

**Muslim Council of Britain E-Newsletter**

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*Sunday 1 May 2005*

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Social and Family Affairs

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## Reports and Events

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### MCB Annual General Meeting 2005

The MCB's eighth Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 14 May, 2005 at the London Muslim Centre, Whitechapel Road (adjacent to the East London Mosque) insha Allah. Affiliates that have not yet completed their delegate forms are urged to do so urgently and return them to the MCB office. Any affiliate that is unable to locate its forms should contact Shahid Kazi at the MCB office by phone on 0208 432 0585 or email [admin@mcb.org.uk](mailto:admin@mcb.org.uk) at their earliest convenience.

Jazakum Allahu khairan  
From the MCB's AGM Preparatory Committee

### Senior Appointment

#### Director, Muslim Spiritual Care Provision in the NHS

£32,800 per incl. LW (Maximum Part-time)

The Muslim Council of Britain wishes to appoint a Director of Muslim Spiritual Care Provision in NHS hospitals in England. This Department of Health (DH) funded post will be a senior MCB position and will be supervised by South Yorkshire Strategic Health Authority.

Working closely with NHS Trusts, the successful applicant will facilitate the appointments of full and part time Muslim spiritual care providers (Imams and Chaplains) in NHS hospitals. He/she will be a Muslim resource in this field and a link between NHS Trusts and the community. He/she will represent the MCB in different health care chaplaincy forums.

Holding a degree or equivalent qualification, the applicant will be a Muslim with a good level of Islamic knowledge and clear commitment to the objectives of MCB and understanding of its role and working procedures. He/she must demonstrate ability to lead in a national scene, to plan and make rational decisions on the basis of correct analysis of situations, and to work independently in a collaborative style. Experience of work with Multi Faith Groups of Hospital Chaplaincy (MFGHC) and current issues/developments in hospital chaplaincy will be useful. Willingness and ability to travel within England and occasional overnight stays will be required.

Closing date: 13<sup>th</sup> May 2005

Further information

A copy of the job description and application form may be obtained from:

Website: [mcb.org.uk/vacancies](http://mcb.org.uk/vacancies) OR from:

The Muslim Council of Britain  
Boardman House

64 The Broadway

Stratford, LONDON

E15 1NT

Phone: 020 8432 0585

e-mail: [admin@mcb.org.uk](mailto:admin@mcb.org.uk)

*The Muslim Council of Britain is the UK's representative Muslim umbrella body with over 400 affiliated national, regional and local organisations, mosques, charities and schools.*

### **Muslims Congratulated Over Robust Participation**

At a time when there has been unprecedented interest in the 'Muslim vote' in the General Elections, the Muslim Council of Britain congratulates British Muslims for the dignified manner in which they have responded to the challenges facing them.

"The General Elections came at a difficult time when there is clearly a lot of disaffection among British Muslims about the Iraq war, the application of draconian anti-terror laws and the manner in which sections of the media have used sensationalism to stigmatize our entire community. The issues raised by British Muslims were mainstream concerns and not peripheral as the results around the country show clearly.

"We are encouraged that despite this negative background the British Muslim community have reaffirmed their commitment to a fuller participation in the civic and political life of the country to work for the common good. The election results show that no single party can any longer take the Muslim community's votes for granted. The Muslim electorate has become more discerning and that is good news for the health of our democracy," said Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain.

The Muslim Council of Britain particularly welcomes the election of two Muslim candidates, Sadiq Khan and Shahid Malik, to the House of Commons, in addition to the existing two, Muhammad Sarwar and Khalid Mahmood, who were re-elected, bringing the total number of Muslim MPs now to four.

"We are delighted to see the election of these two young, talented and dynamic British Muslims to Parliament. This is a positive trend and we hope we will continue to see increased numbers of British Muslims joining the mainstream political parties and contributing to our local and national political debate," added Mr Sacranie.

The MCB for its part will continue to work with the elected government to ensure that election promises are delivered, while remaining engaged with all the main political parties on policy issues that affect our community and the country.

The MCB also takes the opportunity to congratulate Labour for winning a third term and the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats who have the responsibility to provide a healthy opposition.

### **Islamic Scholars Urge British Muslims to Vote**

Just forty eight hours before the nation went to the polls, leading Islamic scholars and prominent community leaders urged the British Muslim community to do their citizens duty and to take the fullest part in the General Election. The Muslim Scholars press conference was held on Tuesday 3rd May 2005 at the London Muslim Centre, Whitechapel, London. The Muslim Scholars present were; Mufti Mohammed Aslam of Jamiat-e-Ulema Britain, Sheikh Suhaib Hasan of the Islamic Shariah Council, Professor Dawud Noibi of the Muslim Association of Nigeria, Mufti Abdal Kadir Barkatullah of the

Islamic Association of Britain, Dr Azzam Tamimi of the Muslim Association of Britain, Maulana Muslehuddin Faradhi of the Islamic Forum of Europe, Dr Mohammed Abdul Bari of the London Muslim Centre, Dr Daud Abdullah the Assistant Secretary-General of the MCB and Maulana Mahmoud UI-Hasan of Dawat ul Islam.

"There has arguably never been a more important time for British Muslims to engage in the mainstream political process. We know there is a lot of disaffection in the community particularly with the way the anti-terror laws have been applied and with respect to the war against Iraq as well as concerns on inclusion and equality. We believe that by not participating in the political process we will only be further marginalised. Our Islamic scholars are convinced in their opinion that British Muslims must increase their engagement with the wider British society with a view to fulfilling the Qur'anic commandment to 'enjoin the good and forbid the wrong,'" said Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain.

### **Eminent Muslim Scholars Support Electoral Participation**

Sheikh Rached Ghannouchi

"Regardless of which party you vote for, the importance for us as a Muslim minority is we have to participate in the public affairs of our society such as in elections, in order to further develop positively our position as a community. Staying in isolation only benefits our enemies. We have no other way to influence and improve our situation - only by participation will we progress, if we do not it will bring us no benefit. Islam urges us to be positive and to try to influence the Muslim communities position for the better - there is a duty to 'enjoin the good and forbid the evil' the main way to use this tool is through participation."

Sheikh Suhaib Hasan

"In my opinion the Muslim Community should participate in the General Election without any hesitation at all. Your vote is a kind of a testimony which you want to give in order to establish something good in the political system of this country. You can only bring a change in the system itself by electing someone who can stand for your causes in parliament. By abstaining from voting you are helping those forces who are working against human rights, morality and good values. It is also a kind of intercession for a good cause and according to al Qur'an a person who gives a good intercession will have a reward for that and a person who gives a bad intercession will have to share a burden for it."

Professor Dawud Noibi

"I would like to take this opportunity to urge all Muslims in a position to do so to vote at these elections. It is indeed a duty we owe and it is to the best interest of the Muslims here. We need to have our voices heard as Muslims in the UK for the benefit of our children and those yet unborn. So please come out and vote for the benefit of the whole society and Muslims."

Sheikh Ibrahim Mogra

"As citizens we have a duty to participate in the affairs of our country. As Muslims we have a lot to contribute for the betterment of our society and one of the most effective ways of doing this is through political participation. We all have to endeavour to create a just, fair and equal society."

Maulana Bostan Qadri

"We should vote for any Muslim candidate who stands in the election intending to further the Muslim cause. Our vote is valuable and should be used with discernment but we should fully participate by voting for the best candidate to benefit the community. The benefit to us will be we have a candidate who will support our cause and benefit us. So we should vote for those who forward our causes."

Mufti Mohammed Aslam

"Muslims should carefully consider their options and use their votes to support those whose policies are most beneficial to society. Do not waste your votes by not voting instead vote for the candidate who will advance your faith and community. Those who argue you should not vote are incorrect. We cannot stay away from the elections, we live in the UK and are an intrinsic part of the whole of society, therefore we should carefully consider our options before casting our votes in order to gain the maximum benefits for our society."

### **Vote Smart: British Muslims and the General Election**

Never has it been more important for Britain's 1.6 million Muslims to get more actively involved and participate in the democratic process than now. As citizens of this country it is only right that we engage with the mainstream political parties. Now is the time for engagement, not isolation.

Visit [www.mcb.org.uk/vote2005](http://www.mcb.org.uk/vote2005) for a range of resources to help you during the next two weeks. You can download the *Voter Card*, outlining 10 key issues faced by British Muslims. You can also read *Electing to Deliver: Towards a Representative Britain*. This detailed policy document draws attention to particular policy areas affecting the Muslim community that also concern the rest of British society.

PLUS:

- Ten key constituencies where Muslims can make a difference
- How the Parties Respond to Muslim Issues
- Election Meeting information from across the country

Vote Smart, visit: [www.mcb.org.uk/vote2005](http://www.mcb.org.uk/vote2005)

### **MCB Letter to Affiliates on Elections**

19<sup>th</sup> April 2005

Dear Colleagues,

Assalamu Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh

The General Election & Muslim Community

In the wake of next month's General Elections I am pleased to enclose the Muslim Council of Britain's (MCB) policy document, *Electing to Deliver* and our *Voter Card*.

Participation in local and national elections, we believe, is a religious as well as a civic duty. Indulgence in self-pity and defeatism are not the traits of the Muslim community. These cannot be options for British Muslims at a time when they are officially recognised as the most marginalised section of society. Our direct engagement offers us an opportunity to register our expectations as well as our concerns.

We hope the ten key issues of the *Voter Card* will facilitate discussion with prospective parliamentary candidates from all parties, and enable you to scrutinise their views on issues of vital concern. The issues are derived from a comprehensive document entitled *Electing to Deliver* which is enclosed and is available on our website: [www.mcb.org.uk/vote2005](http://www.mcb.org.uk/vote2005)

We urge you to take the following actions:

- § Please display the attached *Voter Card* on your notice board
- § Please make photocopies and distribute to the congregation

§ Please make announcement at Jumah prayers urging the congregation to participate in the electoral process

§ Invite prospective parliamentary candidate from the main parties and scrutinise their views on the ten key issues

It is only through constructive engagement and participation in the mainstream that we can bring about the change for the better for the Muslim community and the society at large.

*'There is no good in much of their secret talk, except such as are devoted to enjoining charity, or equitable dealings, or setting things right between people.'* (Qur'an 4:114)

Wassalam

Your brother

Iqbal AKM Sacranie

Secretary General

### **Islam Channel Election Specials**

In the run up to the May 5 General Elections, the Muslim Council of Britain's media committee organised a series of one-hour interviews on the Islam Channel with leading representatives of the three main political parties. Ibrahim Hewitt the Assistant Secretary- General of the MCB, Inayat Bunglawala the Secretary of the MCB's Media Committee and Ehsan Masood a freelance journalist presented. Those interviewed included Fiona Mactaggart (Minister for Race and Equality at the Home office, Labour Party), Alan Duncan (senior member of the Shadow cabinet, Conservative Party) and Simon Hughes (President, Liberal Democrat Party) they were quizzed on their policies in relation to the Iraq war, anti-terror legislation, representation of Muslims in public life, social inclusion and a range of other matters. Viewers also took part with live phone-in questions. Other guests on the programmes included Iqbal Sacranie Secretary-General of the MCB and Dr Daud Abdullah the Assistant Secretary-General. During the pre-election period the MCB also appeared on ARY Digital, Al Mustakillah, Prime TV, Al Jazeera and GEO TV.

### **MCB Reveals its Ten Key Questions for the General Election**

The Muslim Council of Britain launched its Voter Card on 7 April 2005, which lists the ten key questions it believes that British Muslims should ask of all prospective parliamentary candidates as they decide for whom they should cast their vote.

The issues covered by the MCB Voter Card range from legislative equality measures such as a call to prohibit Incitement to Religious Hatred to under achievement in schools by Muslim pupils to the deeply unpopular and illegal war against Iraq.

"Never has it been more important for Britain's 1.6 million Muslims to get more actively involved and participate in the democratic process than now. We know there is a lot of disillusionment out there about the Iraq war and the manner in which anti-terror measures have been applied against our community in recent years. The questions in the Voter Card are there to help initiate an informed discussion about the main issues facing British Muslims today," said Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain.

The voter cards will be distributed to Mosques and Muslim community centres around the country. They will also be available for download via the internet on our election website, [www.mcb.org.uk/vote2005](http://www.mcb.org.uk/vote2005).

A detailed policy document, from which these questions are derived, together with a list of activities for the general election will be launched on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2005.

### **An Act of Betrayal Against Our Faith**

The following article by the Secretary-General of The MCB Iqbal AKM Sacranie appeared in the London Evening Standard on 21 April 2005.

The 20 hooligans who disrupted our election strategy press conference at the Regent's Park mosque this week got their 15 minutes of fame. However, they did so at the expense of Britain's 1.6 million Muslims. The thugs were evicted after 20 minutes but not before they had been filmed defiling a house of worship. Their act was a betrayal of the teachings of our noble Prophet Muhammad who famously said he had been raised to spread good conduct between people. Their breaking down of a mosque door, abusive language, and resort to violence is indicative of a criminal mentality. We condemn these bully-boys but also their mentors who try to remain anonymous. They are a menace to society, but an even greater danger to British Muslims. It is the responsibility of the Muslim community to alienate these thugs.

British Muslims already suffer increased prejudice due to events beyond their control.

A British Psychological Society study found 43 per cent of Britons aged 13-24 admitted they had become more anti-Islamic since 9/11.

The Muslim Council of Britain is committed to working within mainstream institutions to fight this prejudice.

A recent fatwa from Muslim scholars said European Muslims had a duty to participate in the electoral process to achieve social justice.

It is this approach the band of fanatics finds so objectionable. The 5 May elections will see a record number of Muslim candidates. We want to see more Muslims in our national political life.

We can understand disillusionment about the manner in which our country went to war against Iraq. But a mindset advocating withdrawal from society and indulging in self pity is opposed to the spirit of our faith. It must be resisted and resist it we shall.

### **Letter to the Times Editor**

Robert Thomson,  
Editor,  
The Times,  
London

Dear Robert,

This is just a short note to express my deepest appreciation for the very supportive leader column (The Right Choice, The Times, Thursday 21 April 2005) in your paper.

The Muslim Council of Britain is committed to encouraging greater participation of British Muslims in all walks of public life, including mainstream politics, and your paper's recognition of this was both timely and helpful.

It is quite regrettable that a group of thugs tried to disrupt our press conference last week, but their recourse to hooliganism and intimidation was a telling sign in itself that they are bereft of ideas to help British Muslims move forward in our society.

Yours sincerely,

Iqbal AKM Sacranie OBE,  
Secretary-General,  
The Muslim Council of Britain

## **Muslims Congratulate Catholics**

The Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain Iqbal Sacranie commented on the election of the new Pope, Joseph Ratzinger:

"The MCB congratulates and extends its good wishes to the newly elected head of the worldwide Catholic Community, Pope Benedict XVI.

We very much hope that he will further advance the respectable relationships between the faith communities built by his illustrious predecessor.

He can rest assured about the Muslim World's fullest support on social, moral and political issues, common between us.

A letter has been sent from the MCB to the Pope congratulating him on his election.

## **Select Committee Reports on Terrorism and Community Relations**

The Muslim Council of Britain notes that the report on "Terrorism and Community Relations" by the House of Commons Home Affairs committee published on the 6 April 2005 recognises that "Muslims perceive that they are being stigmatised by [anti-terror] legislation", however, we believe that the problem is more than that of mere perception.

In recent years, we have seen how the characterisation of British Muslims as a 'problem community' in much of our media and through statements made by government and police officials have contributed to an undoubtedly growing anti-Muslim climate in the UK. This was shown most recently by the findings presented to the British Psychological Society in Manchester last week which showed that "Hatred and dislike of Muslims hardened after September 11, with 43 per cent of non-Muslims admitting that they had become noticeably more anti-Islamic."

The MCB welcomes the Home Affairs committee's finding that there was "overwhelming evidence" that the media exerted "a powerful and often negative impact" on public attitudes towards British Muslims and that "representatives of the media appeared unaware or dismissive of this."

We hope that this report will serve to act as a wake-up call for more balanced and responsible journalism

## **National Assembly Against Racism Condemns BNP**

Nick Griffin and Mark Collett, leading members of the BNP have been charged with incitement to racial hatred for comments they made against Islam and Muslims. This election will see them use the airwaves and mail shots to further whip up racism and Islamophobia. If Britain is to remain a modern multicultural society that is accepting of all people, there can be no platform for the far right - we call on broadcasters to pull the plug on fascism. "The BNP should not be given a platform on our broadcast media to spread their racist and Islamophobic poison. We call on our broadcasters to be mindful of the divisive agenda of the BNP and to deny them the opportunity to pollute any more minds," said Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain.

## **MCB Calls for Combat Against Hatred Directed at Religious Groups**

The MCB wrote to the leaders of the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats and urged them to support the legislation on Incitement to Religious Hatred which was put before the Commons as part of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Bill on 7th February 2005. Letters were also addressed to individual MPs which also urged support for the proposed legislation:

The Muslim community will be greatly disappointed if MPs oppose what most British Muslims see as a vital piece of equality legislation. Indeed, we see it as an important step towards ensuring the long-

term safety of our community." Said Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain. The government's proposals were passed on 7<sup>th</sup> Feb in the House of Commons by 291 votes to 191, however the Bill still needs to go before the House of Lords for approval.

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### **Religious Hatred Incitement Law: British Muslims Let Down Again**

The Muslim Council of Britain is deeply disappointed by the announcement on 7 April, 2005 that the Government was dropping the Incitement to Religious Hatred section from the Serious and Organised Crime Bill, due to opposition from the Liberal Democrats and the Conservative Party.

"Sadly, British Muslims will now continue to remain second-class citizens and denied the legal protection that is given to some racial and religious groups such as Jews and Sikhs under existing racial incitement laws. We deplore the position of the Liberal Democrats – who had proposed an amendment backed by the Tory Party - that would have regarded Muslims as a racial group, notwithstanding the fact that Muslims transcend racial boundaries. We regarded this as a vital piece of equality legislation that would have accorded Muslims and other faith groups protection from those who are deliberately inciting hatred against them," said Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain.

The Muslim Council of Britain is currently seeking an urgent assurance from the Labour Party that it will include a clear commitment to prohibit Incitement to Religious Hatred at the earliest opportunity in its Election Manifesto. The MCB also calls upon the Liberal Democrats and the Conservative Party to make a similar pledge and support equality for all sections of British society including all faith groups.

### **MCB Responds to Criticism of Muslim Schools**

The MCB has responded to the "worry" expressed by the Chief Inspector of Schools, Mr David Bell, who has singled out Muslim faith schools as a threat to the 'coherence of the nation'. MCB Secretary-General Iqbal Sacranie noted that "the issue of community cohesion and coherence is of paramount importance for the whole nation but we consider it highly irresponsible to suggest that the growth of Muslim faith schools poses a threat to 'our coherence as a nation'. The issue around schools not adequately fulfilling their responsibility in preparing children for 'their wider responsibility and obligations' is a generic issue affecting all poorly resourced schools. That is why the Muslim Council of Britain has consistently argued for an increase in state funded Muslim schools to respond to the wishes of Muslim parents. At present there are over 100 Muslim schools, but only five of them receive state-funding. With only 3% of Muslim children attending Muslim faith schools, it is astonishing that they have been singled out in this way, especially when considering the fact that state-funded Muslim schools and many independents are now outperforming the state sector".

### **MCB Clarifies Hajj Rites in Light of Muslim Job Victory**

The Muslim Council of Britain's Secretary-General Iqbal Sacranie commented on the 15 Jan, 2005 in response to a landmark discrimination case. Mohammed Khan, 43 was sacked after going on Hajj for six weeks and has been awarded £10,000 in damages.

An employment industrial tribunal in Leeds on 13 Jan, 2005 disagreed with Mr Khan's employers that he had taken 'unauthorised leave' and ruled that Mr Khan had been unfairly dismissed and suffered discrimination as per the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) regulations.

Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain, said: "This is a landmark victory. Employers need to understand that there is nothing incompatible between being a Muslim and a good employee."

"Just as employers have made accommodations to employ women in the workforce they should do so to accommodate people of faith. To be fair, many employers are already making progress in this regard."

He continued: "All Muslims, men and women, are required to undertake the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, once in their lifetimes if they have the financial and physical ability to do so. Many Muslims save for several years to fulfil this fifth of the five pillars of Islam."

"It is an awesome occasion and the visit of a lifetime. Those who complete the Hajj rites — with due humility and reverence for God — return home, the Prophet Mohammed said, as sinless as new-born babies."

### **MCB Cautions SKY on'24'**

Muslim Council of Britain is Cautious as SKY Prepares to Broadcast Controversial 24 in the UK  
In response to complaints by the Council of American and Islamic Affairs (CAIR) on FOX's network airing of the third instalment of 24 starring Kiefer Sutherland in the US, a series which has angered America's Muslim community by its portrayal of a Muslim family as a sleeper cell at the heart of an evil plot. FOX agreed to offer a public service spot in its airtime to CAIR who broadcast a public service advert that depicts the American Muslim community in a positive light.  
The Muslim Council of Britain is set to follow CAIR's example as the network premiere on SKY of 24's third series is soon to be broadcast in the UK. The MCB is negotiating with SKY to present similar broadcasts in the UK as those shown in the US which will caution viewers against stereotyping of Muslims.

### **The Need to Protect Faith Communities from Incitement to Hatred**

The MCB Secretary General Iqbal Sacranie and Sher Khan Head of the MCB's Public Affairs Committee attended a meeting on the 13th January 2005 at Portcullis House, Westminster, which was jointly convened with the MCB the Commission for Racial Equality, the British Humanist Association and Justice. Speakers at the event included Trevor Phillips, Chair, CRE; Hanne Stinson, Director, BHA; Robert Beckley, Asst. Chief Constable, ACPO; Gay Moon, Head of Equality Project, Justice. The meeting addressed the deep concern about the gross misrepresentation of the proposed legislation on incitement to religious hatred. There had been many misleading statements made in the press about the purpose behind extending the protection currently given to two faith groups (Sikhs and Jews) under present legislation to other faith and belief communities. The MCB was keen to clarify and explain its reasons in supporting the proposed legislation.  
"It is our view that the public debate on this issue to date has caused more confusion about what the purpose of the legislation is, than shed light on what it is trying to achieve. Primary among the fears and concerns expressed is the belief that our right to freedom of speech is threatened by the proposal being put forward by the Government. Further to this there are people who have been ringing alarm bells about alleged curtailment of the right to criticise religious beliefs. This is emphatically not the case. The proposed legislation is meant to protect believers from incitement and not protect their faiths from criticism," said Iqbal Sacranie, the Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain.  
"The Purpose of this meeting was to rescue the debate from gross misrepresentation found in current reporting in the media. In respect to this the speakers and the debate that followed made an important contribution in putting the record straight," added Sher Khan.

### **Muslim Council of Britain Defends Incitement to Religious Hatred Proposal**

The Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain has written the following article which is to appear in the February issue of The Londoner, the paper is produced by the Greater London Authority (GLA) and is circulated to all households in London.

The Muslim Council of Britain strongly supports the government's proposals to prohibit Incitement to

## Religious Hatred.

The proposal, we believe, will help close a dangerous loophole in our current legislation which while prohibiting incitement to racial hatred, at present is powerless when it comes to incitement to religious hatred. This anomaly has not gone unnoticed by far right groups in the UK - particularly the British National Party - who have been busy exploiting this loophole by publicly adapting their old racist rhetoric of yesteryear into a more virulently anti-Muslim invective deliberately designed to foment divisions in our society.

The latest annual statistics issued earlier this month by the Crown Prosecution Service confirm this trend and show that when it came to religiously aggravated crime, in 50% of cases, the actual or perceived religion of the victim was Islam.

The criticisms of those who believe that the proposed legislation will restrict freedom of speech are, we believe, misplaced. The proposed legislation is meant to protect believers from incitement and not protect their faiths from criticism.

In addition, the Attorney-General has taken a very strict view of what constitutes incitement with our existing race hate laws. Only 4 out of over 80 cases brought to him have been approved for prosecution in the past three years. There is no reason to suppose he would be any less strict in the application of the proposed new religious hatred law.

We should all value our freedoms. At the same time, there needs to be a recognition that one of the most important freedoms for all of us must be the freedom from hate.

Iqbal Sacranie OBE,

Secretary-General,

The Muslim Council of Britain

## **MCB Clarifies Misrepresentations Regarding Holocaust Memorial Day**

In response to media queries about this year's Holocaust Memorial Day, the Muslim Council of Britain has made the following statement in order to correct any false impression that may have been created by a misleading report in the Sunday Times (23rd January 2005) entitled 'Muslims Boycott Holocaust Remembrance':

1. The Nazi Holocaust was a truly evil and abhorrent crime and we stand together with our fellow British Jews in their sense of pain and anguish. None of us must ever forget how the Holocaust began. We must remember it began with a hatred that dehumanised an entire people, that fostered state brutality, made second class citizens of honest, innocent people because of their religion and ethnic identity. Those who were vilified and seen as a threat could be subjected to group punishment; dispossession and impoverishment while the rest of the world stood idly by, washing its hands off despair and suffering that kept getting worse. The MCB believes, that we have therefore to do more than just remember and reflect on the past - we must be able to see when the same abuses occur in our own time.

2. The MCB's principled position from the outset since 2001 - when the Holocaust Memorial Day was first commemorated - has been for the memorial day to be inclusive of the sufferings of all people and urged that it be named the 'Genocide Memorial Day'. The best living memorial for the victims of the Nazi Holocaust is trying to ensure that we make the cry 'Never Again' real for all people who suffer, everywhere. We honour the dead most sincerely by working to end suffering and bring peace with justice to those who live without hope today.

3. Sadly, 'Ethnic cleansing' and mass killings are not a thing of the past; they are a continuing terror. Remembrance must, therefore, refocus our moral vision and rededicate our commitment to prevent current and future inhumanity, state brutality and crimes against humanity. In order to help ensure that such crimes against humanity do not recur and repeat themselves we believe that the Memorial Day can better be observed by making it inclusive to cover the ongoing mass killings and human rights abuses around the world, notably, in the occupied Palestinian Territories, Chechnya and Kashmir and also recent mass killings and genocide on Bosnia, Kosova and Rwanda. Genocide is the most abhorrent and outrageous crime and we are not going to prevent it by selectively remembering only some of its victims.

## **British Muslims Welcome Return of Last British Detainees from Guantanamo**

The Muslim Council of Britain welcomed the return of the final four British detainees from Guantanamo Bay on Tuesday the 25<sup>th</sup> January 2005.

These returnees have been through an appallingly lengthy and unjust ordeal in which they were deliberately held in a legal black hole by the US authorities. The priority now must be for these returnees to receive immediate counselling and medical help.

"Following discussions with the Home Office yesterday we are pleased to have received assurances that the medical needs of these men will be assessed straight away and their cases will be dealt with expeditiously. These men have, of course, already been questioned extensively by our security services in Guantanamo and we can see no justification for them to be detained any longer than absolutely necessary. We want these men now to be returned into the arms of their waiting families," said Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain.

The Muslim Council of Britain notes, however, that over 600 men and boys (all of whom are Muslim) from other nations continue to be held at Guantanamo Bay without any prospect of receiving a fair trial. Their continued incarceration is a blot on the United States' claim to be the land of the free.

The MCB continues also to call upon the UK government to abide by the decision of the Law Lords who in December 2004 ruled that the indefinite detention of foreign terrorism suspects without trial in Belmarsh prison violates human rights laws.

## **Letter to The New Statesman**

MCB & Incitement to Religious Hatred

Dear Sir,

Nick Cohen's article "Labour's Contemptible Election Trade Off" (New Statesman, 31 January 2005) is a sad demonstration of biased journalism that promotes only one side of the argument in a serious and complex debate.

His assertions that the proposed legislation would outlaw proselytising and would threaten the freedom of writers and actors are a gross misrepresentation of the wording and likely impact of the legislation. It is made very clear to those who have read the proposed law and consulted interested parties that only hatred incited towards followers of a religion would be outlawed, and not hatred of religion itself. This is even made clear in the explanatory notes to the legislation, should Cohen have chosen to read them.

Cohen quotes Lord Lester as a distinguished lawyer who opposes this legislation but fails to report the line up of equally distinguished equality and human rights lawyers like Geoffrey Bindman and Robin Allen QC who support this type of legislation. It would have been fairer to inform your readers that the proposal is a result of detailed debate and discussion by cross-party committees in the House of Parliament. Surely mention should also be made of the support by the Law Society and human rights organisations, like Justice and the Commission for Racial Equality. Why is there no mention that the Association of Chief Police Officers have also supported this legislation? Their knowledge and experience in the use of the current racial incitement laws, which already protect the Jewish and Sikh communities, must surely be an important consideration. Furthermore, there is no evidence that this type of law, as currently exists for Sikhs and Jews in mainland Britain and for all religions in Northern Ireland, has had any of the negative impact suggested by Nick Cohen.

The net effect of Cohen's 'journalism' is a dishonest representation of private discussions between the Muslim Council of Britain, Evan Harris MP and Lord Lester. Nick Cohen may have discovered this for himself had he asked us for our side of the argument, which is what your readers would expect any competent journalist to do.

Perhaps Cohen should just stick to writing his usual tripe justifying the murderous war against Iraq.

Yours faithfully,

Abdul Karim Khalil,  
Assistant Secretary-General,  
The Muslim Council of Britain

### **MCB Welcomes Change at Finsbury Park Mosque**

The MCB welcomes the change in the management of the North London Central Mosque in Finsbury Park that took place on Saturday 5 Feb, 2005. It is hoped that the change will usher a new trouble-free era in the life of this important religious centre which has been under the spotlight for several years due to abuse by a small group of misguided Muslim individuals. The MCB offers its full support to the new trustees and wishes them success in restoring the mosque as a centre of learning and guidance to the entire Muslim community in North London. We urge the Muslim community to rally behind the new management and provide it with the support it needs in order to turn the mosque around and revitalize its role.

### **MCB Makes Official Complaint to Ofcom about '24'**

The MCB's Media Committee has formally notified Ofcom of its concerns with '24' (Sky One, first broadcast 30 Jan, 2005), a series based on a fictional US counter-terrorism agency. In the MCB's submission Tariq Hameed of the Media Committee stated, "There has not been a single positive or neutral Muslim character in the programme in the first five episodes that we have reviewed..."

The MCB is very concerned with what ramifications the reinforcement of cultural and religious stereotypes without balance for commercial gain in a glossy and 'addictive' programme (as admitted by Sky) may have on the British Muslim community.

Given the increase in Islamophobia in recent times, and the above concerns, the MCB urged Sky and Ofcom to be more vigorous in giving effect to the word and spirit of our broadcasting rules and regulations which state: "Where appropriate, schedules should give a fair reflection of the contribution of all races to society."

The whole of the MCB complaint to Ofcom may be found on the website: [www.mcb.org.uk](http://www.mcb.org.uk)

### **MCB Addresses Conference on Muslim Youth, Alienation and Extremism in Europe**

The Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain Iqbal Sacranie was a keynote Speaker on Monday 7 Feb, 2005 at a Conference addressing alienation and extremism amongst Muslim youth in Europe, which was jointly organised by Wilton Park, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the United Services Institute for Peace. Tariq Ramadan Professor of Philosophy, College of Geneva was the other keynote speaker. The meeting was attended by delegates from all over Europe and a number of Muslim countries. Mr Sacranie outlined the challenges facing the Muslim communities of Europe and the youth in particular and addressed the question of what can be done? The full speech is available on the MCB website: <http://www.mcb.org/>

**DO YOU KNOW...** that discrimination based on an individual's religion is now against the law in employment and vocational training?

**DO YOU KNOW...** that harassment in the workplace on grounds of your religion or belief is now unlawful?

**DO YOU KNOW...** that you can now ask your employer to make reasonable changes to your workplace to accommodate your religious needs, such as prayer facilities?

The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 make discrimination, harassment and victimisation on grounds of religion or belief unlawful in employment and vocational training.

The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) with funding from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) are undertaking an awareness raising programme amongst both Muslims and non-Muslims to explain the effect of the Regulations.

They have produced a leaflet which explains the main provisions of the legislation and its effect in practice.

A series of seminars are also taking place around the country to provide people with more information on the Regulations.

For information regarding the awareness programmes, leaflet or seminars contact the MCB DTI team by email [dtiproject@mcb.org.uk](mailto:dtiproject@mcb.org.uk) or call 020 8305 6357.

### **Misrepresentation in The Times Complaint**

The Muslim Council of Britain sent an official letter of complaint to the Press Complaints Commission on 14 Feb, 2005 regarding The Times criticism of the MCB for not attending the Holocaust Memorial Day last month (The Times – 26, 28 and 29 Jan, 2005).

Tariq Hameed of the MCB Media Committee wrote, 'The MCB has made it widely known since the inception of HMD in 2001 that it felt that the ethno-centric and exclusionist nature of HMD in Britain negated the "Never Again" sub-text of HMD. The MCB has also made it clear that it would attend HMD should it become more inclusive and recognise contemporary human rights abuses.

However, in an opinion piece in The Times on 26 January 2005, Associate Editor Daniel Finkelstein described the MCB's decision not to attend HMD unless it was more inclusive and less ethno-centric "disgraceful" and "extraordinary."

Furthermore, an editorial in The Times on 28 January 2005 described the MCB's decision as "reprehensible."

The MCB therefore sought to clarify matters with a letter to the editor sent on 28 January 2005. Unfortunately, this letter was not printed in The Times. Instead, attacks on the MCB continued with an opinion piece by Stephen Pollard in The Times on 29 January 2005, whereby Pollard used the sophistic argument that the MCB equated genocide with "the defence of Israel against terror."

The MCB recognises the sensitivity of this issue, which is why it sought in its negotiations with the Home Office prior to this year's HMD that the event be more inclusive. However, given the voracious attacks on the MCB in the pages of The Times, the MCB feels that its views at the very least ought to be reflected accurately. As this was not done, the MCB believes that it is entitled to a right to reply to criticisms made in The Times, which was denied.

Accordingly, the MCB petitions the Press Complaints Commission to consider that The Times has contravened Article 2 of the PCC's Code of Practice by denying the MCB any opportunity to reply.'

### **MCB Expresses Concern over Control Orders and Extradition Act**

After a Meeting with the Home Secretary Charles Clarke the Muslim Council of Britain has written to him underlining concerns over the new extradition process and indefinite house arrest without trial. In the letter dated the 18th February, 2005 the Extradition Act of 2003 is described as a piece of legislation that has been 'fast tracked' without 'parliamentary scrutiny or debate.' In the letter Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the MCB wrote: "It is beyond dispute that the effect on the Muslim community of laws of the kind exemplified by the Extradition Act 2003, has been disproportionate and

discriminatory. We are deeply concerned and are greatly worried to see that there is judicial oversight which is being clouded in pursuit of a "war against terror".

In regard to proposed indefinite detention in the form of house arrest for foreign nationals and UK citizens the letter said: "As we have consistently maintained the principles of due process and presumption of innocence are ones we all hold dear. If there is evidence that someone has or is planning to commit a criminal offence then s/he should be charged and made to stand trial. The current system and your amendments really do offend these basic principles."

### **MCB Unites Against Fascism**

The Muslim Council of Britain's Deputy Secretary-General Dr. Abdul Bari spoke in the 'Unite Against Fascism' (UAF) conference on Saturday 26 February, 2005 at TUC Congress House. He spoke of how the MCB is working with other bodies like UAF against the increase of rascism in Britain. Other speakers included Lee Jasper from the National Assembly Against Racism and Henry Guterman a Holocaust survivor.

### **Meeting with The Independent Police Complaints Commission**

The Muslim Council of Britain's Secretary-General Iqbal Sacranie was accompanied by Dr. Abdul Bari Deputy Secretary-General, Unaiza Malik Assistant Secretary-General, Tanzim Wasti Chair of the London Affairs Committee and Dr. Shuja Shafi Chair of the Medical Affairs Committee to a meeting with Nick Hardwick the Chair of the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) and his colleagues on 22nd February 2005 at the IPCC HQ in London. The discussions centred on the complaints process, the case of Babar Ahmad's treatment at the hands of the police and the best methods of co-operation between the MCB and the IPCC.

### **Muslim Ulema Tackle Discrimination**

The Deputy Secretary-General of the MCB hosted a meeting of eminent Muslim scholars at the London Muslim Centre on 26 Feb, 2005. The Ulema gave their opinions on how to tackle discrimination in Muslim organisations (touching on gender, ethnicity, disability, religion, sexual orientation and age). The scope of Genuine Occupational Requirements (GOR) was discussed regarding bodies that are known as 'organised religion' and 'religious organisations'. The final draft of the report with Ulema's suggestions will be produced by Mrs Maleiha Malik. The following ulema attended; Shaykh Abdul Qayyum, Imam Abdul Hussein, Shaykh Haitham Ben Jawad Al- Haddad, Imam Qasim Rashid, Imam Ismail Gangat, Mufti Barkatullah Abdulkadir, Moulana Hafiz Shafiqur Rahman, Moulana Shamsul Hoque, Imam Dr Abduljalil Sajid and Br Abdul Khaliq Nadwi.

### **Right To Wear Jilbab Ruling Welcomed**

The Muslim Council of Britain welcomed the landmark decision in the Court of Appeal on the 2 March, 2005 which upheld the right of a Muslim schoolgirl in Luton to wear the jilbab to school.

"This is a very important ruling on the issue of personal freedoms. Many other schools have willingly accommodated Muslim schoolgirls wearing the jilbab. The British Muslim community is a diverse community in terms of the interpretation and understanding of their 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. Today's judgement is a clear reflection of that common-sense approach," said Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain.

### **Hazel Blears responds to MCB letter**

The MCB wrote to the Home Office Minister Hazel Blears following her comments to the Home Affairs Select Committee on March 1, 2005. The Minister had said that British Muslims will have to accept as 'reality' that they will be stopped and searched by the police more often than the rest of the public. The MCB Secretary-General Iqbal Sacranie in his letter to Hazel Blears described the 'great alarm and offence' felt by Muslims as a result of her comments. In her response to the MCB in a letter dated March 4, 2005, Hazel Blears reassured the Muslim community that she had 'always been very clear

that the powers in our counter terrorism legislation are aimed at terrorists, whatever their background. They are not aimed at any community, religion or ethnic group.' She added that stop and search powers would not be disproportionately used against members of any particular community.

### **Operation Black Vote**

Dr Abdul Bari Deputy Secretary-General of the MCB was a speaker at the Operation Black Vote event: 'The Politics of Power' on Wednesday 9th March 2005 at Friends Meeting House, London.

In his speech Dr. Abdul Bari said:

"No matter which party you support Muslims must come out to vote, so that the far right and fascist groups cannot take advantage of apathy within the community to forward their hate filled agendas."

The MCB also had a stall at the event where it promoted its "Books for Schools" project. Other speakers included the Reverend Jesse Jackson, Harmander Singh from Sikhs in England and Ramesh Khallidai of the Hindu Forum.

### **Killing of Chechen President Maskhadov Condemned**

The Muslim Council of Britain on the 8 March 2005, strongly condemned the killing of the elected Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov by Russian forces.

"Aslan Maskhadov was the elected President of Chechnya. Instead of dealing with him and the nation of Chechnya on the basis of mutual respect, the Russian government opted for the old Stalinist policy of forcible subjugation and humiliation. It is notable that for all their talk of a 'war on terror' Western leaders have turned a deliberate blind eye to Russia's savage behaviour in Chechnya where they have killed over 100,000 men, women and children since 1994. The Russian President Vladimir Putin - instead of being regarded as a pariah - has instead been feted in London and other capitals. This does not help relations between the world's Muslim community and the West," said Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain.

The Muslim Council of Britain believes that it is precisely illegal actions like these by state entities that help breed terrorism.

### **Grand Alliance Backs Law on Incitement to Religious Hatred**

The Muslim Council of Britain together with the Law Society, the Association of Chief Police officers, Justice, the Commission for Racial Equality, the British Humanist Association and all faith communities called upon the House of Lords on 10 March 2005, at a meeting in the House of Commons, to support legislation to outlaw incitement to religious hatred. Leading human rights lawyer, Robin Allen QC, and the Guardian columnist, Madeleine Bunting also joined various speakers supporting the new legislation.

The Secretary-General of the MCB Iqbal Sacranie said:

"We hope that the members of the House of Lords will appreciate the diverse support this vital piece of equality legislation has. Indeed, we see it as an important step towards ensuring the long-term safety of our community. We urge the members of the House of Lords to give consideration to the views of all the diverse organisations, who have knowledge and experience in the use of the current racial incitement laws, which already protect the Jewish and Sikh communities. We hope they will use this opportunity to finally close this loophole in our legislation and end the hierarchy of rights which currently exists."

### **Racist Incidents Monitoring**

Dr Jamil Sherif Secretary of the Research and Documentation Committee, represented the MCB at the launch of a report by the Citizens Advice Bureau on 8th March 2005, outlining involvement in reporting and recording racist incidents. CAB is well-aware of growing hate crimes against Muslims and its Brent office in particular has set up a project with other voluntary sector agencies to tackle race

and religious hate crimes.

### **Faiths Community Consultation Consortium- ID Cards**

Dr Jamil Sherif Secretary of the MCB Research and Documentation Committee and Abdurahman Jafar Secretary of the MCB Legal Affairs Committee attended a workshop organised by Fujitsu on 24 February 2005. Abdurahman Jafar subsequently submitted a response to a questionnaire, on behalf of the MCB. Dr. Jamil Sherif attended the launch of the Consultation's report on 14th March at the House of Commons and questioned the minister concerned, Mr Des Brown, on the circumstances under which it would be essential to produce the card. The minister did not respond to this issue with clarity, and his explanations of the benefits of the ID card were vague, ranging from "it would prevent under-age clubbing" to "preventing illegal working" and "one third of terrorist activity uncovered in the world is due to theft of identity"

### **Families To Face Terror Stigma Under Govt's Proposals**

The Muslim Council of Britain expressed its deep concern on the Government's proposals on 11 March 2005, contained in the Prevention of Terror Bill currently before parliament.

"The Government's concessions to its original proposals are inadequate. Through its proposals, the government is in danger of branding individuals and their families with the stigma of terrorism without them actually hearing the case against them let alone being convicted in a court of law. It is manifestly unjust to insist on the right to deny or curtail the liberty of people without affording them the opportunity of defending themselves in court against proper charges," said Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain.

The MCB notes that such draconian and illiberal measures were not introduced in mainland Britain even at the height of the IRA's terrorist campaign in the 1970's and 1980's.

"Furthermore, by insisting on the right to impose Control Orders on individuals merely on the basis of 'reasonable suspicion' as opposed to the 'balance of probabilities' - as called for by the House of Lords - the government is undermining the efficacy of the judicial process," added Mr Sacranie.

The Muslim Council of Britain urged the government to reconsider its stance in the interests of furthering justice and achieving a better consensus in Parliament and amongst the public.

### **British Muslims Meet & Question Army Chief of Staff**

The Muslim Council of Britain on 12 March 2005, hosted a meeting with the Chief of Defence Staff, General Sir Michael Walker, and a small team of senior officers at the Islamic Cultural Centre, Regent's Park.

The aim of the meeting was to hear about the steps the Armed Forces are taking to ensure that it becomes genuinely inclusive and representative of the society it exists to serve and to allow British Muslims to raise their concerns about its members joining the Armed Forces.

"The MCB welcomes moves by our Armed Forces towards greater recognition of the needs of its Muslim recruits. The establishment of the post of a Muslim Adviser to the Ministry of Defence and the recently proposed appointment of an Imam to cater for the spiritual welfare of British Muslim recruits are both commendable steps. We hope that we will see increased numbers of British Muslims taking up positions in our Armed Forces just as they have done so in other sectors of our society. For this to be successful, however, it is imperative that the high reputation of our armed forces is zealously protected and maintained and not allowed to be tainted by any misbehaviour or illegal actions," said Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain.

The Chief of Defence Staff said:

"I would like to pay tribute to the Muslim Council of Britain's invaluable work to promote better

community relations and increase knowledge and understanding of the Muslim faith within British society. The Muslim Council of Britain has made a real and lasting contribution to the creation of a just and tolerant society. I would also like to emphasise my personal commitment to creating Armed Forces which reflect more fully the religious, cultural and ethnic diversity of the society we serve. In return we can offer fulfilling careers and high quality training and education."

### **The Muslim Council of Britain Launches its Mentoring Programme**

A mentoring programme is being launched to help build capacity by providing support to and development of people who are serving in the British Muslim Community. We are looking for suitable applicants to join the 1st MCB Leadership Mentoring Programme to be held on 21st + 22nd April 2005. Full details and an application form for the programme can be found by going to:  
<http://www.mcb.org.uk/training/>

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### **MCB Calls for Tightening of Abortion Laws**

In response to the Conservative Leader Michael Howard's pledge to work towards a lowering of the abortion limit from 24 to 20 weeks, Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the MCB said:

"The Muslim Council of Britain welcomes Michael Howard's stance on the issue of abortion which we hope will reduce the number of abortions that occur in this country. There are around 600 abortions occurring every single day in the UK that is over 180,000 terminations every year. Any civilised society should be seriously alarmed about this. Islam commands us to respect the sanctity of all human life.

The Qur'an says:

"Whosoever has spared the life of a soul, it is as though he has spared the life of all mankind. Whosoever has killed a soul, it is as though he has murdered all of mankind." (Qur'an 5: 32)

The only cases in which an abortion could be contemplated is if the mother's life was in grave danger if she were to continue with the pregnancy, or in the case of a foetus that is not sustainable outside of the womb due to severe abnormalities and defects - and this is a recent opinion among some Muslim scholars. In all other cases we believe that abortion is a terrible crime against innocents."

### **Budget 2005**

The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) welcomed the Chancellor's continuing support for Islamic finance in the UK. Following representations by the MCB and various providers the Chancellor's Budget Statement flagged further measures to create a level playing field for Islamic financial instruments in the UK.

Excerpt (Section 5.117): "The government is committed to fair tax treatment of Shari'a compliant financial products. Following consultations announced in the 2004 Pre-Budget report, legislation will be included in the Finance Bill to amend the tax rules so that the mark-up on a Murabaha transaction and the profit-share on a Mudaraba arrangement are taxed on a level playing field with equivalent banking products. Stamp duty and land tax relief for Islamic house purchase schemes will be extended to include a new Shari'a compliant product."

In a separate development, the MCB also welcomed the extension of Islamic Home Finance to council housing tenants, noting:

"There are already discussions about allowing similar facilities to other Social Housing tenants. Over 114,000 Muslim households in the UK are in social housing with over 73,000 in local authority housing. The proposals resulting from these consultations will allow potential customers who want to exercise

their right to buy their homes from local authorities to utilise Sha'aria compliant modalities. The MCB welcomes this extension of Sha'aria compliant facilities to yet another segment of the Muslim housing market in the UK and will work to enable a full range of Islamic financial instruments to meet the diverse needs of the community. The MCB also welcomes the inclusive spirit in which the government has continued to support these important developments"

### **Home Office and Trust in the Muslim Community**

Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary of the MCB's media committee attended a meeting at the Home Office on Wednesday 23rd March 2005 to discuss the new Independent Police Complaints Commission and whether it would help establish more trust between British Muslims and the police. Inayat welcomed the additional powers the IPCC enjoys to investigate cases of abuse by police officers but stated that relations between British Muslims and the police were currently at a low ebb due to a number of high profile cases of police abuse and unfair arrests. In particular, the failure of the Crown Prosecution Service to charge any police officers following their brutal assault on Babar Ahmad in December 2003, has badly dented the reputation of our law enforcement agencies in the eyes of many British Muslims, particularly youth. Until justice was seen to be done, mistrust was likely to remain. The attendees of the meeting at the Home Office included: Fiona Mactaggart, Hazel Blears, Nick Hardwick (IPCC), John Wadham (IPCC) and two representatives of the Muslim Safety Forum.

### **Letter of Condolences to Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor from MCB**

His Eminence The Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor,

Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster Cathedral,

Archbishops House,

Ambrosden Avenue,

London, SW1P 1QJ.

Dear Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor,

May I on behalf of The Muslim Council of Britain offer our deepest condolences to the Catholic community in the United Kingdom and the Holy See with the passing of His Holiness Pope John Paul II.

Pope John Paul II bestrode the international stage for nearly three decades with a simple message of peace, justice and freedom. He will be enormously missed by the world's Muslim community. He will be remembered by many Muslims as well as people of other faiths and no faith, including the poor and disenfranchised for his love and respect for all human beings, regardless of their creed or ethnicity, and his staunch defence of the rights of all unborn children.

The Muslim Council of Britain believes that the Pope's message of peace and goodwill will continue to reverberate in the many places that he visited throughout his remarkable life. It will have a special resonance in the shipyards of Poland, the slums of Latin America, the towns and villages of Africa and the Palestinian refugee camps of the Occupied West Bank.

Yours sincerely,

Iqbal AKM Sacranie OBE,

Secretary-General

### **The Pope's Death is a Loss for All of Us**

The Muslim Council of Britain offered its deepest condolences and commiserations to the Holy See and the world's Catholic community with the passing of His Holiness Pope John Paul II on Saturday 2 April 2005. Iqbal Sacranie Secretary-General of the MCB offered sympathy with the following words:

“Pope John Paul II bestrode the international stage for nearly three decades with a simple message of peace, justice and freedom. He was a man of extraordinary faith, courage and compassion. He will be remembered by the poor and disenfranchised for his love and respect for all human beings. Pope John Paul's death will leave an enormous void in the hearts of hundred of millions of people around the world. The MCB believes that Pope John Paul II's message of peace and goodwill will continue to reverberate in the many places that he visited throughout his remarkable life. It will have a special resonance in the shipyards of Poland, the slums of Latin America, the towns and villages of Africa and the Palestinian refugee camps of the Occupied West Bank.”

### **MCB Consults National Interfaith Network**

The Interfaith committee of the MCB organised an important workshop at the Islamic Foundation on 20 March 2005 to consult all the Muslim representatives engaged in interfaith work in the U.K. The workshop was attended by delegates from all over the country and there were a number of interesting presentations on a variety of important issues. The conference also agreed upon a number of practical measures that need to be considered and adopted as a way of enhancing the effectiveness of our engagement in interfaith work.

The programme as usual commenced with the recitation from the Holy Qur'an and thereafter there was a speech by Dr Manazir Ahsan who warmly welcomed all the delegates. The first presentation of the day was from Dr Ataullah Siddiqui who set out a very interesting overview of the history of the Muslim involvement in interfaith dialogue in Britain covering a period from the early 1970s to the present day. This was followed by 3 speakers who set out their experiences in relation to Muslims in Interfaith relations: Imam Ibrahim Mogra explained the situation relating to Christian-Muslim dialogue and the Family of Abraham group of Leicester; Dr Aslam Siddiqui discussed the Derby Multi-Faith Centre; and Brother Abdul Karim Gheewala narrated his experience of Hindu-Muslim relations. The workshop was also fortunate to have in attendance a contingent of representatives from Turkey and Brother Kerim Balci gave a fascinating account of the state of interfaith dialogue in Turkey.

The afternoon session was addressed by Brother Shabbir Lakha who explained the workings of the Interfaith Network of the U.K. and how it can support other interfaith initiatives. He also discussed a number of factors that are essential for Muslim representatives in order to be effective and dynamic in their engagements. This presentation was followed by a very helpful analysis by Imam Abdul Jalil Sajid of the involvement of Government agencies and he also highlighted the various steps taken by Local Governments in the promotion of the agenda on Interfaith and community cohesion.

In the final part of the conference, there was a very constructive brain storming session on how to enhance the effectiveness of our collective efforts in the field of interfaith work. A number of practical suggestions were put forward which included the following:

- ☐ We need to define the boundaries of interfaith work
- ☐ We need to educate our community as to the importance of interfaith dialogue
- ☐ We also need to build bridges among the Muslim communities
- ☐ We need to ensure that more women are involved in interfaith work
- ☐ We need to define the boundaries of interfaith work

- ☐We need to consider how to deal with international issues that impact upon Muslims in the UK
- ☐We need to increase human and financial resources
- ☐Future meetings should be workshop orientated
- ☐We need to join forces with the faith communities on issues and campaigns that we share and agree upon
- ☐We should meet at least twice a year
- ☐We need to form a sub-committee of about 5 members to take this process forward and to formulate a package for Muslim representatives)

In relation to the final suggestion, at this very meeting a committee was formed and elected.

Dr Ataullah Siddiqui

Br Shabbir Lakkah

Mawlana Riyaz Nadwi

Dr Abdul Jalil Sajid

Sheikh Ibrahim Mowgra

With the guidance from Allah (SWT) and the efforts of all those who attended, the conference was very successful in achieving its strategic objectives.

#### **'Churches Together' Focus on Marriage and Family in Islam**

The Assistant Secretary-General Dr. Abdul Bari gave a talk on 'Marriage and Family in Islam' in a seminar organised by 'Churches Together for Families' at their head quarters in Tavistock Square, London on 19th April, 2005. The presentation was warmly received.

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## **Affiliate News**

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### **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](http://www.mcb.org.uk/mcbdirect/event_add.php)
  - To register community news go to: [http://www.mcb.org.uk/mcbdirect/news\\_add.php](http://www.mcb.org.uk/mcbdirect/news_add.php)
  - To register jobs: send and email to: [mcbdirect@mcb.org.uk](mailto:mcbdirect@mcb.org.uk).

Automatic registration will soon be possible insha'Allah.

### **Islamic Forum of Europe: Voting is Halal Project**

A glossy pamphlet declaring 'Voting is Halal' was produced and distributed by the Islamic Forum of Europe and its subsidiary organisations. As part of the awareness raising campaign the Booklet entitled: 'Voting in Islam Guidance to Muslims in Britain from the Scholars of Islam' was circulated in London to counter some of the misconceptions the Muslim community holds regarding democratic electoral participation. The Booklet can be downloaded from the MCB website: <http://www.mcb.org.uk/> or by visiting:

[www.islamicforumeurope.com](http://www.islamicforumeurope.com)

ENQUIRIES: TEL. 020 7456 1062

E-MAIL [media@islamicforumeurope.com](mailto:media@islamicforumeurope.com) FAX. 020 7456 1063

Post. IFE Head Office, 3rd Floor, West Wing, London Muslim Centre,

38-44 Whitechapel Road, London E1 1JX

### **Muslim Cultural Centre - PRESS RELEASE: Islamic Exhibition**

29th April 2005.

You are cordially invited to the Launch of the Islamic Cultural Centre Exhibition on Tuesday 3rd May 05 at 11am. The launch will take place at the Library Hall of the Islamic Cultrual Centre: 146 Park Road. London NW8 7RG.

His Excellency Prince Al-Turki, Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will be present along with many other dignitaries from the Muslim world and the UK.

#### *About the Exhibition:*

The Islamic Cultural Centre And The Regent's Park Mosque is holding an 11 day exhibition. This museum style exhibition will give eye-catching insights into Islamic civilisation, its history, tenets and contributions. With its stunning artworks and Arabic calligraphy; dazzling posters, beautiful multimedia presentations; unique, breathtaking and rarely seen Islamic antiques; all fused together with the sights, sounds and smells of the Islamic world to create a vibrant and animated settings for visitors of all ages.

**Exhibition Dates: Sat. 30th April Till Tuesday 10th May**

**Exhibition Times: From 10am to 8pm.**

FREE Entrance To All Parking Available On Site.

We invite you to cover our exhibition or be present at the event, please

email us with your details or the details of the crew and the number of people in the team. Email us: [media@iccuk.org](mailto:media@iccuk.org)

Mr. Abdesselam BenDaoud — Project Manager.

THE LONDON CENTRAL MOSQUE TRUST &  
THE ISLAMIC CULTURAL CENTRE

A Registered Charity.

146 Park Road, London NW8 7RG.

Tel: 020 7724 3363 (10 Lines). Fax: 020 7724 0493

### **An Evening of Inspiration 2005**

An enjoyable nationwide tour of Children's Benefit Concerts was organised by Islamic Relief from the 25 - 28 March 2005. Entertainers included Dawud Wharndby Ali with the \*Fletcher Valve Drummers, Azhar Usman, Mesut Kurtis, Imad Rami, Shaam, and 786. The tour covered Bradford, London and Birmingham and the evenings were deemed highly successful by those who attended in terms of family entertainment value and money raised for good causes.

### **Muslim News Awards 2005**

The Muslim News 'Awards for Excellence 2005' were held on 23 March at the Intercontinental Hotel, London. The event recognised individuals and institutions achievements. Included amongst the fifteen award recipients were: Tanzim Wasti (award for Community Relations), chair of the MCB's London Affairs Committee and a veteran community activist, Ebrahimsa Mohamed, Co-ordinator of Muslim Aid, and Ibrahim Hewitt, chair of Interpal. Both Muslim Aid and Interpal are MCB affiliates, and Ibrahim Hewitt is currently an Assistant Secretary-General of the MCB. Awards were also conferred on Venessa Redgrave (for championing human rights), solicitor Imran Khan (of the Stephen Lawrence case), boxer Danny Williams and Professors Tariq Durrani and Alimuddin Zumla, of the University of Strathclyde and University College London, respectively. Over 600 guests attended the event.

A stirring keynote speech was delivered by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Rt. Hon. Gordon Brown MP, focussing on social justice and the challenge of meeting the targets set for tackling poverty by the year 2015.

Iqbal Sacranie Secretary-General of the MCB paid tribute to the hosts:

"It has been 16 years now since the Muslim News was first launched - as a free monthly newspaper - at the height of the Satanic Verses Affair. Throughout this time the Muslim News has - with only a tiny but immensely dedicated staff - become an essential and reliable source of information about issues of concern to British Muslims."

### **Bring the Troops Home Demonstration in London**

200,000 demonstrators participated in the most recent of London's great marches to protest against the illegal war in Iraq and its resulting loss of civilian life – they called for British troops to return home. Amongst the speakers at Trafalgar Square on Saturday 19th March were Reg Keys and Rose Gentle, parents of soldiers killed in Iraq. The MCB Assistant Secretary-General Dr Daud Abdullah also addressed the gathering on behalf of the MCB by saying:

“We salute the steadfastness and determination of the Iraqis to ensure peace and stability is returned to their land, by doing so however it is important to remember other people who are threatened with a similar situation such as Syria, Iran and Venezuela.

He went on to say on Palestine:

“The London conference was not about negotiations but of reform, but Palestines problems are not ones of reform but of occupation and the right of return.”

Other prominent speakers included George Galloway, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Tony Benn and Bruce Kent. Speakers from the Muslim community included Anas Altikriti, Dr Adnan Siddiqui, Sami Ramadani and Salma Yaqub. The march was organised by the Stop the War Coalition, The Muslim Association of Britain and CND.

### **Royal Delegation Visits Southampton Mosque**

His Royal Highness Prince Edward and the Countess of Wessex visited the Southampton Medina Mosque in Southampton, an affiliate of the Muslim Council of Britain on 14 January 2005. They were accompanied by the Lady Lieutenant of Hampshire and other dignitaries and leaders of other faiths in the City. The royal couple were received at the Mosque by the MCB Adviser on Constitutional Affairs, Mr Khurshid Drabu and members of the Southampton Medina Mosque Management Committee members. The royal couple took a keen interest in the views of Muslims on the Tsunami disaster as well as the structure of the mosque which is the biggest purpose built mosque in the South of England. Commenting on the visit, Mr Rashid Brora, Secretary of the Mosque said, “The visit was arranged at very short notice to us but we are so glad that the occasion was so successful. The couple engaged in an interesting debate on natural and man made tragedies and we were pleased to note that the views of the Muslims in Southampton corresponded with those of other faiths particularly the Jewish faith on man made tragedies such as the holocaust, the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Kosovo and the genocide in Rwanda.”

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: [external.html?link=mailto:%20donate@hrf.co.uk](mailto:external.html?link=mailto:%20donate@hrf.co.uk) website: <http://www.hrf.co.uk>

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## **Committees Update**

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## **Media Committee**

### **Letter on Hajj to The Times**

Inayat Bunglawala from the Media Committee of the MCB responded to Ruth Gledhill's article in the Times on Jan 15.

Dear Sir,

The Hajj - the Great Pilgrimage to Makkah - does not "last up to five weeks" (The Times, Jan 15, 2005). The central Hajj rituals take only four days to complete. Every year, around 40,000 British Muslims undertake the Hajj. However, many pilgrims from around the world, including the UK, do remain in Saudi Arabia usually for between one and two weeks so that they also have the opportunity for visiting the Mosque of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in Madina and doing some sightseeing. Even so, the Hajj pilgrimage is - in the overwhelming majority of cases - easily accommodated within the typical annual leave granted to employees.

Yours faithfully,

Mr Inayat Bunglawala,  
Secretary,  
Media Committee,  
The Muslim Council of Britain

### **British Muslims to Refer '24' to OFCOM for Possible Breach of ITC Programme Code**

A delegation from the Muslim Council of Britain's Media Committee met on Tuesday the 25 Jan, 2005 with senior Executives from Sky Television to discuss their concerns about Sky One's decision to broadcast the fourth series of the American drama '24' which begins on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2005.

"We are greatly concerned by the unremittingly hostile and unbalanced portrayal of Muslims in this series of '24' based upon a preview of the first five episodes that we have seen. There is not a single positive Muslim character in the storyline to date. At a time when negative stereotypes of Muslims are on the increase we feel that Sky – as a major UK broadcaster – has a responsibility to challenge these insidious views, not help to reinforce them. We have urged Sky to urgently make contact with Fox Television – the producers of the '24' series – with a view to ascertaining whether they plan to introduce or develop any positive Muslim characters in the series which we understand is still being filmed. Meanwhile, we will be referring the series to OFCOM for investigation, as we believe that the episodes we have already seen are in clear infringement of the ITC Programme Code about the representation of minorities," said Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain.

Rule 1.8 of the ITC Programme Code states:

"Consideration should be given to the treatment of vulnerable minorities bearing in mind the likely effects of both misrepresentation and under-representation."

Additionally, rule 1.8(i) states:

"No programme should be transmitted which is intended to stir up racial hatred, or taking into account the circumstances, is likely to do so."

Rule 1.8(iii) applies the same to minority religious faiths.

The MCB received assurances from Sky that they would undertake a pro-active review of the '24'

episodes as and when they receive them from Fox Television, with a view to ensuring that its broadcast of the "24" series complies with domestic broadcasting regulations, which may entail editorial changes. The MCB will be actively monitoring episodes broadcast on Sky to ensure that the Muslim community is not unfairly stereotyped.

The MCB delegation consisted of Inayat Bunglawala, Tariq Hameed and Ehtisham Hibatullah from the media committee. David Smyth, the Head of Acquisitions for the Sky One channel, led the Sky delegation.

### **Sky's response to the MCB Press Release**

"During a useful meeting on Tuesday 25 Jan, 2005 Sky listened to the concerns raised by representatives of the MCB.

"Sky informed the MCB that it had no knowledge of the scripts and storyline for the series as a whole. Sky will be making contact with Fox to see if advance plotlines are available.

"Given the unpredictable nature of the storyline in previous series, Sky would urge all viewers to consider the content of 24 in the context of the series as a whole, rather than on the basis of a few episodes. Some of the key characteristics of all previous series of the show have been the significantly changing plotlines and character portrayals as the series have progressed.

"It is our belief that the series does not breach the OFCOM Programme Code.

"Sky provides a digital satellite platform for hundreds of channels including those catering for the Muslim community, such as the Islam Channel (836). In 2004, Sky News was the only 24 hour news broadcaster at the Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca."

### **End to Indefinite Detention of Foreign Nationals in Britain – At Last**

The Muslim Council of Britain broadly welcomes the announcement by the Home Secretary Charles Clarke on 26 Jan, 2005, in which he declared an end to the government's policy of indefinitely detaining foreign terror suspects.

"The MCB has long argued that the indefinite detention of these foreign terror suspects was discriminatory and that their continued incarceration without charge in Belmarsh prison represented our very own mini-Guantanamo Bay. The MCB's position was given added support last month following the ruling by the Law Lords which declared that the indefinite detention of these foreign national was unlawful. So it is encouraging that the government is now looking at more humane alternatives to indefinite detention," said Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain.

The MCB believes that the cornerstone of any judicial system is to have open justice with transparency and accountability.

### **MCB Letter to The Guardian on French Hijab Ban**

Dear Sir,

Stuart Jeffries ("If only we were more like the French," 31 January 2005) makes the absurd suggestion that the French law restricting a Muslim woman's liberty to observe religious dress "surely sought to make Muslim ghettos a thing of the past." Jeffries fails to appreciate that social deprivation is not remedied by reducing issues pertaining to poverty and discrimination to

the dress of women.

Only financial investment and cessation of racist rhetoric passed off as "laïcité" will lead to the "hopeful trajectory" that is apparent to Jeffries. The iniquitous discrimination that is employed to enforce a particular cultural lifestyle will only lead to a homogeneous society that eschews cultural innovation and rejects alternative lifestyles.

Tariq Hameed,  
Media Committee,  
The Muslim Council of Britain

## **MCB Letter to Prospect Magazine**

Islamophobia is Not a Myth

Dear Sir,

Kenan Malik ("Islamophobia Myth," Issue 107) surreptitiously isolates manifestations of Islamophobia to violent and overt hostility towards Muslims on our streets by racists and the police.

However, Malik's conception of Islamophobia is at odds with virtually every source cited in his article. Ever since the term Islamophobia entered mainstream discourse following the Runnymede Trust's report on Islamophobia in 1997, it is understood to entail a fear of and prejudice against Muslims. Such prejudice may manifest itself in ways other than physical attacks by racists or disproportionate arrests by the police, and the semantic edifice erected by Malik makes a mockery of victims of prejudice by pretending they have not been discriminated against.

In January 2005, the Crown Prosecution Service released figures which showed that of the 44 cases of religiously-aggravated crime between April 2003 and March 2004, in exactly 50% of the cases the religion or perceived religion of the victim was Islam. This is only the second year that the CPS has been collating these figures, but with the Muslim population making up only 3% of the British total, the statistics are already quite telling.

Malik also fails to recognise how and why the likes of the British National Party – for fear of being prosecuted under our incitement to race hate laws - have switched their strategy from targeting racial groupings to explicitly targeting British Muslims as a faith group. Malik's Prospect piece and his C4 documentary 'Are Muslims Hated?' strangely omitted any mention of the northern riots of 2001 and the key role the BNP's Muslim-baiting played in them. Gallingly, he then criticises the government's proposals to close the loophole in our legislation and prohibit incitement to religious hatred. Does Mr Malik – who describes himself as an anti-racist - think that the BNP should be allowed to continue their incitement because it is merely anti-Muslim?

Malik has further not read the explanatory notes of the draft law to outlaw incitement of religious hatred, which states that "what must be stirred up is hatred of a group of persons defined by their religious beliefs and not hatred of the religion itself ... criticism or expressions of antipathy or dislike of particular religions or their adherents will not be caught by the offence." Malik may therefore continue to be hateful of religion as long as he does not incite hatred of followers of religion, which is hardly a meritorious act worth protection.

Islamophobia is not confined to the far right. It is the progressive realisation that racism may manifest itself in ways other than physical attacks that racial discrimination in the field of employment and in the delivery of services was outlawed in the Race Relations Act 1976. Similarly, Islamophobia may be manifested by denying an individual employment based on their belief in Islam, and such conduct was only recently outlawed in the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003. There is no such "myth" in this regard, as demonstrated for example by the survey conducted by BBC Radio 5 Live in July 2004. The BBC sent fictitious applications for jobs using applicants with the same qualifications and work experience, but different names. The investigation found that a quarter of the applications by

the candidates with traditionally English sounding names were successful in securing an interview, compared with 13% for the applicants with Black African names and only 9% of applicants with Muslim names.

Some writers in the mainstream media have been no less culpable in fomenting this prejudice against Muslims and contributing to their emergence as the 'folk devils' of popular and media imagination. In July 2004, the Sunday Telegraph published a series of four breathtakingly anti-Muslim pieces by Will Cummins in which he compared Muslims with dogs and argued why 'Muslims are a threat to our way of life' (Sunday Telegraph, 25 July 2004). It is simply unthinkable that an editor of a national newspaper would still be in his job if he had allowed a similar barrage of hate to be directed at Afro-Caribbean's or Jews.

It can appear, as Kenan Malik contends that 'Islamophobia is a myth', but only if you deliberately choose to look the other way.

Inayat Bunglawala,  
Secretary,  
Media Committee,  
The Muslim Council of Britain

### **Letter to The Times on MCB & The Holocaust Memorial Day**

Dear Sir,

Today's leader column described it as 'reprehensible' (The Times, 28 Jan) while your columnist Daniel Finkelstein thought it 'disgraceful' (The Times, 26 Jan).

The decision by the Muslim Council of Britain to decline the invitation to this year's Holocaust Memorial Day was not intended to belittle the horror of the Nazi Holocaust. The view held by the MCB - ever since the inception of Holocaust Memorial Day in 2001 - is that the subtext of the memorial day - "Never Again" - is greatly diluted by the exclusive nature of the event.

The memorial day would in our opinion be better served by also covering more recent and ongoing mass killings and human rights abuses in our world, and thus make the cry "Never Again" real for all people who suffer, even now. In the last decade we have seen genocide take place in both Rwanda (1 million killed in the space of a few weeks) and Chechnya (10% of its population has been killed since the Russians launched their first invasion in 1994) and Bosnia. We need to do more than just reflect on the past. We must be able to recognise when similar abuses occur in our own time.

Not to acknowledge current and recent genocides would be to undermine the benefits of remembrance, deprecate lessons learnt from the Nazi Holocaust and call into question our commitment to prevent current and future inhumanity. The Nazi Holocaust began with a hatred of an entire people because of their religion and ethnic identity. To reflect a more tolerant and inclusive Britain, we believe that Holocaust Memorial Day ought to be renamed "Genocide Memorial Day" to make no distinction between genocides undertaken against people of other religions and ethnicity. Is that really so 'reprehensible'?

Inayat Bunglawala,  
Secretary,  
Media Committee,  
The Muslim Council of Britain

### **MCB Letter to The Irish Independent - O'Doherty's Pro-Israeli Agenda**

Dear Sir,

Mr O'Doherty is of course entitled to disagree (Jan 28) with the Muslim Council of Britain's decision to decline the invitation to this year's Holocaust Memorial Day.

The view held by the MCB since the inception of Holocaust Memorial Day in 2001 is that the subtext of the memorial day - "Never Again" - is diluted by the exclusive nature of the event.

The memorial day would in our opinion be better served by covering the ongoing mass killings and human rights abuses in our world, and thus make the cry "Never Again" real for all people who suffer, even now. We must do more than just reflect on the past. We must be able to recognise when similar abuses occur in our own time.

O'Doherty's allegation that 'it is school policy in the 'occupied territories of Palestine' to deny the Holocaust' (Irish Independent, Jan 25) is simply untrue and betrays his pro-Israeli agenda. And why the need for quotation marks around Occupied Territories? The whole world except for Zionists accept that Israel is occupying and building illegal Jewish settlements on Palestinian land. Indeed, 60% of the Palestinian West Bank has now been gobbled up by Jewish settlers.

In today's paper (28 Jan) O'Doherty mocks the MCB's concerns about the wholly negative portrayal of Muslims in the first five episodes - the ones we have previewed - of the new series of '24'. At a time when Muslims are fast becoming the 'folk devils' of popular imagination, does Mr O'Doherty not think that broadcasters have a responsibility to try and challenge these views rather than help to reinforce them?

Inayat Bunglawala,  
Secretary,  
Media Committee,  
The Muslim Council of Britain

### **MCB Media Lecture at Edinburgh University**

Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary of the MCB's Media Committee, spoke on 'Islam, the Middle East and the British Media' at a well attended meeting arranged by Edinburgh University's Impact Society on Thursday 3 Feb, 2005. Inayat's talk centred around insights from the late and much missed Palestinian academic, Professor Edward Said, on the denigration of Islam in the West.

### **Muslim Council of Britain Visits Bath**

Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary of the MCB's Media Committee, visited the beautiful and historic city of Bath on Monday 7th Feb, 2005 at the invitation of King Edward's School - to speak about 'Western Perceptions of Islam' as part of the school's Islam Day. Inayat delivered a PowerPoint presentation to a mixture of the school's History and Politics students.

Later in the evening, Inayat spoke to over 150 members of Bath's premier cultural society 'Cafe Philo' on the topic 'East is East' and this was followed by a very lively and interesting question and answer session.

During Inayat's visit he also met Imam Rashad Azami of the Bath Islamic Centre and the Imam stated that he would recommend to the Islamic Centre's committee that they affiliate to the MCB.

### **Deeyah – a Singer with a Muslim Background?**

The MCB's Media Secretary Inayat Bunglawala wrote to the Times in response to Sean O'Neill's report that Deeyah – a singer with a 'Muslim background' – has had to hire a 24-hour bodyguard "after receiving threats from religious extremists" (The Times, Feb 5th 2005).

"The Muslim Council of Britain looked into this story last month. If the reports of victimisation were true

then we would condemn it unreservedly and hope that the perpetrators were speedily caught and brought to justice. You can imagine our surprise then when we found that despite her being more than ready to speak to the British media about the abuse and threats she has allegedly received, Deeyah has not reported these serious incidents to the police for investigation." Said Mr Bunglawala.

"Could this be because Deeyah herself would face prosecution if - hypothetically - the police were to discover that the whole story is a Public Relations stunt to coincide with the release of Deeyah's first UK single at the end of last month. It appears there is no easier way to get publicity these days than by claiming to be a victim of Muslim persecution." Added Mr Bunglawala

### **End The Insults That Will Lead To Violence**

The following article by Iqbal Sacranie Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain appeared in the The Mirror newspaper on 7 Feb, 2005

Recent years have undoubtedly been difficult ones for Britain's 1.6million Muslims.

Thrust into the limelight over acts of terrorism they were not responsible for, they have had to constantly fend off allegations of extremism in a way no other faith has had to.

The constant drip-drip effect of negative media stories has had an undeniable impact on British Muslims. So it is surely about time we put matters in perspective.

In last May's European and local elections, 750,000 people in the UK went out and voted for the overtly racist and increasingly Islamophobic policies of the British National Party.

But many readers may well notice an uncanny similarity between the hate-filled and bigoted outlook of the BNP and the views expressed by Abu Abdullah. Abu Abdullah's rhetoric and that of his counterparts in the BNP often leads only to the dismal cul-de-sac of senseless violence.

It is far removed from the lofty injunction to all Muslims in the Koran about how to engage with non-Muslims: "And call all to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching and argue with them in the better way." Offensively dismissing fellow citizens as "filthy kuffar" (insulting term for disbelievers) is clearly unIslamic.

It is an enormous insult to the hundreds of thousands of non-Muslims who marched alongside us in the great anti-war marches of 2002 and 2003.

It is also an insult to human rights lawyers like Gareth Pierce and Louise Christian who worked with British Muslims to bring home the nine British detainees from the legal black hole that is Guantanamo Bay.

The way forward is not by engaging in pointless grandstanding, but in patient work to ensure we break down the remaining barriers of racial and religious discrimination.

Today in Parliament, MPs will be debating the Government's proposals to close a loophole in our current legislation and finally prohibit incitement to religious hatred.

We dearly hope this Bill will be passed. For it will put on notice not just the Islamophobes of the BNP, but also their soul mates such as Abu Abdullah.

### **Knowing the World Means Knowing its Maker**

Saturday 19 February 2005, (The Times) Credo by Inayat Bunglawala

"EVERYTHING has its polish which takes away rust and the polisher of hearts is the remembrance of God - Dhikr Allah," said the Prophet Muhammad.

It is well known that Islam enjoins its followers to observe the five canonical daily prayers, to fast during daylight in the month of Ramadan and to undertake the Great Pilgrimage - the Hajj - to Mecca at least once in a lifetime if one has the financial and physical ability. These acts of worship have their own times and modalities associated with them. This is not the case with dhikr, however, which believers are asked to engage in constantly, with God Himself inviting all of us to: "Remember Me and I shall remember you. Be grateful to Me and deny Me not" (Qur'an 2:152).

The Prophet Muhammad warned his followers to be on their guard lest their hearts harden through absorption in worldly affairs and urged them to soften them through the regular practice of dhikr. His admonitions on this subject have a noble lineage. In the Old Testament, the Psalmist poured scorn on those "nations that forget God" (Psalms 9:17) and observed that: "We will remember the name of the Lord our God" (Psalms 20:7-8).

Martin Buber, the Jewish philosopher, regarded the Passover liturgy of the Exodus as firmly anchoring the world's Jews as "a community based on remembrance" (Hebrew: zakhar).

Given that our heart is the place where God casts His gaze and the receptacle of all our hidden thoughts, the role of dhikr in expelling any impurities becomes more central. In his book *Unweaving The Rainbow*, the Darwinian thinker and atheist Richard Dawkins contends that our poets have not sufficiently used their gifts in order to draw our attention to the insights into the wonders of the universe that science has revealed to us. These discoveries are, Dawkins passionately argues, more than worthy of capturing the imagination of poets.

The Qur'an too calls on humankind to reflect on the universe around us and says that this should provide added certainty for those who engage in dhikr: "Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, there are indeed signs for people of understanding - those who remember God standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides" (Qur'an 3:190-191). Indeed, the Arabic word for the world (al-'alam) comes from the root word alam, or sign. The study of the workings of the Universe is regarded as a sure means of establishing a belief in and greater appreciation of the sheer omnipotence and omniscience of our Creator.

No other species possesses a communication system as competent for the transmission of abstract concepts as human language. The late Muhammad Hamidullah, a translator of the Qur'an into the French language, believed that it was no coincidence that the first words of the Qur'an revealed to the Prophet Muhammad draw our attention to this gift: "Read! In the name of Your Lord who created, created humankind from something which clings, Read! And your Lord is the most noble, who taught by the use of the pen, Taught humankind that which they knew not" (Qur'an 96:1-5).

Nevertheless, there have been persistent attempts in the past century to advance the cause of atheistic materialism under the guise of science, by portraying human beings as just another animal species. Yet, to believers, there is something astounding about the appearance of our species. The scientist and Christian, Sir John Polkinghorne, while accepting the Darwinian view of how species evolved, maintains that the coming to be of persons is: ". . . the most significant event in cosmic history that we know about. The Universe became aware of itself, and science became a possibility."

Would it not be the irony of ironies if human beings were to use their ability to explore, examine and understand their environment, while forgetting about the existence of the very Creator that exhorts them to do just such?

Inayat Bunglawala is the Secretary of the Media Committee of the Muslim Council of Britain

**Islamscope Conference in Bath**

Inayat Bunglawala, the Secretary of the MCB's Media Committee was a keynote speaker at the one-day Islamoscope Conference held in Bath on Thursday 24th February 2005. The Conference was organised jointly by Bath Islamic Centre, the Racial Equality Council and the local police to help raise awareness about issues facing British Muslims. The over 150 attendees came from local employers and civic organisations. Inayat spoke on 'The Western Media's Portrayal of Islam'.

### **Clarification by MCB on Incitement to Religious Hatred Proposals in the Times**

The MCB wrote to the Times in response to a piece by Camilla Cavendish (The Times, 1st March 2005) where she distorted basic facts in order to build her case against the government's proposals to prohibit incitement to religious hatred.

Inayat Bunglawala Secretary of the Media Committee said, "She claims that 'anyone who insults the beliefs' of amongst others, Christians and Muslims, could face seven years in prison if the proposals become law. This is plainly untrue. It is made very clear to those who have read the proposed law and consulted interested parties that only hatred incited towards followers of a religion would be outlawed, and not hatred of religion itself. This is even made clear in the explanatory notes to the legislation. In addition, the Attorney-General has taken a very strict view of what constitutes incitement with our existing incitement to racial hatred law. Only 4 out of over 80 cases brought to him have been approved for prosecution in the past three years. There is no reason to suppose he would be any less strict with the proposed religious hatred law.

The government's proposals are supported by the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Law Society and human rights organisations, like Justice and the Commission for Racial Equality. Their knowledge and experience in the use of the current racial incitement laws, which already protect the Jewish and Sikh communities, must surely be an important consideration. Furthermore, there is no evidence that this type of law, as currently exists for Sikhs and Jews in mainland Britain and for all religions in Northern Ireland, has had any of the negative impact suggested by Ms Cavendish.

Ms Cavendish claims that under a similar law in Australia, Pastor Daniel Scot was found guilty of incitement 'for explaining why he had fled from his home from Pakistan.' This is nonsense. In fact, the Australian judicial tribunal found Pastor Scot and Pastor Danny Nalliah guilty - not of criticising Islam - but of inciting fear and hatred of Muslims by claiming that 'Muslims were liars and demons who were planning to overrun Western democracy by violence and terror.'

### **MCB Corrects Guardian Leader**

The Secretary of the Media Committee of the MCB Inayat Bunglawala wrote concerning The Guardian's Leader ("Sense and Sensitivity", The Guardian, 03 March 2005) that it: "sought to defend the claim made by the Home Office Minister Hazel Blears that the terrorist threat "mostly comes" from people "falsely hiding behind Islam". However, Ms Blears is contradicted by official statistics supplied by her own department. According to the Home Office, of the 17 (out of over 700 arrested) individuals convicted for terrorist-related offences since 9/11, seven of these were cases related to terrorism in Northern Ireland, and the three Muslims convicted to date were in fact convicted for credit card fraud. This is not to say that there is no threat from terrorists who may claim to be Muslims but to single out one particular community was unhelpful to say the least."

### **Correction in Sunday Times**

Following a misleading article in the Sunday Times, Inayat Bunglawala the Media Secretary of the MCB wrote the following correcting the mistakes:

"It is true that many British Muslims opposed the war in Iraq and are deeply unhappy at the way they feel they have been stigmatised by current anti-terror laws.

However, the claim by your correspondent Jason Allardyce (Sunday Times, Scottish edition, March 6 2005) that the Muslim Council of Britain has therefore agreed a plan to "instruct Muslims to vote against Labour in nearly 40 constituencies" is simply untrue.

The Muslim Council of Britain is a non-partisan body and works with all the leading political parties with a view to seeking the common good. All we ask of Muslim voters is that they examine the views of their prospective parliamentary candidates on all issues that are of importance to them and vote accordingly.

This position was made clear by our Secretary-General, Iqbal Sacranie when he gave the keynote address at the meeting organised by the Muslim Association of Britain to which Mr Allardyce referred in his article."

### **Rod Liddle's C4 Documentary on Immigration**

Following numerous complaints from British Muslims - and several non-Muslims - about Channel 4's documentary on immigration by Rod Liddle, the Muslim Council of Britain's Media Committee have contacted Channel 4 to obtain copies of the programme to examine the complaints. More soon...

### **BNP uses 'Arab' Publishers**

The BNP party's monthly paper, The Voice of Freedom, is published by Satellite Graphics Ltd, which is Saudi owned and staffed by Muslims. BNP leader Nick Griffin was recently arrested on suspicion of inciting racial hatred after denouncing Islam as a "wicked, vicious faith". He was secretly filmed telling supporters that British Muslims were behind a "massive rape wave" aimed at spreading Islam in the West by impregnating white girls.

Inayat Bunglawala Media Secretary of the MCB commented on the BNP's publisher choice:

"The BNP's odd version of patriotism - as stated on their website - entails shunning all foreign nationals and dealing only with British companies employing British workers. In practice, it appears that the BNP are somewhat more flexible about this if they think it will save them some money. They should go the whole hog and ditch entirely their bankrupt racist philosophy.

Satellite Graphics publish one of the Arab world's most prestigious papers, Asharq al-Awsat. We hope they will think again about also publishing the BNP's often venomously anti-Muslim magazine."

BNP activist Phil Edwards said: "We didn't know about them being Arab owned. We would love to use a British firm, even if it meant paying a bit more. But British firms are heavily unionised and the unions hate our guts."

### **To Vote or Not to Vote?**

Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary of the MCB's Media Committee took part in a 90 minute debate with Imran Waheed of Hizb ut-Tahrir on Sunday 24th April 2005 at the Froud Centre, Manor Park, London, about whether British Muslims should participate in the upcoming General Elections.

Inayat explained that contrary to the usual analysis presented by Hizb ut-Tahrir, the clear majority of Muslim scholars in the UK believe it is permissible to take part in the British electoral process with a view to following the Qur'anic commandment of 'enjoining the good and forbidding the wrong'. While participation in the electoral process may not secure British Muslims 100% of their goals, it was clear that it was a more practical approach than non-participation which would secure 0% for British Muslims and indeed indirectly help far-right and Zionist politicians.

### **Islamophobia and the Media Debated**

Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary of the MCB's Media Committee took part in a panel debate about 'Islamophobia in the Media' on 14 April 2005 organised by the Centre for the Study of Democracy at the University of Westminster.

Other panelists included Ahmed Versi,, editor of the Muslim News, Martin Bright of The Observer. The event was chaired by Abdul Bari Atwan, editor of the Arabic daily paper al-Quds.

### **Letter to the Editor, The Daily Telegraph**

Dear Sir,

So, Christopher Howse believes that "the Crusaders were right, and we should be grateful to them."  
(Daily Telegraph, May 4th 2005)

The Crusades were launched in 1095 by Pope Urban II who - in order to shore up his position in the Church - worked an assembly of knights, nobles and clerics at Clermont, France into a frenzy with what are now acknowledged to have been fictitious tales of Muslim atrocities in the Holy Land. "If you must have blood, bathe in the blood of infidels," the Holy Father instructed them.

Aside from utterly destroying Antioch - one of the greatest cities in the world at the time - these first crusaders who conquered Jerusalem massacred the Muslim garrison and almost every Muslim and Jewish occupant of the town in an orgy of violence until, as one contemporary chronicler reports, the horses of the crusaders were 'knee-deep in blood'. For some reason, Howse neglects to mention this bloody episode or to compare it with the humane manner in which the Muslim general Saladin (Salahuddin al-Ayyubi) treated the Christians when he recaptured al-Quds (Jerusalem). Does the 'free press' that Howse is so lauds only allow Muslims to be portrayed as barbarians?

Later Crusades also included the Children's Crusade which saw 20,000 children set off from Germany led by the ten year-old Nicholas, only for many of the girls to be captured and forced to work in brothels when they reached Italy by their fellow Christians.

Yours faithfully,

Inayat Bunglawala.  
Secretary, Media Committee,  
The Muslim Council of Britain

## **Health and Medical Issues Committee**

### **Health & Medical Affairs Committee Responds to Healthcare Commission Consultation**

The Muslim Council of Britain's Health and Medical Affairs Committee submitted it's response to the Healthcare Commission's Consultation process: 'Assessment for improvement: Our approach,' on 21st February 2005.

### **Study of Influenza & other Respiratory Infections among UK Pilgrims to Hajj, 2005**

Around 2 million Muslims from over 140 countries around the world travel to Makkah each year to perform Hajj - approximately 20,000 (ie 1 in 100) of these are from the United Kingdom.

Travelling anywhere and at anytime carries some risk to health. The unavoidable over-crowding, excessive heat and exhaustion associated with performance of the Hajj rituals provide the conditions that increase the risk of transmitting infections. Respiratory infections are the most common reason for which British Hujjaj seek medical consultation at the British Hajj Delegation Clinic in Makkah and Mina. These risks however can be minimised by taking some simple steps.

Infectious disease research associated with the Hajj has focused on meningococcal disease. Outbreaks associated with the W135 strain of *Neisseria meningitidis* and a high mortality following the 2000 and 2001 Hajj resulted in a high profile campaign to increase uptake of the quadrivalent vaccine (acwy). Since the introduction of that policy and the successful uptake of the vaccine, there have been no deaths or serious infections associated with W135.

The Hajj has now moved in to the winter season; this could lead to a seasonal increase in outbreaks of respiratory infections caused by influenza and other viruses. Several publications in recent years have reported a high prevalence of influenza among pilgrims. The rate and extent of influenza infection among pilgrims from Europe is not well known. Recently El Bashir et al (2004) have published the risk of influenza infection among a cohort of pilgrims from the east end of London (who performed Hajj in 2003) <sup>ref</sup>

They tested blood from pilgrims before departure and after return from Hajj. Based on seroconversion, they found the influenza attack rate to be:

- 38% among all pilgrims(44/115)
- 30% among the vaccinated &
- 41% among the nonvaccinated participants.

Nearly half (21/44) of the patients with influenza received a course of antimicrobial drugs while on the Hajj compared with 38%(27/71%) among those who did not receive

It was concluded that

- all pilgrims, regardless of age should be offered influenza vaccine before they travel for the Hajj during the winter months and
- treatment with a neuraminidase inhibitor should be offered to persons who test positive and present for medical assistance within 48 hours of the onset of their symptoms.

This approach offers several benefits:

- Earlier relief of symptoms
- Reduced transmission among pilgrims during the crowded conditions
- protects close contacts from contracting infection when pilgrims return home.

The group also carried out a feasibility study on British pilgrims during their stay in Makkah last year. Working closely with the British Hajj Delegation (BHD) Clinic in Makkah, individuals who attended the clinic were tested for evidence of influenza infection. Three (6%) of the 50 individuals from whom throat swabs were tested by the QuickVue influenza test, were positive. Thus providing evidence that influenza viruses were circulating in the British pilgrims during 2004.

During the forthcoming Hajj (Jan 2005) a team of three researchers will travel to Saudi Arabia to carry out a more detailed study of the prevalence of respiratory viruses (including influenza) among British pilgrims. The doctors will work closely with the British Hajj Delegation team (led by Lord Adam Patel of

Blackburn). Individuals who attend the clinic with respiratory symptoms will have swabs taken. Test for influenza will be carried out at the clinic and those found to be positive will be offered Oseltamivir (*tamiflu*) if they fell in the 'at risk' group. Samples will be brought back to carry out the ultra-sensitive molecular tests to detect presence of influenza and other respiratory viruses.

We aim to test 400 – 500 pilgrims and hope that the results will help to determine whether all pilgrims who travel to Hajj during winter months should be classified as 'at risk' group and be offered influenza vaccine before departing and those in whom diagnosis of influenza is confirmed, are given the neuraminidase inhibitor, oseltamivir (*tamiflu*). Apart from benefit to the patients, the use of the antiviral drug oseltamivir offers the potential for health protection measure for the wider community against the introduction of any new variant strains.

NB: The study is approved by the North London Multicentre Research Ethics Committee (MREC).

Research participants: Drs Harunor Rashid, Kamal Ali, Haitham El Bashir & Professor Robert Booy of Queen Mary's School of Medicine and Dentistry, London, Dr Shuja Shafi, Health Protection Agency, HPA Collaborating Laboratory, Northwick Park Hospital, Harrow, Dr Elizabeth Haworth, HPA South East, Dr Maria Zambon, Centre for Infections, HPA Colindale, London NW9, Haitham El Bashir, Elizabeth Haworth, Maria Zambon, Shuja Shafi, Jane Zuckerman & Robert Booy

Influenza among UK pilgrims during Hajj 2003

*Emerging Infectious Diseases, 2004, vol 10, No 10*

(Dr Shuja Shafi also Chairs the Health & Medical Committee of the Muslim Council of Britain)

## **Education Affairs Committee**

### **Education Show 2005**

The MCB is participating in 'Education Show 2005' at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham, the premier showcase event for educational materials (17-19th March, 2005). Dr Azhar Sheikh and colleagues will be promoting the MCB "Books for Schools" project that offers resource packs of authentic and imaginative materials on Islam for use in the class-room setting, the project was launched by the Secretary of State for Education in October 2004.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of February a five member MCB delegation, lead by the Secretary General Iqbal Sacrani, met with the newly appointed Secretary of State for Education Ruth Kelly MP. A number of important issues were raised including comments made by the OFSTED chief David Bell about Muslim faith schools, achievements of Muslim pupils in state schools, issues relating to meeting Muslim pupils needs and low representation of Muslim in the teaching profession and on school governing bodies. The Books for School project was also discussed.

This was a very positive meeting in which good understanding was developed and a number of actions were agreed to be followed up in the next meeting.

A further four Community Development Seminars on Education have been held in different LEAs areas to raise awareness of the importance of being involved in the education and participating as governors and teachers. Three seminars were held in London and one in Birmingham.

A number of functions were attended by the members of the Education Committee; Minority Ethnic Achievement Project consultative committee (Tahir Alam), Equality Challenge Unit celebrations of their work targeted at higher education (Mohammed Omer) and Meeting with an Indonesian educational delegation from Nahdatul Ulama. The MCB delegation included Tahir Alam, Nawazish Bukhari, Qamrul Hasan and Idris Mears.

Numerous comments and interviews on educational issues have been given by members of the education committee (Tahir Alam and Hussain Shefaar) to media including television, radio, and newspapers. Most queries were generated by comments by OFSTED chief David Bell's comments about Muslim faith school and Jilbab case of Shabina Begum who won the court of appeal ruling.

## **Education, Training & Employment**

### **The Muslim Council of Britain Launches its Mentoring Programme**

A mentoring programme is being launched to help build capacity by providing support to and development of people who are serving in the British Muslim Community. We are looking for suitable applicants to join the 1st MCB Leadership Mentoring Programme to be held on 21st + 22nd April 2005. Full details and an application form for the programme can be found by going to:  
<http://www.mcb.org.uk/training/>

The 2001 Census figures show that there are now approximately 1.6 million Muslims in Britain. Two thirds of British Muslims originate from the Indian sub-continent. The other third originate mainly from the Middle East, with small but significant numbers from virtually every other part of the world. Over 50% of British Muslims are now born in Britain and a similar proportion is aged under 30.

British Muslims have a much poorer than average socio-economic profile. Large numbers live in very deprived areas. They are poorly employed, and their housing conditions, general health and educational attainments are considerably below the national average. The proportion of Muslims in the prison population is thrice their number in the national population.

These disadvantages lead to alienation and social exclusion. Whilst serious and committed efforts by the local and national governments are essential to address the social and economic deprivation of Muslims, we as the Muslim community also need to develop strategies and action plans to change this disturbing reality so as to enable us to realise the full potential of British Muslims. We need to increase our human resource and leadership capacities to tackle this agenda. This programme aims to develop the type of leadership that will enable the Muslim community in Britain to develop strategies to reverse the downward spiral of our community.

The MCB, as an umbrella body for British Muslims, aims to enable the Muslim community to realise its full potential by participating in and contributing to the mainstream society. The capacity building programme is an important initiative towards that goal.

The MCB residential leadership development programme which is now in its second year has been an important initiative towards building the leadership capacity within the Muslim community in UK. What has emerged is that once the participants complete the programme they need continuing support towards their development.

The Muslim community in the UK has many successful organisations and leaders that could benefit others by sharing their experience and skills. It is important to disseminate the wealth of knowledge held by existing leaders with future leaders to improve their capacity, network and effectiveness to contribute towards the development of their own respective community.

This programme will develop and train mentors from those who are currently serving in the Muslim Community to enable them to support mentees who are aspiring to serve the Muslim community.

## **MCB Highlights Impact of Employment Equality Legislation**

The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) with funding from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) are undertaking an awareness raising programme amongst both Muslims and non-Muslims to explain the effect of The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003.

A conference was organised for Muslim employers and employees, Imams, community leaders, activists and all those interested, at the Muath Welfare Trust, the Bordesley Centre, Camp Hill, Birmingham on 20<sup>th</sup> Jan, 2005. The following events were also organised:

### Seminars

- Awareness raising seminar for the local community in Leicester on 10th January 2005.
- Awareness raising seminar for Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB) in Birmingham on 13 Jan, 2005.
- Awareness raising seminar for the local community in Batley on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2005.
- Awareness raising seminar for Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB) in Brighton on 10 Feb, 2005.
- Awareness raising seminar for the Prison Service in Manchester on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2005.
- Awareness raising seminar for the Prison Service in London on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2005.
- Awareness raising seminar for the Prison Service in London on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2005.
- Awareness raising seminar for Local Authorities in the West Midlands on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2005.
- Awareness raising seminar for the local community in Birmingham on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2005.
- Awareness raising seminar for the Prison Service in East Midlands on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2005.
- Awareness raising seminar for Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB) in Rhyl on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2005.
- Awareness raising seminar for the local community in Cardiff on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2005.
- Awareness raising seminar for Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB) in Cardiff on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2005.
- Awareness raising seminar for the Prison Service in Cardiff on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2005.
- Awareness raising seminar for the Prison Service in Nottingham on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2005.
- Awareness raising seminar for the Prison Service in Doncaster on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2005.
- Awareness raising seminar for Local Authorities in Manchester on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2005.

### Surgeries

- Advice giving surgeries for the Muslim community in Batley on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2005.
- Advice giving surgeries for the Muslim community in Batley on 22nd February 2005.
- Advice giving surgeries for the Muslim community in Batley on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2005.

### Literature and Information

- 50,000 of 'The Religious Discrimination at Work' leaflet have been distributed to various organisations and mosques around the country.

## **Social & Family Affairs Committee**

### **Social and Family Affairs**

The remit of the Women and Family Affairs committee and Social Affairs committee is now undertaken by the Social Affairs Committee. This is implementing the decision taken by the CWC at their last meeting.

Muslim Families in the Capital Opportunities and Challenges conference took place on 11 December at the City Hall. Over 200 delegates of diverse background attended the conference. Speakers invited on the panel had diverse views and there were some challenging moments. The conference highlighted the need for internal debate on issues that have a serious impact on family life.

Events attended in June 2004 on the panel defending faith schools at NASUWT conference,

January 2005 attended the launch of the Forced Marriage Unit at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, April, July and October attended WNC meetings and contributed to their response on CEHR and strengths and diversity response.

October 2004 Co-chaired "Hijab the right to choose" at the European Social Forum.

## **Mosques and Community Affairs**

### **The UK Ruyiate Hilal Committee**

Eid Al-Adha prayers are being held in mosques in the UK on both Thursday 20th January and Friday 21st January. The UK Ruyiate Hilal Committee meeting on Sunday 16th January at the Tooting Islamic Centre, acknowledged that differences of opinion would be respected and the matter would be left to each mosque to announce its Eid arrangements.

### **MCB Addresses Gathering and Dutch Minister**

Imam Ibrahim Mogra of the MCB's Mosque and Community Affairs Committee on the invitation of the Dutch Muslim Council (CMO) visited Holland on Saturday 19 February 2005. He addressed the Dutch Minister for Integration Mrs Randok and other government representatives regarding the move in Holland to outlaw the employment of foreign imams from the year 2008. The Dutch government believes all of its imams should be trained in Holland via Dutch Universities. Imam Mogra presented the UK model, where 30 yrs of progress still meant we employed foreign imams to meet the needs of the Muslim community. Others present included academics, ulemma and representatives of Sunni and Shiite communities.

## **Public Affairs Committee**

### **General Election 2005**

The Muslim Council of Britain's Public Affairs Committee (PAC) has embarked on a number of initiatives to encourage British Muslims to actively participate in the General Elections, expected to be held in May 2005. PAC will be organising hustings meetings to enable British Muslims to quiz parliamentary candidates about their views in a number of key constituencies. The PAC will also for the first time be producing a 'Voter Card' with a list of ten key issues of importance to British Muslims.

### **MCB Thanks Ken Livingstone**

The Chair of the Muslim Council of Britain's Public Affairs Committee Sher Khan has written to Ken Livingstone, the Mayor of London thanking him for his public support of the Incitement to Religious Hatred provision which was put before the Commons on 7th Feb, 2005. The Mayor wrote a letter to the Guardian and an article in the GLA's monthly paper - The Londoner. The MCB welcomes Mr Livingstone's position as it has lobbied government for over a decade to extend the law to afford the protection given to Sikhs and Jews to cover all faiths.

## **London Affairs Committee**

### **Nawa-i-Waqt's Islamabad Editor Visits UK**

The Chairman of the MCB's London Affairs Committee, Tanzim Wasti hosted a meeting with Javed Akhtar, the Islamabad editor of the Pakistani Urdu daily newspaper Nawa-i-Waqt. The meeting was held on Friday 25th February, 2005 at the offices of Muslim Aid in London. Mr Akhtar - who was visiting the UK as a guest of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office - enquired about the situation facing British Muslims.

### **GLA Report - Muslims in London**

The Chair of the London Affairs Committee Tanzim Wasti has been working with GLA researcher Sharon Field and other GLA staff in the compilation of this first-ever report on Muslims in London. A number of MCB committee chairs have been invited to comment on the report's draft chapters. The report will be consolidating information from the 2001 Census and other factual sources and also identifying issues requiring the attention of London's policy makers such as borough council leaders and chief executives. The report is expected to be launched in May 2005

### **Islamic Exhibition at GLA HQ**

With the help of the Greater London Authority and the Mayor of London the Muslim Council of Britain's London Affairs Committee arranged an Islamic Exhibition in the main building of the GLA at City Hall.

On 6<sup>th</sup> April 2005, the Mayor inaugurated the exhibition, Mr Tanzeem Wasti the Chair of the MCB's London Affairs Committee and Dr Abdul Bari the MCB's Deputy Secretary-General were present, they explained the purposes of the artefacts on display. Mr Wasti also presented the Mayor with a rare document - an address by Late King Faisal of Saudi Arabia given in 1967 to a reception held in honour of the Late King Faisal by the Muslim community of London. Mayor Livingstone expressed his appreciation of the gift and said he would place it in his office. The exhibition lasted throughout the month of April and included the Muslim Heritage Exhibition, Women and Islam, Islamic calligraphy, Islamic artefacts and free literature.

The exhibition was mentioned by Mayor Ken Livingstone in his last meeting of the London Assembly of the GLA, in which he emphasised the objectives of the exhibition to introduce Islam and Muslims to the local community, in order to create awareness about Islamic principles of peace, tolerance and justice for all mankind.

### **Islam Awareness for London Police**

Dr. Jamil Sherif on behalf of the London Affairs Committee of the MCB made a presentation on 'Muslims in Britain': A demographic overview and current trends' at the Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre on 17th March, 2005 at a training day for local police officers.

## Legal Affairs Committee

### Response to Consultation Paper on Judiciary by MCB

Judge Khurshid Drabu the MCB's Constitutional Affairs Advisor, submitted the MCB's response to the Department for Constitutional Affairs consultation paper on "Increasing Diversity in the Judiciary" on the 9 Feb, 2005. It is hoped that the suggestions would ensure a more sympathetic judiciary for minority communities including Muslims.

### Legal Affairs

Sadiq Khan Chair of the Legal Affairs Committee spoke at the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies conference on 'Politics and Terror' on Friday 25 Feb, 2005. He spoke on the effects of anti-terrorism legislation on the Muslim community. The Secretary General was also a key note speaker.

### MCB Delighted by Muslim Chaplain to Armed Forces

Mr Drabu was appointed to the Religious Advisory Panel in 2001 to succeed Mr Iqbal Sacranie OBE who was the first Muslim Adviser to the MOD, having been appointed in 1998 when the Panel was first set up. The post is an honorary position.

Commenting on the Government's announcement to appoint an Imam in the Armed Forces, the Adviser on Constitutional Affairs said: "These policies and practices...accommodate the special dietary and dress needs of the Muslims and cause no impediment in their obligation to worship and to keep fast."

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## New on the MCB Website

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### Media/Press Releases -

- 18 Apr 2005      [Electing to Deliver - British Muslims Launch Election Strategy and Programme](#)
- 08 Apr 2005      [Religious Hatred Incitement Law: British Muslims Let Down Again](#)
- 07 Apr 2005      [MCB Reveals its Ten Key Questions for the General Election](#)
- 02 Apr 2005      [The Pope's Death is a Loss for All of Us](#)
- 11 Mar 2005      [Families To Face Terror Stigma Under Govt's Proposals](#)
- 10 Mar 2005      [Reported Killing of Chechen President Maskhadov Condemned](#)
- 10 Mar 2005      [MCB, The Law Society and ACPO Back Law on Incitement to Religious Hatred](#)
- 07 Feb 2005      [MCB Calls on Party Leaders and Members of Parliament to Vote for Equal Treatment under the Law](#)

26 Jan 2005	<a href="#"><u>British Muslims to Refer '24' to OFCOM for Possible Breach of ITC Programme Code</u></a>
26 Jan 2005	<a href="#"><u>End to Indefinite Detention of Foreign Nationals in Britain – At Last</u></a>
25 Jan 2005	<a href="#"><u>British Muslims Welcome Return of Last British Detainees from Guantanamo</u></a>
13 Jan 2005	<a href="#"><u>MCB Calls for an End to Misrepresentation of Proposed Incitement Law</u></a>

### **Media/Letters to the Editor -**

3 March 2005	The Guardian	<a href="#"><u>Responding to Home Office minister Hazel Blears</u></a>
1 March 2005	The Times	<a href="#"><u>Camilla Cavendish</u></a>
1st Feb 2005	The Guardian	<a href="#"><u>'If only we were more like the French', letter from Tariq Hameed, MCB Media Committee</u></a>
31st January 2005	New Statesman	<a href="#"><u>Nick Cohen's 'Labour's contemptible election trade off', a response from Dr Abdul Karim Khalil, Assistant Secretary General, MCB</u></a>
30th January 2005	Prospect Magazine	<a href="#"><u>'Kenan Malik's Islamophobia Myth', a response from Inayat Bunglawala</u></a>
28th January 2005	Irish Independent	<a href="#"><u>MCB and Holocaust Memorial Day, letter from Inayat Bunglawala</u></a>
28th January 2005	The Times	<a href="#"><u>MCB and Holocaust Memorial Day, letter from Inayat Bunglawala</u></a>
27 January 2005	The Guardian	<a href="#"><u>'Holocaust Memorial Day', letter from Iqbal Sacranie</u></a>
20 January 2005	The Times	<a href="#"><u>Reporting on Hajj, by Inayat Bunglawala</u></a>

### **Library/Articles & Essays -**

26th April 2005	<a href="#"><u>Muslims in Britain and the Elections: What does the Shari'a say? by Shaykh Michael Mumis</u></a>
19th February 2005	<a href="#"><u>The Times, 'Knowing the world means knowing its maker' by Inayat Bunglawala</u></a>

### **Library/MCB's Submissions and Responses To Consultation Requests**

21 Feb. 2005

[Response to The Healthcare Commission's Consultation process, submitted by the MCB's Health & Medical Committee \(pdf\)](#)

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## **New on the MCBDirect Website**

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MCB*Direct* 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](http://www.mcb.org.uk/mcbdirect). MCB*Direct*'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.

**To advertise community new and events please contact [mcbdirect@mcb.org.uk](mailto:mcbdirect@mcb.org.uk)**

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## **Events**

To advertise events please contact [mcbdirect@mcb.org.uk](mailto:mcbdirect@mcb.org.uk)

**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.**

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