

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Ever Merciful



21 March 2010

## **AHMADIYYA MUSLIM JAMAAT PEACE SYMPOSIUM 2010**

### **REPORT**



## **INAUGURAL AHMADIYYA MUSLIM PEACE PRIZE AWARDED TO**

### **LORD ERIC AVEBURY**

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Press Secretary AMJ International

Last night the Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, spoke at length about how to achieve global peace whilst delivering the keynote address at the seventh Annual Peace Conference hosted by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat UK at the Bait-ul-Futuh Mosque in Morden. The event was attended by over 550 non-Ahmadi guests, including a number of Parliamentarians. During the event Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad presented Lord Eric Avebury with the inaugural Ahmadiyya Peace Prize in recognition his continued efforts to protect human rights across the world.

Rafiq Hayat, the National President of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat in the UK, opened the event by welcoming the guests. He said that under the leadership of Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad the Jamaat was leading the way in terms of service to humanity. He said that hundreds of schools, colleges and hospitals were run by the Jamaat in remote towns and villages across Africa where education or medical treatment is provided regardless of creed or colour.

Siobhain McDonagh, MP for Mitcham and Morden, spoke of how despite differences of faith, all humans were joined by a desire for happiness, equality and respect. These values, she said, were clearly asserted by the Holy Qur'an.

The Shadow Minister for Transport, Stephen Hammond MP, commented that much of the conflict in the world was based upon '*easy misunderstandings*' and that functions such as the Peace Conference were a means to remove such misconceptions and distrust.

Laura Moffatt, MP for Crawley, said that she believed that *'there cannot be a single soul who does not support the work of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community'*. She added that she hoped that an Ahmadiyya mosque would soon be opened in her constituency.

The Shadow Minister for Communities and Local Government, Justine Greening MP, remarked that for peace to develop *'understanding, tolerance and respect'* were the key factors. She said the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat was actively engaged in *'breaking down barriers'*.



Tom Cox, an MP from 1970-2005, spoke of the ongoing persecution of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat in Pakistan. He said that he had recently visited the country and had seen at first hand the cruelty inflicted upon Ahmadis. He said that some had been brutally murdered, whilst others were imprisoned for years without recourse to proper means of justice. He said he was struck by the fact that despite the ongoing cruelty all the Ahmadis continued to repeat the motto *'Love for All, Hatred for None'*.

Martin Linton, MP for Battersea, said that he was a *'great admirer'* of Islam and in particular the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat. He said the Jamaat displayed a great example of tolerance and respect for all.

Tom Brake, MP for Carshalton and Wallington, said that the Jamaat's message of peace needed to be heard around the world. He added that he was sure that all of the major political parties would try their utmost to bring about an end to the persecution of the Jamaat.

Andrew Pelling, MP for Central Croydon, said that it was crucially important to understand the need and importance of world peace and that he hoped that the cruelties inflicted upon Ahmadis and Christians in Pakistan would soon end.

Dominic Grieve QC, the Shadow Secretary of State for Justice, said he was aware that the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat was doing a great deal at local levels to bring about peace and tolerance.

Following on from the MPs speeches, the inaugural Ahmadiyya Peace Prize was presented to Lord Eric Avebury, in recognition for his lifetime devotion to the issue of human rights. The award, along with a cheque for £10,000, was presented by Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad. Upon receiving the award Lord Avebury said that he had been left '*overwhelmed*' by the honour. Commenting upon the Ahmadiyya motto of 'Love for All, Hatred for None' he said that if others lived their lives according to that principle there would be much less conflict in the world. He condemned the long standing persecution of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat in various countries and said that this was an issue on which all British politicians were united.

The keynote address by Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the Fifth Khalifa (Caliph), of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat began at 8.25pm. During his forty minute speech His Holiness discussed the major obstacles impeding long lasting peace: the oppression of minority groups; corruption; the failure of governments to take concrete steps to prevent cruelty; the preoccupation of certain groups with interfering with the basic rights of individuals and the constant failure of the United Nations to work as a united organisation where all countries were equal.

His Holiness began his address by highlighting the '*high objective*' which was sought by all. The high objective was peace both at an individual and societal level. He said that over 1400 years ago the Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>pbuh</sup> had outlined how true peace could be achieved - by treating others in the same way that you wished for yourself to be treated. His Holiness said that this '*golden principle*' applied as much today as it ever had before.



He continued that in today's world the desire for peace was becoming a distant dream. Cruelty and conflict were replacing love and harmony as matters of norm.

Western countries bore some responsibility for this sad state of affairs. His Holiness mentioned Ethiopia, a country ravaged by famine and violence. Even though limited aid was sent there from time to time, due to corruption the vast majority never reached those innocent men, women and children who were starving. Instead corrupt officials used the wealth for their own personal pleasure or for stockpiling weapons from powerful nations as a means to preserve their own seats of power.

In Palestine, Western Governments had continually turned a blind eye to the attacks of the Israeli forces. He said that even if the Palestinians were not blameless the response of Israelis was wholly disproportionate. If they believed that in the long term their attacks would increase their peace and security they were very much mistaken because hatred would naturally develop in the hearts of the helpless Palestinians. He said:

***“Can those innocent children who saw their homes being destroyed; who saw their brothers and sisters being killed without any reason; who saw their helpless parents targeted whilst pleading for their lives; can those innocent children ever erase those horrific scenes from their memories. Their inner frustrations will make them anxious, and when this anxiety is manifest, it will result in disorder and it will lead to a reaction.”***

His Holiness then went on to criticise the basic failures of the United Nations and the self serving nature of its more powerful member states. By allowing the five permanent members of the Security Council to maintain a right to veto denied absolutely the requirement for justice and equality.

Another issue that threatened the peace of the world was unnecessary interference of State in the personal matters of an individual. He said that the security role of Government was to legislate on matters that were a threat to the nation. However where the peace of the country was not at risk then the Government had no right to interfere. He said:

***“Instead of unnecessarily interfering in the affairs of others and erecting walls of hatred we should look to knock them down. The Governments should not interfere where rights are not being violated. No laws should be proscribed regarding those matters that do not endanger the peace of the nation. Of course, where there is a threat to the peace of the nation; where there is a likelihood of harming the prosperity and progress of the nation; where the rights of citizens are unduly curtailed and where a person is made a symbol of hate due to his religion, there the Governments should interfere and legislate.”***

His Holiness then commented on the partial ban on Hijab that is being seriously considered by the French legislature. He said:

***“Whenever I have reflected on this matter I have not been able to understand where the problem with Purdah lies that it has become such a threat to Governments. Is it such a heinous crime to wear a coat and cover one’s head and chin with a piece of cloth so that an entire Parliament sits to pass a law against it?”***



This particular issue, he said, had the potential to lead to a great deal of distrust and hurt in the Muslim world. Obviously such distrust could only hinder peaceful objectives. Who knew where the situation would end? Would Christian women or Jewish women who chose to dress modestly also be legislated against? Would Muslim countries ban all forms of European dress? Of even greater concern was that if these laws were implemented then women would be denied their basic civil rights such as healthcare, education and the right to travel simply because they were trying to live their lives in accordance with the teachings of Islam. He gave the example of an Ahmadi Muslim girl in Germany who due to the over-zealousness of

her local school administration had been forced out of education despite the fact that she was extremely intelligent and hard working. This was but one case where a Muslim girl who could have been of real service to her country was being denied the right to explore and develop her talents.

The issue of minarets on mosques was also an issue that had caused concern and indeed had been banned a few months previously in Switzerland. His Holiness said that if there were concerns that mosques were the breeding grounds for terrorists then removing the minarets would make no difference. Such terrorists would be caught by better policing not by removing the peaceful symbol of a Muslim place of worship. There were so many bigger issues in the world today; people were out of work, the economy was still struggling, people were fighting to put food on the table. These were primary issues that had to be tackled for peace to emerge. His Holiness concluded by observing:

***“Will a woman wearing or not wearing a veil affect the economy of any country or the world? Will the wearing or not wearing of a veil or having or not having a minaret affect the moral values of a country or will it lead to a recognition of the Creator? Will the wearing or not wearing of a veil or having or not having a minaret improve or harm the peace of the world? If it does then I will be the first to accept it because Islam teaches that you should be willing to sacrifice something small for the greater good. But no! All these actions are strengthening the foundations of hatred.”***

Following the main address the guests enjoyed dinner and then had an opportunity to meet with His Holiness. Many of the guests commented upon the high quality of his address and others sought his prayers.

The event concluded as His Holiness met with assembled members of the Press and Media. Discussions took place regarding various matters, particularly the political and social instability currently engulfing Pakistan<sup>1</sup>.



**End of Release:**

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<sup>1</sup> A separate report on this meeting will be published