from any Muslims to provide a semblance of balance.

In response, Peter Rippon, Editor of PM advised that "BBC guidelines rightly require us to uphold the highest standards of accuracy and fairness. However, they do not require us to broadcast the views of all sides of a debate every time we report an element of it." Furthermore he asserts that "Ariel Sharon's comments were newsworthy and controversial. His was critical of European Union governments, of the general public in Europe as well as of Muslim groups. The best way to test and explore his arguments was to conduct a challenging interview with a diplomat from his own government in Europe."

To this, Inayat Bunglawala responded that "while I appreciate the BBC's argument that they may at times want to test just one side of an argument, in this case, the Israeli PM's remarks were so incendiary against another community that it seems to me inexplicable and a disservice to your listeners that a representative of the Muslim community was not invited to comment on his views." Mr Whittle responded to this saying "the most effective approach to impartiality or indeed to testing the arguments is not always to involve a third party where the presenter is pushing the points in a challenging way. We also have to beware of believing that our audiences are incapable of making their own judgements based on what they hear." A meeting is being arranged to discuss this and other BBC editorial policies with the MCB.

Letter to Daily Telegraph

The Secretary of the Media Committee responded to an article by Barbara Amiel in the Daily Telegraph which was published on 24 November. In his response, Mr Bunglawala points out the outright untruths in her article to which refers to the 29 September 2001 MCB statement from Imams and 'Ulama as 'no condemnation of September 11 at all' by 'condemning the bombing of al-Qa'eda and the Taliban in Afghanistan equally and in the same terms'. This latter statement is an invention of Ms Amiel's - the war against Afghanistan had not even begun at that time. In contrast no record is held in any of the back issues of the Daily Telegraph expressing Mrs Amiel's sympathy for the victims or their families. An edited version of Inayat's response was printed in the Daily Telegraph on 27 November. The full letter is available online at <http://www.mcb.org.uk/letter56.html>.

Letter to the Daily Mail

The Secretary of the Media Committee wrote to the Editor of the Daily Mail on 25 November 2003 in response to an article by Melanie Phillips in which she asserts that 'clerics have hijacked mosques up and down the country to incite young Muslims to hate the west and even recruit them to terrorism,' without offering up any evidence in proof of this statement. For the full response please refer to the media/Letters to Editor section at <http://www.mcb.org.uk/letter55.html>

Interview for BBC

The Secretary of the Media Committee gave an interview on the subject of "honour" killings. This can be found online at the BBC website: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/3150142.stm>

Research & Documentation Committee (ReDoc)

Translations of the Qur'an

The MCB's Research & Documentation Committee (ReDoc) and Health and Medical Committee (HMC) have collaborated in the provision of translations of the Qur'an to hospital chaplaincies for use by patients. A box of 18 Qur'ans has been provided to Watford General Hospital. Further copies are available from ReDoc for this purpose.

Radio Interviews

Professor Aziz Sheikh, Chair of ReDoc, appeared on East London Ramadan Radio on Thursday 11 Nov discussing the ethics of organ transplantation. Professor Sheikh also participated in a radio panel discussion on Wednesday 29 October on Glasgow's Ramadan Radio on the subject of Islamophobia

Ramadan Timetable

ReDoc provided Ramadan timings to The Guardian which were published daily.

MCBDirect Update

MCBDirect, the community information portal, has continued to service information requests from a variety of sources whilst promoting excellent initiatives in the community. MCBDirect's website (www.mcb.org.uk/mcbdirect) reviews include the recent exhibition in London by Ali Omer Ermes, ISB's Virtual Classroom, Gai Eaton's "Islam and the Destiny of Man", the innovative "Cube of Cubes"; an interview with Sami Yusuf, SHAMM and Visual Dhikr; along with reportage on the International Symposium on Cultural Diversity and Iftar in a London state school. Articles have also been posted on the essence of Eid, faith schools, the importance of Tajweed and "honour" killings.

MCBDirect's telephone and email helpdesks (0845 1 23 23 63; mcbdirect@mcb.org.uk) have serviced research enquires from journalists, civil servants, researchers, academics, students and educationalists. To date, we have dealt with enquires from the BBC, Channel 4, The Observer, The Guardian, Daily Telegraph, Economist, Department for Health, Department for Education and Skills, City University and the University of Glasgow, to name but a few.

Upcoming on the website is an interview with Charles Clark, Secretary of State for Education and Skills; reviews of "Why do Muslims Hate America", YM/ISB's Nasheed Extravaganza and profiles of Ebrahim Community College and the Muslim Youth Helpline.

Articles

Professor Aziz Sheikh published an article in the 13 October issue of Pulse with Professor A R Gatra on 'Treating Muslim Patients' which outlines practical issues that may be important in dealing with Muslim patients such as taking into account birth customs, fasting, appropriate medication, contraception and health promotion on issues such as smoking, alcohol and drug related issues. The article notes that "Equipped with skills of patient-centredness, empathy and a basic understanding of the dynamic interface between faith and health, it is possible to work with and engage minority communities in the task of delivering care that is both culturally competent and sensitive." Professor Aziz Sheikh has also recently published an article in GP on the subject of Muslim health.

Islam Awareness Week

Shadi Bashir and Shargil Ahmad represented ReDoc and MCBDirect at the launch of Islam Awareness Week in early November. A copy of their review of the event can be found online at www.mcb.org.uk/mcbdirect.

Foreign Office Open Day

Shabana Khan headed a team representing the MCB at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's annual Open Day.

Education Training & Employment Committee (ETEC)

ETEC Meeting

On 2 November 2003 the MCB ETEC held a meeting at the Islamic Cultural Centre, London in order to

select new committee members. Mr Tahir Alam was elected as the chairman of ETEC. Dr. Abdul-Hayee Murshad was elected as the Vice-Chair. The election of the position of Secretary was deferred until the next meeting which is set for Sunday 4 January. The Education, Training & Employment committee can be contacted at education@mcb.org.uk

Youth Committee (YC)

YC Meeting

The MCB Youth Committee met on 23 October at the East London Mosque. Among items discussed was the election of the new chair of the MCB Youth Committee, Abul Khayar Ali, a prominent youth leader in Tower Hamlets.

Social Affairs Committee (SAC)

"Honour" Killings interview

Shiban Akbar, Chair of the Social Affairs Committee, was interviewed on the subject of "Honour" Killings by BBC London on 7 October 2003, stating "No one deserves to be killed and killed in this manner.. This is murder. The father has committed a heinous crime." She went on to clarify the issue of sexual morality in Islam "Pre-marital or extra-marital sex is prohibited in Islam. If parents feel their family honour is at stake then they should ensure that proper moral guidance is given to children before it's too late. Parents need to talk to their children and maintain a relaxed environment at home so that children can talk to them on anything. If children or young people behave in a manner that is immoral and un-Islamic, then I would say it is the failure on the part of the parents not to have effectively communicated that message. For their own personal failings they can't take it out on their children." Ms Akbar pointed out the need for a concerted action plan to be implemented at grassroot level in order to raise awareness of this problem and educate parents and children alike.

International Colloquium

Shiban Akbar attended the opening ceremony of a 4 day International Colloquium on "Word of God, Art of Man: The Qur'an and its Creative Expressions" on Sunday 19th Oct at the Ismaili Centre, London. The session was addressed by His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan, Professor Emeritus Oleg Grabar from Princeton, Professor Yasser Tabbaa from Michigan, Professor Francois Deroche from Paris and Dr Heather Ecker from Washington D.C. They spoke on The Qur'an as a Source of Artistic Inspiration; Early Qur'anic Ornament and Scribes and Reciters: Decoding Praxis in Early Qur'anic Manuscripts. In conjunction with the colloquium, The Institute of Ismaili Studies held an exhibition at the Centre with a selection of Qur'anic and related materials. The Colloquium was attended by scholars and academics in the field from all over the world.

Ramadan Article

Shiban Akbar's article focussing on good practice during Ramadan in Her Majesty's Prison service for Muslim prisoners entitled 'Ramadan Kareem' has been published in "Initiative" Autumn 2003 magazine by the United Religions UK. A concise version of the article with the title "Ramadan Inside" was also published in the Independent Monitor, The Journal of the Association of Members of Board of Visitors, Oct 2003, Issue 81.

Al-Jazeera Interview

Prof Abdul Haleem, member of the Social Affairs Committee, was interviewed on Al-Jazeera on 14 November 200. He answered questions on Democracy, Bush and the current political climate.

Health & Medical Committee (HMC)

Joint seminar with Islamic Cultural Centre

On Saturday 15 November 2003 the Food Standards Agency in collaboration with the Islamic Cultural Centre (ICC), London and the MCB organised a seminar on the theme 'Food, Halal & Culture'. Speakers included Dr Ahmad Al-Dubayan, ICC Director General, Dr Yunus Teinaz, Senior Environment Health Officer, London Borough of Haringey and Health Advisor to the ICC, and Drs Shuja Shafi and Majid Katme of the MCB's Health and Medical Committee.

Seminar on Stunning

On 28 September Dr Shuja Shafi and Dr A Majid Katme gave talks on the issue of Halal meat and stunning at a conference on Halal meat in Peterborough.

BBC Radio Interview

Dr A Majid Katme, member of the MCB Health & Medical Committee, took part in a debate on Friday 10 October on BBC Radio London with the Director of VIVA! (Vegetarians International Voice for Animals) who are staunchly against religious slaughter without stunning,

Foodaware Meeting

On Thursday 30 October Dr Katme attended a meeting held by Foodaware, the Consumers Food Group at the European Parliament Office on behalf of the Muslim Council of Britain. Keith Miller of the Food Standards Agency spoke on the issue of animal feeding. Dr Katme provided an Islamic perspective on issues such as natural diet, animal husbandry and labelling. This was followed by a speech by Paul Marshall of the Department of Health who discussed updating the Food and Health Action Plan. Dr Katme raised issues of Muslim diet and health problem and the need for regular consultation between the Muslim community and the Department of Health.

Letter to MPs

On 19 November 2003, Dr Shuja Shafi, Chair of the MCB Health & Medical Committee and Dr Al-Dubayan, Director of The Islamic Cultural Centre, London sent a letter to key MPs at DEFRA and the Department of Health to clarify the position held by Muslims on the issue of the ritual slaughter of animals (Halal) with a briefing note on Islam's concerns with animal welfare and objections to pre-slaughter stunning. The letter outlined dietary laws as a key part of the holistic way of life proscribed in Islam as part of the broader Islamic religious code of conduct. The letter urges MPs to meet both religious needs and the best modern animal welfare standards. A copy of the letter can be found online at www.mcb.org.uk

New on the MCB Website

- **Media/Press Releases** - 29 Nov 2003, Nothing Less Than Full Public Apology From MacShane
Will Be Acceptable
29 Nov 2003, Government Officials Urged To Refrain From Prejudicing Any Future Sajid Badat Trial
22 Nov 2003, UK Muslims Reject MacShane's Ill-Informed And Insulting Comments
21 Nov 2003, MCB Condemns Bombings in Istanbul
15 Nov 2003, Police Harassment of Leading British Muslim Scholar
- **Media/Letters to the Editor** - 25 November 2003 , The Daily Telegraph, Response to Barbara Amiel by Inayat Bunglawala
25 November 2003 , Daily Mail , Response to Melanie Phillips by Inayat Bunglawala
23 October 2003, The Guardian , Minority faiths in south of Sudan
- **Media/Speeches** - 3 Nov 2003, Islam Awareness Week launch speech by MCB Secretary General

1 Oct 2003, 'Post-War Iraq' by Dr Basil Mustafa, based on a presentation at a fringe meeting, Labour Party Conference.

- **Library/Articles & Essays** - 1 November 2003, The Times, "Ramadan tells us that abstinence makes the heart grow better", by Inayat Bunglawala
- **Library/Guidelines, Dossiers & Factsheets** - Preparation of the Deceased and Janazah Prayers
- **Library/MCB's submissions and responses to consultation requests** - 20 November 2003
Submission to the Runnymede Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia

New on the MCBDirect Website

- **MCBDirect Helpline**

MCBDirect's helpline has been set up after successful associate membership application to the Telephone Helpline Association. The helpline number is 0845 1 23 23 63.

- MCBDirect has already posted many exciting features on the website. These include reviews of books, events, individuals etc.
- Feature on Iqra Arts
- Feature on Ramadan and Eid by Suma Din
- Feature on Faith Schools, Professor Grace of the Institute of Education gives his thoughts on a recent Guardian article on faith schools.
- Feature on the Ali Omar Hermes Exhibition, reviewed by Faisal Rafique in London
- Feature on Iftar at a London state school
- Exclusive feature interview with Ruh al-'Alam on *Visual Dhikr* and developing contemporary Islamic art in Britain
- Feature interview with Sami Yusuf on the Azeri people, his inspiration and his next album.
- Community News, Events & FAQs regularly updated
- To advertise community news and events please contact Shargil Ahmed:
mcbdirect@mcb.org.uk

Events

Event: Lecture on the Geneva Accord and the right of return

Date: Thursday 11th December 2003

Held By: The Palestinian Return Centre (PRC)

Venue: Al-Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS, London University, Thornhaugh St., Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG

Contact: Tel: 0208 453 0919 , Tel: 0207 384 3300 , Fax: 0208 4530994, <http://www.prc.org.uk/english/>

Information: This public lecture, in Arabic, will be presented by Mr. Abdul Bari Atwan, editor-in-chief of Al Quds Al Arabi newspaper

Event: Nasheed Extravaganza 2003

Date: Friday 5th - Tuesday 9th December

Held By: Young Muslims UK and ISB

Venue: 5 major cities around the UK

Contact: To book your tickets please visit <http://www.nasheed2003.com/extravaganza/home.htm>

Information: This year the Nasheed Extravaganza will insha'Allah be bigger and better with performances

from Sami Yusuf, Dawud Wharansby Ali, Khaleel Muhammed, Shaam and Mecca 2 Medina. Don't miss this unique evening of entertainment celebrating the beautiful message of Islam. Adult tickets cost £12, Under 13's pay £8, Group discounts are available. This event is sponsored by INTERPAL

Event: Palestine - What Next?

Date: Saturday 6th - Sunday 7th December 2003

Time: 9.00 - 5.00 pm

Held By: Friends of Al Aqsa and the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS)

Venue: Markfield Conference Centre, Ratby Lane, Markfield, Leicestershire, LE67 9SY

Contact: To register a place call 0116 212 5441 or register online

at: www.fosis.org.uk/fpc_seminar.pdf

Information: The issues to be covered include: History, Media Monitoring, Political Zionism, The Road Map, The Apartheid Wall, and much more. Dr Azzam Tamimi, Dr Mahmood Chandia, David Abdullah, Ibrahim Hewitt, Massoud Shadjareh, Othman Moqbel & Ismail Adam Patel.

Cost: £20 students / £25 non students (includes meals & accommodation).

The Muslim Council of Britain

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