

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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Reports and Events

MCB Annual General Meeting

The Seventh Annual General Meeting of the MCB was held at Brent Town Hall, London on Saturday 22 May 2004. The Mayor of Brent, Councillor Ahmed Shahzad, launched the proceedings. Four hundred delegates from the MCB's affiliated bodies and guests participated in the day's business that centred on reports from Office Bearers, elections and presentations on major projects. In the course of the day, the new Central Working Committee (CWC) was elected and also held its first meeting for the election of three Office Bearers. The meeting unanimously re-elected Iqbal Sacranie to a second two year term of office as Secretary-General of the MCB. Dr Muhammad Abdul Bari was elected as the Deputy Secretary-General and Dr Akber Mohamedali elected to the post of MCB Treasurer.

Speaking at the AGM Mr Sacranie said: "The British Muslim community is facing a defining moment. We are not, and cannot be, a community that is content with agitating from the sidelines against perceived ills and injustices. We must be a community that is firmly committed to participation at every level of society for the common good of all our fellow citizens. That has been the MCB's ethos right from its inception."

For an excerpt from the annual report refer to <http://www.mcb.org.uk/agm2004.pdf>

CWC Meeting

The CWC reconvened on Saturday 12 June at the East London Mosque to appoint four further Office Bearers for the two-year term. The CWC appointed Daud Abdullah, Mrs Unaiza Malik and Ibrahim Hewitt as Assistant Secretary Generals. Dr AbdulKarim Khalil will serve as Assistant Treasurer. A number of co-optees were also made to the CWC: Shabana Khan, Shibani Akbar, Sadiq Khan, Dr Azhar Sheikh, Shehzad Saraf and Naushir Jaffer. Dr Abdul Raheem Khan has been appointed to the MCB's Board of Counsellors.

Friends of The MCB

The "Friends of the Muslim Council of Britain" initiative, spearheaded by Judge Khurshid Drabu, was launched at the AGM on 22 May 2004. Constitutionally, membership to the MCB is not open to individuals but only to organisations. Its work is carried out by members of affiliated organisations and other individuals. In view of this fact, the "Friends of the MCB" initiative seeks to encourage and enable individuals to lend their support and provide assistance with the work of the MCB.

In signing up as a "Friend of the MCB" the MCB undertakes to provide information on its major initiatives, extend invitations to its public functions and set up mechanisms to receive ideas and feedback the future strategic planning of the MCB.

For further information and a form to become a "Friend of the MCB" please contact the MCB
Office: admin@mcb.org.uk

Prof Noibi's Services to the Community

The MCB extends its warmest congratulations to Professor Dawud Noibi, the distinguished Islamic scholar much loved by the Muslim community in Britain, for receiving an OBE. Professor Noibi's dedication to public service - in a variety of fields including education, prison welfare and inter-faith relations - has been a source of inspiration. The MCB is privileged to have him in its ranks in the MCB Board of Counsellors as a valued advisor.

Unjust War, Now The Brutalities

The Muslim Council of Britain believes that the seemingly unending stream of pictures emanating from Iraq showing Iraqis being tortured, brutalised and degraded by US troops marks a turning point in the current conflict. In a statement issued on 12 May 2004, the MCB condemned the indefensible murder in Iraq of the US hostage Nick Berg who was shown being beheaded in a website video recently released. "Islam categorically forbids the killing of innocents. The appalling abuses that have been known to have occurred at the Abu Ghurayb prison in Baghdad cannot be used as a justification for this criminal act," said Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain.

Refer to www.mcb.org.uk for the full press release.

Alarming statistics from 'Stop & Search' Report

On Thursday 20 May, the MCB released a statement regarding the report from the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) which provided evidence of an 'arrest first, ask questions later' approach which, in the view of the MCB, is causing alienation in large sections of the Muslim community. The report revealed a 41% rise in persons stopped by the police in 2001-2002 - mainly of Asian origin - and an arrest rate of only 4% of those stopped and searched: a community is being criminalised.

"These figures are quite devastating and confirm what we have been hearing anecdotally from the experiences of a worryingly large and ever-increasing number of young Muslim men. Just as an entire generation of young black people were alienated through Stop and Search practice, we are deeply worried that the same thing could occur again, this time to young Muslim men," said Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain.

For the full press release refer to www.mcb.org.uk

Genocide in Gaza

On Monday 24 May 2004, the MCB issued a press release which denounced Israel's criminal

slaughter of Palestinian civilians in the Occupied Territories. It noted that "we have time and again warned that Israel's murderous leadership would exploit the US presence in Iraq to escalate its ethnic cleansing of Palestine. Now the evidence is incontrovertible. What we are seeing is a creeping genocide of the Palestinian people. It is palpably clear that the Israeli campaign is calculated and deliberate. Most of the Palestinian children killed in recent days bore the marks of sniper bullets to their heads", said Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain. The press release went on to urge the British government to come off the fence and go beyond words and take a clear stand against Zionist brutality and the dehumanisation of the Palestinian people.

Letter to Attorney General Regarding Guantanamo Bay

The Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain, Iqbal Sacranie, has written to Lord Goldsmith, Attorney General expressing appreciation for remarks made last Friday at the Cour de Cassation, France, where he made it clear that the planned military tribunals for the suspects still being held by the United States at Guantanamo Bay were unfair and unacceptable.

The MCB Secretary General conveyed the hope that the remaining four Britons still being held at Guantanamo would be brought back to this country at the earliest opportunity.

The letter continued by noting the concern in the British Muslim community regarding the way these detainees have been treated by the US authorities, especially after two former Guantanamo inmates, Jamal Udeen and Tarek Dergoul both publicly stated that they had been repeatedly humiliated and also tortured while in US custody and asks whether this serious matter has been taken up by Lord Goldsmith with the US authorities.

The letter noted that the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has also supported the Attorney General's remarks and called for the return of the remaining four British detainees to the UK. The sooner this sorry chapter in UK-US relations is closed the better it will be for all concerned.

Interfaith Award Retracted

The MCB's stand criticising Israel's 'creeping genocide' and human rights abuses in Palestine prompted the Sternberg Foundation to cancel an award for interfaith work that was due to be made to its Secretary General Iqbal Sacranie. Muslim scholars active in interfaith work, including Imam Abdul Jalil Sajid, have deplored this action by the Sternberg Foundation, in particular its demand that the Secretary General should "disassociate" himself from the MCB's statements. However the MCB reiterated its commitment to genuine interfaith dialogue and expressed the hope that this episode would not impact adversely on Muslim-Jewish relations in the UK. MCB affiliates have supported the Secretary General's response 'one can always differ, but not shy away from injustice'.

The Rise of Institutionalised Islamophobia

The MCB welcomes the timely publication of the updated Islamophobia report on 1 June 2004 by the

Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia.

"We have been witnessing a relentless increase in hostility towards Islam and British Muslims and it is clear that existing race relations bodies have been either unable or unwilling to combat this phenomenon effectively" said Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain. Mr Sacranie has written to the Chair of the BCMI Dr Richard Stone to thank him for his longstanding efforts to combat Islamophobia.

The Islamophobia report can be purchased through Trentham Books, ISBN 1 85856 317 8, price, £12.99 Tel: 01782745567 or www.trentham-books.co.uk. Further information is available at www.insted.co.uk/islam.html. For the full press release refer to www.mcb.org.uk

Najaf Cemeteries Shelled

Following news reports that Coalition Forces in Iraq were shelling cemeteries in Najaf on 4 June 2004, the Muslim Council of Britain contacted the Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister's offices urging the government to look into the reports and instruct the military command in Iraq to bring an immediate halt to the shelling of the cemetery, the place of rest for some of the most senior Islamic figures.

The Foreign Secretary's Office responded after having contacted Mr Straw in the USA. Following his discussions with Colin Powell, Straw assured that the message had been conveyed to the Military Commander in Baghdad and that the value placed on the sanctity of the cemeteries would be upheld. Evening reports confirmed that no major incident had arisen from earlier shelling. Following further enquiry from the Private Secretary's office, confirmation was given that there had been no firing on the gates of Hadhrat Ali's shrine.

The MCB continues to work to ensure that any wide felt concerns of the community are taken on board and dealt with efficiently and with vigour.

Arson Attacks on Synagogues

The Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain wrote to the Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks on 23 June 2004 expressing his sadness at accounts of arson attacks on the South Tottenham synagogue and the Hendon headquarters of the educational charity, Aish HaTorah. The letter conveyed his deepest and heartfelt sympathies stating "There is never any justification for hate crimes such as these and I can well imagine the fear and uncertainty that they may serve to instil in members of the British Jewish community. Know that you do not stand alone in times like these. We at the Muslim Council of Britain stand firmly against all who want to stir race hate". The letter went on to offer assistance and voice the hope that the criminals who perpetrated these shameful acts were speedily apprehended by the authorities and dealt with according to the law.

Joint Campaign to Call for Aid

Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary General of the MCB was among the signatories of a campaign calling upon the Government to increase development aid substantially as part of the United Kingdom spending review this year. In an unprecedented move, 290 charities representing many different communities and faiths have come together this year in a joint campaign calling upon the Government to agree a timetable to increase aid so that the United Kingdom reaches the United Nations aid-spending target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income (GNI) by 2008.

“It is our duty as members of a global community to increase our assistance to these people and to work towards a more stable, peaceful world.”

For the full text of the letter and the list of signatories, refer to "Poverty is our problem".

Elections and the Muslim Vote

In the run-up to elections in June, the Muslim Council of Britain undertook a number of initiatives to connect Muslim voters to politicians:

Muslims urged to vote

The Muslim Council of Britain sent a letter to all of the country's mosques, Islamic associations and institutions urging them to encourage their communities to take the fullest part in the local and European elections that took place on June 10. The letter generated a nationwide awareness of the elections and its importance amongst UK Muslims across the country. The Public Affairs committee also took part in a number of media interviews to further discuss the implications of the letter. The BEC breakfast interview with the Chair of Public Affairs Committee, Sher Khan, was repeated every hour on News 24.

For the full text refer to http://www.mcb.org.uk/Jun04_letter_mosques.pdf

Mayoral Hustings

The MCB urged Muslim Londoners to participate in the political process and cast their votes for the London Mayor on an informed basis. The Public Affairs committee of the Muslim Council of Britain organised a Mayoral Hustings meeting in East London on 4 June 2004 for London's Muslims to meet and question the main London Mayoral candidates, one of the country's most influential elected posts.

The discussion panel were provided an opportunity to outline their policies for London and respond to questions. The Mayoral candidates present included: Ken Livingstone (Labour), Steven Norris (Conservative), Simon Hughes (Lib-Dem), Darren Johnson (Greens) and Lindsey German (Respect). The audience represented a cross-section of the London Muslim community and issues raised included public transport, policing and representation, terrorism and security, capacity building for Muslim community organisations and foreign policy.

The Public Affairs Committee highlighted the crucial nature of the Muslim vote given the fact that if a far right party received 5% of the vote in the London Assembly elections they would have qualified for a seat via the top up list system. See the Unite Against Fascism Press Release [http://www.uaf.org.uk/news/press_releases/10 May press rel.pdf](http://www.uaf.org.uk/news/press_releases/10_May_press_rel.pdf) for more details.

'Super-Thursday' sends signal

Hundreds of thousands of British Muslims responded positively to the MCB's call to participate in the political process and vote to marginalise the Far Right. The Muslim Council of Britain welcomed the higher than average turnout for Local Council, GLA, Mayoral and European elections. Electoral hustings organised by the MCB and similar events initiated by local community bodies, highlighted two issues as 'top of mind' -not just amongst Muslims but in wider circles as well: concerns with the application of anti-terrorism laws and foreign policy. The former has stoked Islamophobia and disrupted the lives of many innocent individuals. The situation in Palestine as well as the invasion of Iraq is central to the negative views towards New Labour. These issues have been translated into support for anti-war candidates.

"For Muslims, these elections mark another milestone in their progressive integration," said MCB Deputy Secretary General, Dr Abdul Bari. "We hope that instead of being active only during the polls, Muslims will also take an active part within the parties of their choice and contribute to the general good of the nation."

For the full press release refer to www.mcb.org.uk. For further Public Affairs Committee matters, refer to the Committee Update section below.

OIC Foreign Ministers Conference, Istanbul

MCB Secretary General Iqbal Sacranie attended the Islamic Foreign Ministers Conference in Istanbul between 14-16 June 2004 where he urged the OIC (Organisation of the Islamic Conference) to play its rightful and active role in helping to stabilise an increasingly unjust and violent world.

A final statement issued by the foreign ministers in the 31st two-day meeting of the OIC called on the United Nations Security Council to hold its responsibilities in keeping international peace and security and forcing Israel to stop its aggression on the Palestinian people. Member states welcomed the establishment of an Interim Government in Iraq to end the occupation and establish a fully sovereign, free and democratic Iraq. The Foreign Ministers strongly condemned the inhuman practices committed against the Iraqi prisoners and detainees in Abu Ghurayb prison, demanding that those responsible be put on trial.

For the Secretary General's full speech refer to the Media, Speeches section at www.mcb.org.uk.

Conservative Party Organises Milad Un Nabi Event

The Conservative Party held an event to celebrate the birthday of the Prophet (pbuh) (Milad al-Nabi) at its Central Office on 5 May 2004. Muslim community leaders including MCB Secretary General Iqbal Sacranie and Dr Aziz Pasha of the Union of Muslim Organisations, along with leading members of the Conservative Party including its Leader Michael Howard, Tory activist Sameer Mirza and Shadow Attorney General Dominic Grieve MP were there to recognise the contribution made to mankind by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

The Opposition Leader emphasised the importance of working with the Muslim community and pledged to restart dialogue and meetings with the Muslim Community leadership, praising them for excelling in all aspects of business and expressing the wish that more people from the Muslim community participated in politics. Mr Howard echoed the sentiments expressed by the Muslim Council of Britain regarding the use of the term "Islamic Terrorists" agreeing that such terminology is offensive and supported the rights of British Muslims to retain the Halal method of slaughter.

Iqbal Sacranie addressed the attendees, stating that this event marked a clear recognition of the very positive contribution the Muslim community makes to society quoting from the speech by the asylum seeker Ja'far in 616 CE when addressing the Negus in Abyssinia and going to say:

"From Ja'far's speech, we learn that the noble Prophet encouraged all the natural inbuilt moral virtues that make us human beings with dignity, virtues such as truthfulness, kindness, generosity and justice. And he condemned all the naturally repugnant vices such as falsehood, shamelessness, ignorance and oppression. These were not just fine words. They were mirrored day by day in the actual life of the noble Prophet. This is why people who knew him loved him. There was not a blind following for the noble Prophet also taught them that 'The person who has no mind, has no true religion.' This is why millions of people the world over continue to love him and seek to follow his fine example."

"I firmly believe that the world we live in, however sophisticated it is, in terms of its science and technology for example, would be a far, far better place if we all shun the vices he condemned and uphold the virtues he taught and exemplified. "

Mr Sacranie also expressed his appreciation for the proposed establishment of regular meetings between the Muslim community and the Opposition Party on a range of issues.

Hate Crimes

Dr Daud Abdullah, MCB Assistant Secretary General attended a meeting on Hate Crimes. The meeting was the first of a series on equality held in the House of Commons on 4 May 2004. The findings of these seminars will be presented to the Labour Party as suggestions for its election manifesto.

Convenors at the meeting included Shaun Woodward MP, Barbara Roche MP and Angela Eagle MP. A number of representations were made from lobbying groups and public institutions including the Metropolitan Police.

The meeting served to emphasise the need for legislation against religious hate crimes. Speaking on behalf of the MCB, Dr Daud Abdullah called for the reinforcement of the policy of identifying the faith of victims of hate crimes. By so doing we would be better placed to monitor the level of Islamophobia in society.

The seminar heard three main presentations from Dr Paul Iganski, lecturer at Essex University, Mr. Peter Herbert of the Met Police Authority and Dr. Michael Sutton a Reader in criminology at Nottingham Trent University.

UNRWA Commissioner General: Without Justice a Durable Solution Would Remain Elusive

Dr Daud Abdullah attended the second Ruth Steinkraus-Cohen International Law lecture on Wednesday 28 April at the London School of Economics. The lecture was delivered by UNRWA's Commissioner General, Mr. Peter Hansen. A large audience turned out to hear the senior UN diplomat speak on "UNRWA's Operational Environment and the Role of International Law."

In his presentation Hansen explained as a "humanitarian practitioner" he was deeply concerned with issue of justice. Without it, he warned, the search for a durable solution to the conflict in Palestine would remain elusive. In this vein, Hansen said the fair application of international law with regard to the Palestinian refugees was seriously wanting and in many instances smacked of "double standards". This culture of double standards must end if international law should have any relevance in the Middle East, Mr. Hansen asserted.

Hansen affirmed that according to international law the Palestinian people were a "Protected People" and as such should be respected and treated humanely. This is evidently not the case in the OPT as most of those who were killed during the current Intifada were civilians.

Hansen said while many humanitarian agencies had stopped operations in the territories because of the harsh conditions and tight restrictions imposed by Israel, UNRWA would continue to serve the Palestinian refugees. He said the Palestinian refugees had a legitimate expectation for assistance from the agency and that there would always be governments and peoples willing to help the organization continue with its mission until a solution is found to the refugee problem.

Kashmir Conference

A two day international Kashmir conference was held in Birmingham between 7 and 8 June 2004. The conference was organized by the MCB Affiliate, the World Kashmir Freedom Movement (WKFM) to focus on the issue of the Kashmir and to pay tribute to the late Dr Ayyub Thakur. The conference unanimously adopted a resolution rejecting conversion of the Line of Control (LOC) into a permanent border between Pakistan and India.

The WKFM resolution stated that the dispute should be resolved on the basis of the "expression of the free will of the people of Kashmir and without compromising the territorial integrity of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, as it existed on August 14th 1947." The conference called for the inalienable right to self-determination, unity and the release of political prisoners and withdrawal of cases against them. The resolution also called for an extension of the ceasefire throughout Indian held Kashmir, restoration of civil liberties and the repeal of draconian laws such as the Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act, Disturbance Areas Act and Armed Forces Special Powers Act.

MCB Assistant Secretary General, Dr Daud Abdullah, attended and spoke at the conference. Attendees also included amongst others WKFM President Dr Ghulam Nabi Mir, Pakistan's Acting High Commissioner Murad Ali, Lord Nazir Ahmed, MP Khalid Mahmood, Member of the Labour NEC, Shahid Malik, and Liz Lynn MEP, Chairman Kashmir Group in the House of Commons.

The Right To Wear Jilbab

The Muslim Council of Britain views the landmark decision made in the High Court on 15 June 2004 to deny a fifteen year old Muslim schoolgirl in Luton her right to wear the jilbab to school as worrying and objectionable. The British Muslim community is a diverse community in terms of the interpretation and understanding of faith and its practice. Within this broad spectrum those that believe and choose to wear the jilbab and consider it to be part of their faith requirement for modest attire should be respected. "Our schools need to respond positively to recognise and reflect the communities they are serving" said Dr Abdul Bari, Deputy Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain.

Editorials in the Guardian and the Daily Telegraph also supported the girl's right to wear the jilbab as did statements from Dr Richard Stone, Chair, Commission on British Muslims & Islamophobia, and Neville Nagler, Director of the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions UK Launched

Dr Daud Abdullah, MCB Assistant Secretary General, attended the launch of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions UK held in House of Parliament on 22 June 2004. The event was attended by a cross-section from media, academia, human rights, churches and politicians. For further information refer to <http://www.icahtuk.org/index2.html>

Opportunities and Challenges facing Muslim Communities

In cooperation with its strategic partner, the King Baudouin Foundation (KBF), the European Policy Centre held a Dialogue entitled "Opportunities and Challenges facing Muslim Communities: The European and the North American Experience," as part of its three-year work programme on this subject. The Dialogue was held in Brussels on 9 June 2004.

The panel discussion was contributed to by Saqeb Mueen, Secretary of the Public Affairs Committee Muslim Council of Britain and featured Dr Jocelyne Cesari, Principal Research Fellow at the National

Centre for Scientific Research, Paris and Professor at Harvard University, Denise Helly, Researcher at the Institut National de Recherche Scientifique, Canada and Khallad Swaid, President, Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisation. EPC Political Director, John Palmer, chaired the meeting.

Saqeb Mueen presented a view on the topic of terrorism from the UK in which he underlined that Muslims had not been spared from attacks because they were part of society like any other ethnic or social group. "An attack on Britain is an attack on British Muslims too," he said. Anti-terrorism legislation needed to be balanced and to be successful, anti-terrorism initiatives needed the support of the Muslim community. There had been many arrests within Muslim communities, but few actual convictions made. Overall, the use of draconian powers by the police had created a climate of fear, which had been maintained by the press, he said.

Affiliate News

Notice to MCB Affiliates

The Muslim Council of Britain would like to remind its affiliates that they can advertise events, news and job opportunities nationally free of charge through the MCB website and MCB E-Newsletter.

- To register events go to: http://www.mcb.org.uk/mcbdirect/event_add.php
- To register community news go to: http://www.mcb.org.uk/mcbdirect/news_add.php
- To register jobs: send and email to: mcbdirect@mcb.org.uk.

Automatic registration will soon be possible insha'Allah.

The Launch of the London Muslim Centre

The Muslim Council of Britain congratulates the Muslim community in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets on the occasion of the grand opening of the new London Muslim Centre, one of the largest Islamic cultural centres in Europe. The London Muslim Centre is a symbol of vision, planning and skill which will actively seek to cater for all, irrespective of faith.

Welcoming guests at the launch of the London Muslim Centre, Dr. Muhammad Abdul Bari, Chairman of the East London Mosque and Deputy Secretary General of the MCB, alongside Yaqoob Johnson, Chairman of the London Muslim Centre Committee, emphasised that "the London Muslim Centre allows the Muslim community to lay firm roots in British society, by re-affirming its British identity. British Muslims would need to continue to engage in the mainstream political, socio-cultural and economic life of Britain."

Shaykh Abdur-Rahman al-Sudais, the Imam of the Grand Mosque in Makkah formally opened the Centre. Shaykh Al-Sudais said "I am very happy to see that the Muslim community in Britain has taken

great steps towards achieving community cohesion working in partnership with the wider society. The East London Mosque and the new London Muslim Centre is the best testament to this"

Speaking at the launch, Iqbal Sacranie, MCB Secretary General said: "This new multi-purpose complex is an example of where, from the start, a large number of young and talented people have been engaged in a project which is set to become a landmark contribution to the vibrant and cosmopolitan city of London. This project demonstrates that a community that is plagued by poverty and by a variety of social ills has the capacity to raise itself up and to become a beacon of hope for others."

Prince Charles (through a video message) praised the efforts of the local community for raising nearly half of the total cost (£10M), and stated "it seems to me that such bold endeavours deserve wider support and I can only hope that some of the city institutions and other funding bodies might perhaps be able to take up this challenge, which I think would do so much to encourage community self help projects elsewhere, as well as contributing to better understanding between communities here in London and elsewhere."

The London Muslim Centre is a six-storey multi-purpose building which has been designed to provide innovative services to the community. The Centre's activities will include services for and run by women and young people, education and training provisions; promotions for healthy living; initiatives for economic development; provisions for religious and social welfare as well as active sponsorship of cultural and religious dialogue and community cohesion.

For further information refer to www.londonmuslimcentre.org.uk

FOSIS Annual National Conference

Between Thursday 17 June and Sunday 20 June 2004 FOSIS held its annual national conference at the University of Nottingham entitled "Promoting Unity, Diversity and Integrity", where over 600 Muslim Students and Islamic Societies from across the UK and Ireland had the opportunity to come together to learn and discuss various issues. The conference included international speakers, evening entertainment, workshops, interactive lectures, exhibitions, careers fairs and reminders. Workshops and sessions were geared towards making Muslim Students and Islamic Societies more effective in all aspects of their work on campus on topics ranging from: Inter-religious interaction on campus; time is life: use it right; interaction with the media; fiqh of brother-sister interaction; making a difference on every level; running an Islam awareness week and character-based Da'wah.

Prominent speakers from as far as Canada, Switzerland and the UK, graced the event. Among the distinguished list were: Dr Tariq Ramadan, Dr Jamal Badawi, Shaykh Shabir Ally, Dr Hisham Al-Awadi, Prof. Salman Nadvi, Lord Nazir Ahmed and Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra.

The Annual Council Meeting took place as the conference drew to a close and the new executive committee was elected by representatives of member Islamic societies. Dr Abdul Bari, MCB Deputy

Secretary General and Ahmed Al Rawi, President of the Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe (FIOE) spoke during the closing session on 20 June.

For further details on the conference contact the FOSIS Head Office on 020 8452 4493 or refer to www.fosis.org.uk

Conference in Berlin

On 15 May 2004 MCB Affiliates, the Palestinian Return Centre and the Association of the Palestinian Community in Berlin jointly organized a mass conference of Palestinian communities in Berlin, Germany under the title, 'we will never surrender the right of return and we mandate no one to compromise it.' Representatives and delegates from Palestinian institutions and communities throughout Europe participated in the conference. It was attended by a large contingent of Palestinians resident in Germany in addition to many prominent Palestinian personalities from inside Palestine, the refugee camps and other parts of the world. The conferees asserted their absolute rejection of all solutions and initiatives that compromise their right of return.

For further details refer to www.prc.org.uk

Halal Meals at Bevington Primary School

After 6 years of campaigning for their rights, Muslim parents at Bevington Primary School, North Kensington have won the case for their children to be served meals they are able to eat after the High Court accepted a request for urgent consideration and proceedings against both the School and Kensington & Chelsea Council. Since 1998, Bevington School had rigorously resisted the continuous demands of Muslim parents for their children, who make up approximately 70% of the School's pupils, to be provided with Halal meals.

The parent who took legal action against the School said; "I'm delighted that the rights of the majority of children at our school have finally been recognised, but it's a big shame that after years of attempted diplomacy and negotiation I had to issue legal proceedings, and a day before the hearing Halal meals were served at the School".

MCB Affiliate Dar Al Arqam, The Moroccan Community Welfare Group MCWG represented the parents on this issue and liaised with the school. MCWG provided Bevington School with specialist information about the dietary requirements of Muslims, and presented them with a research case study of how neighbouring schools had introduced Halal meals. When community consultation was rejected, the MCWG wrote numerous letters of complaint on behalf of parents to the School's Board of Governors and the RBKC Education Department explaining why the meals provision at the School was inadequate and discriminatory.

Rachid Choabi, Project Coordinator for the MCWG said; "The way Muslim parents have been treated by the School and the Education Department is absolutely appalling. In today's world to lack

understanding of a community's essential needs is unacceptable, to totally ignore their rights is completely scandalous". The Muslim community now hopes the Council and other local schools can use this case as precedence to provide equal opportunities for their children."

Pro-Hijab

On 12 June 2004 The Assembly for the Protection of Hijab (Pro-Hijab) a group initiated by MCB affiliates the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) and the Muslim Women Society (MWS) was officially launched at the House of Commons to defend the right of Muslim women in Europe and worldwide to wear hijab. The initiative is fully supported by the Muslim Council of Britain, Islamic Society of Britain (ISB), the National Assembly Against Racism (NAAR), United Sikhs, Islamic Forum Europe (IFE), Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS) and FIOE.

"The aim of Pro-Hijab is to campaign peacefully using all available legal means to protect the right of every Muslim woman to exercise her religious duties unimpeded," the group coordinator Abeer Pharaon said. Adding that the advocacy group will also seek to "increase awareness and tolerance between people of all faiths and no faith."

Ms Fiona Mactaggart MP, Home Office Parliamentary Under Secretary officially helped launch the campaign, showing unequivocal support by stating that while the British government "will never prohibit it", and that it would do all it could to protect the right of Muslim women to wear it. Britain's diversity and multi-culturalism are something to take pride in."

The body was formed in response to the recent moves in countries across Europe to restrict religious practices and curb expressions of faith which have a negative impact on Muslim women in particular. The campaign aims to remove the negative stereotypical image of the hijab which lies at the root of this discrimination, to quell the spread of the 'hijab ban' and work through all peaceful means to repeal laws that ban the hijab wherever they are in place.

For further information please refer to www.prohijab.net

Interpal Celebrates 10 Years of Achievement

In Interpal's tenth year, the MCB affiliate is planning to hold Open Days and many other events around the country in cities such as Bradford, Birmingham, Cardiff and Glasgow culminating in a Charity Gala Dinner in London in November 2004 to raise awareness of the continuing humanitarian crisis in Palestine, and to let the British public know how their support and contributions have helped provide much needed aid. These events will be a fitting tribute to the generosity and caring nature of the majority of the British people, especially the Muslim community. Please contact Interpal if you would like to help in your local area.

For further information refer to www.interpal.org



Since its conception in 1991 the Human Relief Foundation has saved lives and relieved suffering amongst hundreds of communities, through aid, education and care. Originally established as a response to the first Gulf War, HRF has become the first point of reference for donors and sister agencies who wish to help the people of Iraq. HRF have conducted projects around the world: in Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Eastern Europe. HRF offices are now located in London, Birmingham, Rotterdam, Damascus, Peshawar, Baghdad and Basra.

E-Mail: donate@hrf.co.uk website: <http://www.hrf.co.uk>

Committees Update

Media Committee (MC)

Meeting With Daily Telegraph Editor

In the latest of its ongoing series of meetings with national newspaper editors and senior journalists, a delegation from the MCB's Media Committee met with the Daily Telegraph's editor, Martin Newland, and the Associate Editor, Daniel Johnson, on Wednesday 5 May 2004, at the Daily Telegraph's offices in Canary Wharf.

The ensuing discussion focussed on the current terror threat facing the UK and the coverage of Islam and Muslims in the mainstream media. The MCB team consisted of Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the MCB, Daud Abdullah, Assistant Secretary-General, and Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary of the Media Committee.

Book Launch of 'The Infidel Within'

The Secretary of the Media Committee spoke at the book launch of 'The Infidel Within: A History of Muslims in Britain since 1800' on Wednesday 5 May 2004 in the Moses Room, House of Lords. The book launch was hosted by Lord Ahmed of Rotherham.

Inayat congratulated the author of 'The Infidel Within', Dr Humayun Ansari, a historian at the Royal Holloway College, London, for producing the most definitive and comprehensive account yet of the British Muslim experience in the UK. Inayat expressed the hope that the book would become a standard reference book concerning the history of British Muslims in schools throughout the country.

Using the British Muslim Vote Strategically

Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary of the Media Committee, was invited to speak about 'Using The British Muslim Vote Strategically' to a gathering of Muslims at the Upton Lea Centre in Slough on Saturday 5th June 2004.

Iraq & the June 10 Elections

Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary of the Media Committee, spoke about "Iraq and the June 10 elections" on Thursday 3 June 2004 at the Indian Muslim Federation Hall in Leytonstone. Fellow speakers included George Galloway MP, Professor Muhammad Arif and Dr Ghayasuddin Siddiqui. Inayat drew the attention of the audience to the recent MCB letter to UK masjid which emphasised the need for a high Muslim voter turn-out in the June 10 elections.

Channel Islam Interview

Shabana Khan, Vice Chair of ReDoc was interviewed by Channel Islam in Johannesburg, South Africa regarding the MCB call for Muslims to vote in the elections. Topics covered included why it was important for Muslims to vote, the threat the far right posed, why young Muslims should vote when they see government policies impacting on them adversely, and what the MCB was doing to encourage young people to vote.

Meeting with Russian Journalists

Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary of the MCB's Media Committee met with two visiting journalists, Victor and Marina Kalashnikov, from Russia on Tuesday 25 May 2004 to discuss the current situation facing British Muslims and their portrayal in the media. The journalists were from the Russian daily liberal paper, the Russian Courier (www.ruskur.ru) and their week-long visit to the UK was organised by the Foreign Office.

Letter to the Jewish Chronicle

On 14 June 2004, the Secretary of the Media Committee, Inayat Bunglawala wrote to the Editor of the Jewish Chronicle regarding a piece by Melanie Phillips which voiced her outrage that an example of her writing had been included in the new Islamophobia report. Mr Bunglawala quoted extracts from Ms Phillips' writings and asserted that "At a time of visibly increased anti-Muslim sentiment, when many mosques have had their windows smashed in, walls covered in graffiti and prayer halls desecrated, Ms Phillips' provocative words could be interpreted by those with a less magnanimous disposition as being designed to vilify and stir ill-feeling towards British Muslims and their institutions."

For the full text refer to Media, Letters to the Editor/Producer at www.mcb.org.uk

Celebrating Diversity

Inayat Bunglawala, the Secretary of the Media Committee, was invited by his former school in Bolton to speak on the theme of 'Celebrating Diversity' at a seminar for educationalists at the Reebok Stadium on Thursday 17 June 2004.

Meeting with Scriptwriters of TV show 'The Bill'

The scriptwriters of the popular TV drama 'The Bill' contacted the MCB to discuss issues currently

facing the Muslim community with a view to creating possible storylines involving Muslim characters. On Tuesday 22 June 2004, Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary, Media committee; Masood Sharif, Media Committee; and Dal Babu, Superintendent in the Met Police visited the Thames Talkback Studios where they discussed at some length with the scriptwriters some of the challenges facing British Muslims.

Research & Documentation Committee (ReDoc)

Workshop for Foster Parents

Shabana Khan led a half day workshop for foster parents on 'Culturally appropriate foster care for Muslim children' in London on 7 June 2004. Guidelines have been produced which will be available on the MCBDirect website soon insha' Allah.

Books4Schools

Tahir Alam, Chair of the Education Committee, gave a presentation on 'Books for Schools' at the MC3 AGM on 22 May 2004. Suma Din, Sangeeta Dharmi and Tahseen Sheikh had a stall displaying Books4Schools resources at the AGM.

The Books4Schools resources were made available to teachers at the Norwich SACRE inset day on 22 April 2004.

Multifaith Chaplaincy

Prof Aziz Sheikh, Chair of the ReDoc Committee, and Prof Rashid Gatrad have had an editorial published on 'Multifaith chaplaincy' in the June issue of Archives of Diseases in Childhood.

Childhood Diseases

Prof Aziz Sheikh and Prof Rashid Gatrad have had a paper accepted on 'Consanguinity and deafness: in British Muslims' by Archives of Diseases in Childhood.

British Muslims – Discrimination and Islamophobia

On 20 June 2004 Dr Jamil Sherif, Secretary of ReDoc, provided a report to the Greater London Assembly defining Discrimination and Islamophobia. The report states that "Religious stereotypes and prejudice against Muslims are manifested in a variety of forms: incitement to hatred, harassment/violence, discrimination, demonisation in the media. As 99% of British Muslims are from an ethnic minority background, Muslims suffer these wrongs over and above what they already suffer on the basis of their racial identity."

Public Affairs Committee (PAC)

The General Elections

In the run up to the next general election, the Public Affairs Committee and the Chairs of all MCB committees met on 5 May 2004 to discuss proposing policy objectives for all political parties in the next General Election. The policy proposals will convey the views of the Muslim community on matters

in different fields of public life. The Muslim Council of Britain will highlight issues and principles to help shape debate and policy. The proposals will conclude in a document similar to one published by the MCB in 2000 in the run-up to the 2001 General Election, entitled 'Electing to Listen'.

In addition the MCB hopes to undertake a number of initiatives to connect Muslim voters to politicians and policy makers, ultimately allowing the community to make an informed choice in the next General Election.

For further information email: pac@mcb.org.uk

Party Conferences

The Public Affairs Committee has secured venues and time slots for Fringe Meetings to take place at each of the three main political party conferences. For the first time in MCB's history all the venue and time slots are within the secure zone with prominent positions during peak time periods. The events will also be in all the Party conference Listing guides.

New on the MCB Website

Media/Press Releases -

- 15 Jun 2004; [The Right To Wear Jilbab Should Be Respected](#)
- 13 Jun 2004; [Message of 10th June: Trust and Iraq](#)
- 11 Jun 2004; [The London Muslim Centre - A Symbol of Hope](#)
- 03 Jun 2004, [Muslims Urged to Vote to Keep Racists Out](#)
- 01 Jun 2004, [The Rise of Institutionalised Islamophobia](#)
- 24 May 2004, [Many Challenges, But British Muslims Look Ahead With Courage And Confidence](#)
- 21 May 2004, [Genocide in Gaza, Muslims Demand Action Not Words](#)
- 20 May 2004, [MET Police's Stop and Search Powers Used Unfairly Against Muslims](#)
- 12 May 2004, [Muslims condemn reprehensible Nick Berg killing](#)
- 11 May 2004, [Unjust War, Now The Brutalities](#)
- 27 Apr 2004, [Conference for Imams at London's City Hall](#)

[Media/Letters to the Editor -](#)

- [14th June 2004; Jewish Chronicle; Inayat Bunlawala responds to Melanie Phillips](#)
- 16th April 2004, Daily Express, On the Treaty of Hdaybiyya, Inayat Bunlawala

Library/Articles & Essays -

- 19 May 2004, [Muslim Weekly Interview with Iqbal Sacranie](#)

15 April 2004, [The Guardian, 'Mr Blair's tete-a-tete with Mr Bush'](#)

14 April 2004, [Daily Telegraph interview, Iqbal Sacranie, 'Most of us are sane and sensible'](#)

New on the MCBDirect Website

MCBDirect is the Muslim Council of Britain's community information service. The Internet plays a central role in the provision of the service - [visit the project's redesigned website](#) at www.mcb.org.uk/mcbdirect. MCBDirect's objectives are to widen the sharing of information and expertise within the community, increase awareness of best practice initiatives and services, and promote a more informed understanding of Muslims and Islam throughout our society. The project is an initiative of the MCB's Research & Documentation Committee.

MCBDirect Helpline

MCBDirect's helpline number is 0845 1 23 23 63.

MCBDirect has posted many exciting features on the website. These include reviews of books, events, individuals etc.

My Story: Hijab and Me

Diary of a Muslim GP: Type 2 Diabetes - What is it?

The London Muslim Centre – Committed to Creating a Vibrant London

Your Vote Counts!

A Week in the Life of MCBs Media Committee

Royal Observatory Displays Islamic Collection

Interfaith Award Withdrawn

Leaked Government Plans to Win 'Hearts and Minds' of British Muslims

MEEM Music Present the 786 Tour of New Nasheed Artists

The Muslim Weekly Interviews Iqbal Sacranie

Shelter launches Million Children Campaign to end bad housing for Children

'Vision becomes Reality': Opening of the London Muslim Centre

Latest edition of Emel now available!

Research and Documentation Committee E-Newsletter, Issue 7

If you want to work in TV, don't turn over!

Exciting Opportunity: Could You Become The Next MCBDirect Web Editor?

Review: Metamobile ushers in a new era of Muslim mobile technology

Booklet launched on alternatives to drugs derived from pigs

Interview with Kash Gabriele Torsello: Reflections on Kashmir- the forgotten people

'Oh Spring, Oh Spring' by Aadam

Review of Islamic Relief's Evening of Inspiration

Don't miss the latest issue of Emel – Britain's foremost Muslim magazine

Don't Miss Shariah TV Tonight on Channel 4!

Review of 'The Dignity of Man: An Islamic Perspective'

To advertise community new and events please contact mcbdirect@mcb.org.uk

Events

Event:	Annual Summer Conference: 'Islam, Mercy to Mankind'
Date:	10 July 2004
Held By:	Muslim Association of Britain
Venue:	Kensington Town Hall
Contact:	For more information about the conference please contact 0207 2722888 or email conference@mabonline.net , www.mabonline.net
Information:	Prominent speakers will share ideas on the conference topic including Shaikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, Amr Khalid, Dr Jamal Badawi, Dr Tariq Ramadan, Dr Azzam Tamimi and Anas Altikriti

Event:	HIJAB: A Woman's Right to Choose
Date:	Monday 12th July 2004
Time:	10.00am – 6.00pm
Held By:	Conference Hosted by Mayor of London Ken Livingston, The Greater London Authority, Pro-Hijab
Venue:	City Hall, Queen's Walk, London SE1 2AA
Contact:	www.prohijab.net
Information:	Sheikh Yusuf Qaradawi Head of the European Council for Fatwa and Research is the guest of honour. The Conference will be officially opened by the Mayor of London, Mr Ken Livingstone. Dr Tariq Ramdan and Sarah Joseph will address the audience regarding the significance and status of the Hijab in Islam and European Muslim Identity. Representatives from French Organisations will explain the impact of the ban on young Muslim girls. Other specialists and representatives from the Commission of the Bishop's Conference, Liberty for Human rights, the Centre for European Policy Research, Carline Lucas MEP, British Sikh Federation and others have also been invited to give speeches. Fiona Mactaggart and other representatives of the British Government have been invited to summarise the British Government's view of the Hijab Ban. Attendance by Registration Only.



INTERPAL is a non-political, non-profit making British charity that focuses solely on the provision of relief and development aid to the poor and needy of Palestine the world over, primarily in Palestine and the refugee camps in Jordan and Lebanon.

The Muslim Council of Britain

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