



# RESPECTING Religious Feelings

An address by Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim community delivered in Tahir Hall, Baitul Futuh, Morden, UK on 29th March 2008



# RESPECTING RELIGIOUS FEELINGS

Following recitation from a passage from the Holy Qur'an and addresses by Mr Rafiq Ahmed Hayat, National President UK, Ms Siobhain McDonagh, MP for Mitcham and Morden and Mr Dominic Grieve, MP for Beaconsfield and Shadow Attorney General, Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V affirmed the Unity of God Almighty etc., began in the name of Allah, the Most Gracious and Ever Merciful and addressed the audience:

Lord Mayors, Honourable MPs, fellow religious leaders, distinguished guests

*Assalamu alaikum warahmatullah wabarakatuhu*  
(Peace and blessings of Allah be upon you)

We are gathered once again in this hall today to listen to one another. I am also thankful to the MPs who have extended kind words for the community and I also thank you all who have come here to listen. You all have assembled to express your feelings of love and affection and of brotherhood and kinship. Firstly, I am grateful to all of you decent people - some new faces and some familiar friends – who have accepted our invitation to be with us today.

Your real purpose of coming here today, as I have just stated, is to give expression to your feelings of love and affection and renewing ties of brotherhood and kinship so that we can try to establish peace in our society in the best possible manner. In this age, when certain powers are engaged in destroying peace and when ill-feelings against each other are being sparked unnecessarily and walls of hatred are being erected, this objective is all the more important.

There is no religion in the world – be it Islam, or Christianity, or Hinduism or for that matter any other faith – that advocates the destruction of peace. Each person likes peace and hates disorder. Every heart is inclined towards good deeds and every good-natured person wants

that peace should be established in the world. Everyone is restless in attaining this objective of peace. Some of you may indeed already be working towards peace in your own domain. So, our coming together is a link of that same chain of human endeavour.

Over the last few years, this peace conference has become a permanent feature of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community's love for peace and the establishment of peace. Therefore, in this context, I will present a few matters with reference to my faith because in this materialistic world, religion, and in particular Islam, is being blamed for causing division amongst people, whereas Islam requires one to be pure-hearted about others and to prefer and desire peace. Unfortunately, those within Islam and those beyond have both tried to tarnish this attractive image of Islam and this facet of its picture. If any excesses have been committed by one side, the other side has tried to fan the flames of hatred.

Today, it is only the Ahmadiyya community that is telling both parties that neither have some of the so-called scholars amongst the Muslims understood the beautiful teachings of Islam nor have some amongst the non-Muslims truly done justice to finding the truth.

In 1897, the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian<sup>(as)</sup> sent a message about Islam in the form of a book addressed to Her

Majesty Queen Victoria on her diamond jubilee, and, assuring her of allegiance, added:

“Yes, I accept that the behaviour of some ignorant Muslims is not good and there are foolish habits to be found in them such as a few barbaric Muslims call the cruel shedding of blood as Jihad. The confrontation of subjects against a JUST ruler is termed rebellion and not Jihad and one who violates covenants and commits evil instead of doing a good deed, and kills the innocent, is called a tyrant and not a conqueror against disbelievers.”

[Tohfa-i-Qaisariya]

At the same time, the Founder drew the attention to some non-Muslims of that time that also included some Christian priests who played a key role in wrongly interpreting the concept of Jihad. And, nowadays we see that the media in some countries and some so-called well-educated persons are playing a similar role in attributing, unfairly and contrary to all evidence, the concept of a ceaseless Jihad to the Holy Qur'an. As a result, some ignorant religionists are driven into frenzies. Some ignorant Muslims think that whereas their own scholars are urging them towards Jihad, the opponents of Islam are also telling them that the Qur'an gives the commandment of Jihad and it is unsparing and harsh about every matter. So, instead of studying and discovering carefully what the true teaching of the Holy Qur'an is, they are inclined towards barbaric severity and killing and maiming.

You may recall that a few days ago, some newspapers in Denmark republished cartoons of the Holy Prophet of Islam<sup>(saw)</sup> and attempted to defame and disrespect him in a false manner. Will this improve mutual relations or harm them? Or, will not the derogatory attempt by the member of parliament of Holland to make a film about the Holy Qur'an cause feelings to boil over?

A Muslim can never defame nor show



**“A MUSLIM CAN NEVER DEFAME NOR SHOW DISRESPECT TO ANY PROPHET BECAUSE HE BELIEVES IN ALL PROPHETS. IN PARTICULAR, AN AHMADI MUSLIM BELIEVES IN PROPHETS MORE THAN AN ORDINARY MUSLIM...”**

**“THE HISTORY OF MORE THAN A HUNDRED YEARS OF THE AHMADIYYA COMMUNITY BEARS TESTIMONY TO THE FACT THAT WE ARE TRULY MAKERS AND KEEPERS OF PEACE.”**

disrespect to any Prophet because he believes in all Prophets. In particular, an Ahmadi Muslim believes in Prophets more than an ordinary Muslim does because in addition to believing in all Prophets up to the Holy Prophet of Islam<sup>(saw)</sup>, he believes in the Promised Messiah and Reformer of the age<sup>(as)</sup> who was to gather all faiths and establish peace, love and affection in the world and has done so. The history of more than a hundred years of the Ahmadiyya community bears testimony to the fact that we are truly makers and keepers of peace.

I included the reference about Jihad from the Promised Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> so that no one should think that we are adopting this apologetic attitude to reconcile ourselves in view of the changed

**“COME, LET ME SHOW YOU THE QUR’ANIC TEACHING ON HOW TO CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE OF PEACE, LOVE AND BROTHERHOOD IN SOCIETY.”**

circumstance in which we find ourselves. This has been the Ahmadiyya teaching from Day One and is in light of the teachings of the Holy Qur’an.

In response to a question as to what he intended to show in his controversial film, the Dutch MP, Mr Wilders, has quoted a verse of the Holy Qur’an:

*And when you meet in regular battle those who disbelieve, smite their necks; and when you have overcome them, bind fast the fetters – then afterwards either release them as a favour or by taking ransom – until the war lays its burdens. That is the ordinance. And if Allah had so decided, he could have Himself exacted retribution from them. (Ch.47:V.5)*

If you look at this verse in a fair manner, then are people not killed in combat? Did Mr Wilders not see all the casualties that occurred in the First and the Second World War? Is it only the Muslims who are killing in Iraq, Afghanistan, Israel and Palestine?

The Holy Qur’an commands according to the circumstances. The verse I have just quoted only means that providing you are in an actual battle and that battle is in self-defence, then be not cowardly but be bold and show chivalry. Fight till peace is restored. Unless there is a state of war, do not make prisoners of war, that is to say, there is no permission to take prisoners unless there is a bloody war.

And then look from the high moral ground at the exemplary treatment of the prisoners of war which is that one should either release them as a favour or take ransom – until the war lays its burdens. There is no permission to hang on to prisoners of war indefinitely.

The Founder of our community has said that unnecessary criticism and finding faults with others is not the recipe for maintaining peace. If some commandment is unclear, then ask the followers of that faith. Since not every one is knowledgeable, ask those who are well-versed because, as I have pointed out earlier, the majority of the common people merely follow the misguided mullahs and thus earn Islam a bad name. However, if Mr Wilders did not understand this, he should have at least investigated it fully because the history of Islam bears witness to this fact and historians admit that the Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>(saw)</sup> always treated prisoners of war with kindness in every battle.

After the battle of Badr, the first battle fought against Muslims by the people of Makkah, for instance, the more learned prisoners were released in exchange for teaching the unlettered Muslims. That shows the sympathy that the Messenger of Allah<sup>(saw)</sup> had for mankind as well as the significance that he attached to knowledge. A basic principle for the establishment of peace is to see the true picture of something instead of giving negative interpretations. With regard to Mr Wilders, the Ahmadiyya community had explained to him all of this clearly, yet he did not care for the sentiments of the Muslims and had the audacity to accuse Islam of wanting to end peace in the world. Why did he not see the Qur’anic verse that states:

*And the recompense of an injury is an injury the like thereof; but whoso forgives and his act brings about reformation, his reward is with Allah. Surely, He loves not the wrongdoers. (Ch.42:V.41)*

The teaching of Islam is that your duty is reformation. If forgiveness brings about reformation, then you forgive. In the case of a hardened criminal who is bent upon disrupting the peace of the society, punish him for the sake of his reformation and not out of revenge. Personal enmity, grudge, malice and rancour of

any kind should play no part in the punishment, for these are the motives that destroy the peace of society.

The Holy Qur’an says:

*O ye who believe! be steadfast in the cause of Allah, bearing witness in equity; and let not a people’s enmity incite you to act otherwise than with justice. Be always just, that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah. Surely Allah is aware of what you do. (Ch.5:V.9)*

Hence, let not a people’s enmity cause you to abandon righteousness. What is righteousness? Righteousness is to do everything with the fear of God and bearing His love in your heart. Allah, the Exalted loves His creation very much. It is because of this very love that Allah has sent prophets and messengers into this world so that the people may be saved from entrapment by Satan and do good works, promote love and affection amongst each other; and, establish peace. Allah has made it binding on a Muslim that he should not advance in enmity so much as to abandon fulfilling the requirements of justice. I ask my dear respected guests: is it fair that our beloved Prophet whom a Muslim holds dearer than his life, should be ridiculed and portrayed, God forbid, as a terrorist? Or can it be said about the Holy Qur’an – that teaches love and affection and justice – that it should be torn and cast into the sea?

I very much liked the comments by a Danish Christian on the publication of the caricatures. He said that these cartoons were like him writing a poster with some false statement about his neighbour and putting it on his external wall so that the neighbour could read it every day and yet claim that he loves his neighbour. Every sane person can understand that these things cannot help establish peace. Therefore, if peace is to be established, we will have to respect the sentiments of each other and safeguard the rights of society. It is easy to



**“IF SOME COMMANDMENT IS UNCLEAR, THEN ASK THE FOLLOWERS OF THAT FAITH. SINCE NOT EVERY ONE IS KNOWLEDGEABLE, ASK THOSE WHO ARE WELL-VERSED BECAUSE, AS I HAVE POINTED OUT EARLIER, THE MAJORITY OF THE COMMON PEOPLE MERELY FOLLOW THE MISGUIDED MULLAHS AND THUS EARN ISLAM A BAD NAME.”**



**“THE HOLY QUR’AN DOES NOT SAY THAT YOU ARE RAISED FOR THE GOOD OF MUSLIMS BUT SAYS FOR THE GOOD OF MANKIND. THE BELIEFS OF THE ONE WHO BELIEVES IN GOD WILL BE REAL ONLY WHEN HE ENJOINS GOOD, SPREADS GOOD AND FORBIDS EVIL.”**

spread hatred but very difficult to sow the seeds of love. Modern man has come so close to other men that he can find the whole world before him on the touch of a button while seated on his sofa in his drawing room. Were all the efforts to achieve that nearness of a global village aimed at kindling the fire of hatred or were they to witness the evergreen fruit-bearing trees of love and sympathy for mankind? You will certainly agree with me that our goal should be to acquire and promote love.

Come, let me show you the Qur’anic teaching on how to create an atmosphere of peace, love and brotherhood in society. The Holy Qur’an says that a major cause of social ills is violation of the rights of one another and admonishes us to be mindful of the rights of the weaker sections of society in particular.

The Holy Qur’an says:

*And in their wealth is a share belonging to the beggar and the destitute.*  
(Ch.51:V.20)

Today when we are so close to each other that we witness scenes of starvation and poverty in the poor countries of the world, mere sympathy is not enough, rather we should also help them. Despite his deepest desire, no single

person can eradicate hunger from the world on his own; this requires a concerted effort to be made by all. A few NGO’s are nowadays working on this but even they cannot fully cope with it. Unless the wealthier governments, be they oil-rich or developed Eastern countries or affluent Western countries, pay attention to sincerely helping at government level, unrest will persist. If instead of supplying arms and ammunition, the countries, especially the African countries embroiled in conflict, are helped with food that many rich countries have in excess of their needs, unrest will abate. Development plans should be chalked out for these countries. Efforts should be made to extend educational and medical facilities to all remote areas. The rights of the needy and deprived are not limited to food but also include education and opportunities for progress. Otherwise, unrest will spread. Unfortunately, when the donor countries do come to the aid of the poor nations, more than 70% of their approved budget is consumed on the salaries and benefits of their personnel. When aid ultimately trickles down to a poor man, his condition improves only to the extent that he is able to take a gasping breath before death and does not have the energy for any other movement.

I was surprised when I saw that several

governments had installed pumps in Africa to provide water but the pumps no longer worked after a short time and there was nobody to repair them. When our ‘Humanity First’ and the Ahmadi Engineers investigated, they were told that the pumps had been installed by the foreign countries and the local governments did not have the means to rehabilitate them as the cost would be very high. The cost was so high because the workers claimed a lot of personal expenses. However, Humanity First and our engineers were able to rehabilitate them at a very low cost. The pleasure that they got on seeing that clear water flow through the pumps again makes you realise why Allah has exhorted us to take care of the needy and the destitute. Poor people do not have many desires. If their needs are satisfied, it can lead to peace in society.

Then the Holy Qur’an says:

*... You are the best people raised for the good of mankind; you enjoin what is good and forbid evil...*  
(Ch.3:V.111)

This is a major claim made by the Holy Qur’an that obviously means that the deeds done by you should be such as benefit the people. Do not simply be beneficial to yourself, but enjoin others to do what is good and forbid evil. Tell others that it is only the good that lasts forever. Therefore, attend to the due rights of each other. The Holy Qur’an does not say that you are raised for the good of Muslims but says for the good of mankind. The beliefs of the one who believes in God will be real only when he enjoins good, spreads good and forbids evil. If the critics of Islam had acted fairly they should have pointed out to the Muslims who transgress in evil and do not fulfil the requirements of justice that their acts are at variance with the teachings of their holy Book. The actions of those criticising the Founder of Islam and Qur’an clearly indicate that they do not mean to reform things or create an atmosphere of peace but to stir up hatred

instead. Islamic teaching, as indicated in this verse, aims at establishing human values and spread good.

To create an atmosphere of love and peace in international relations, the Holy Qur’an exhorts us:

*O ye who believe, let not one people deride another people, who may be better than they nor let women deride other women who may be better than they...*  
(Ch. 49:V.12)

So that is the basic principle in promoting a relationship between different people and faiths: do not utter anything that is hurtful to others even in a lighter vein; not to speak of using all the media to erect walls of hatred.

I give you one example to illustrate how the Holy Prophet<sup>(saw)</sup> respected the sentiments of others. Once a Jewish person came to the Holy Prophet<sup>(saw)</sup> and complained that Hadhrat Abu Bakr<sup>(ra)</sup> had hurt his feelings. Now see, who was he complaining against? It was against one who was the most dear friend and companion of the Holy Prophet<sup>(saw)</sup> and for whom he had very special sentiments. But when the Jewish person complained, the Holy Prophet<sup>(saw)</sup> kept in view the Qur’anic injunction: *let not a people’s enmity incite you to act otherwise than with justice.* The Holy Prophet<sup>(saw)</sup> asked the Jewish person how Abu Bakr<sup>(ra)</sup> had hurt him. The Jewish person replied that Abu Bakr<sup>(ra)</sup> had said: I swear by Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, whom God has exalted above Moses<sup>(as)</sup>. The Holy Prophet<sup>(saw)</sup> called for Abu Bakr<sup>(ra)</sup> and enquired what the matter was. Abu Bakr<sup>(ra)</sup> stated that the Jewish person had started it by saying that he swore by Moses<sup>(as)</sup> whom God had exalted above the whole world. Upon this, I responded by saying that Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah was made superior. The Holy Prophet<sup>(saw)</sup> told Abu Bakr<sup>(ra)</sup> that he should not have said so and that he should be mindful of the sentiments of others. He said, ‘Do not exalt me above Moses<sup>(as)</sup>,’ despite the fact that God had

given him the title of the *Seal of the Prophets*, as he was the last of the law-bearing Prophets and the Shari'a had been perfected in the Holy Qur'an and it was an integral part of the beliefs of every Muslim. Out of respect for the sentiments of the Jewish person, he told Abu Bakr<sup>(as)</sup> not to declare as such because that had hurt the Jewish person. This incident took place when the Holy Prophet<sup>(saw)</sup> was the ruler of Madinah and had full power and sovereignty over it.

That is the measure of respect we must show for the sentiments of others if we wish to maintain peace in society. How unfortunate it is that in spite of such teaching and example, the Holy Qur'an and the Founder of Islam are being made the target of attacks that not only hurt the sentiments of the Muslims but also destroy peace in society. When the Muslims, especially those who live in the West, react to this provocation, it is said that they lack tolerance and do not want to or cannot integrate with the Western society. Moreover, it is said that, because their teaching puts faith before the country and society, they cannot be loyal to the country. If you see the history of Christianity, Christianity passed through a similar phase when it was alleged that Christians were loyal to their faith but not to their country. However, I would like to tell you what Islam teaches with regard to one's country. Islam teaches that love of one's country is part of one's faith. It is essential for a true Muslim to love his country.

Religion is a personal matter, of course, and the Qur'an makes it absolutely clear that there is no compulsion in religion. As long as that principle is adhered to, peace will be maintained. Islam teaches us that compliance with the law of the land and loyalty to the country are just as essential for every Muslim as compliance with the Shari'a. At the same time, Islam advises lawmakers that there is no compulsion in religion and, therefore, to uphold the civil rights, one should not interfere with someone's religious matters. Any law that

interferes with one's choice of religion or one's method of worship, compromises personal and civil rights and is not accepted anywhere in the developed world today.

Religion says: speak the truth. Islam lays great stress on this teaching. Then Islam says: do not usurp the rights of others; do not steal; do not kill; and, obey the authorities. Islam, in particular, emphasises these things. Do these teachings conflict with the laws of the land? I do not think that you can answer that in the affirmative. In this regard, I express my gratitude to the British Government and its people and most of the European governments and their public, and so does every Ahmadi Muslim, that they protect basic human rights. In the wake of these immoral acts that are happening or that transpired in Denmark and Holland, many common people, like the Danish Christian whose example I have quoted before, and officials from government departments have raised their voice counselling prudence and regard for the feelings of Muslims. That is a display of high morals and is indeed praiseworthy.

If keeping within their civil rights, the Muslims also protest, no one should have any objection. However, a Muslim living in any country has no right to take the law into his own hands and act in such a manner that his loyalty for that state may be discredited. Time does not allow me to elaborate on this subject any further.

In any case, neither the Qur'an nor the practice of the Holy Prophet<sup>(saw)</sup> permits any Muslim to rebel against the country in which he lives. If there is any problem in a personal matter, or in discharging the rights of Allah, or there are restrictions in His worship (the worship of Allah), the Muslim should emigrate.

Today, Ahmadis are prohibited by law from exercising their right of religious freedom in Pakistan. What is their reaction? They have never rebelled. They either endure the hardships, or, if they cannot survive, they

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emigrate. We are grateful to you for having absorbed the Ahmadis amongst you.

Following a long experience, the people and governments of Britain and Europe have established great traditions of religious freedom. Never let that come to an end. The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement congratulated Queen Victoria of Britain on this sense of justice. If you desire the survival of your countries and want peace, then maintain that tradition of freedom of religion and justice forever. Let not the misdeeds of a minority, stop you from abiding by the dictates of justice.

As I have stated earlier, peace is established by caring for the sentiments of one another. Therefore, to ridicule founders of religions and prophets and make mockery of their teachings and scriptures is neither a display of everyday moral values nor is it liked by God: as all prophets were sent by Him and all came with a message of peace.

We pray that God Almighty grants the whole world the ability to understand this principle. As the requirements of justice to establish the rights of common man are being fulfilled in developed countries, they should also be fulfilled at the international level so that love and affection and a peaceful environment prevail in the world. Remember, if the power bestowed on a nation by God is not used properly, the tables can also turn. That is Divine Law and the superpowers must always keep that in view.

In this age, God commissioned one of His servants – Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of



**“MOREOVER, IT IS SAID THAT, BECAUSE THEIR TEACHING PUTS FAITH BEFORE THE COUNTRY AND SOCIETY, THEY CANNOT BE LOYAL TO THE COUNTRY. .... HOWEVER, I WOULD LIKE TO TELL YOU WHAT ISLAM TEACHES WITH REGARD TO ONE'S COUNTRY. ISLAM TEACHES THAT LOVE OF ONE'S COUNTRY IS PART OF ONE'S FAITH. IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR A TRUE MUSLIM TO LOVE HIS COUNTRY.”**

Qadian<sup>(as)</sup> with a message of peace. He was a sincere servant of the Holy Prophet<sup>(saw)</sup> and we believe him to be the Messiah and the Mahdi. In the light of the real teachings of the Holy Qur'an, he outlined the obligations people owe to Allah and the rights of people on each other. If mankind understands this reality, the world will be transformed into a paradise. This is the message of the Promised Messiah that the Ahmadiyya community is spreading to all corners of the world and is achieving success by the Grace of Allah because he has been succeeded by his true successors which is called *Khilafat-i-Ahmadiyya*. Every Ahmadi is attached to the khilafat with loyalty and with love. It is due to this attachment that Ahmadis the world over have become models of real Islamic teachings. Despite the fact that they have absolute love for their country, Ahmadis of 190 countries in the world, have also a relationship of absolute loyalty, sincerity and love for the Founder of Islam.

This is what the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community has inculcated in every Ahmadi and the Ahmadiyya Khilafat has continued to do the same during the last 100 years. That is the message we are trying to convey to the best of our ability to everyone in the world and I hope, God Willing, that the message will go on spreading and the world will turn to its Creator and will become a model of love and peace.

I thank you once again and hope that all those sitting before me, coming from different religions and sects, will extend their helping hands to us in this task for that is extremely essential for the survival of mankind.

*Thank you!*

### OTHER SPEAKERS AT THE PEACE CONFERENCE



Siobhain McDonagh – MP

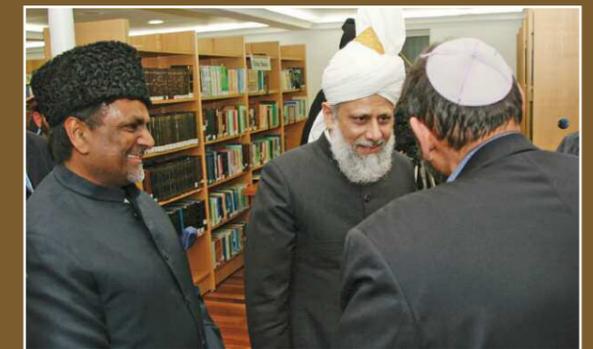
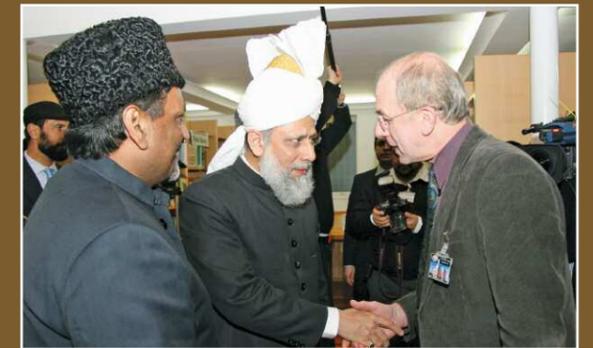


Dominic Grieve – MP

*The MP for Mitcham and Morden, Siobhain McDonagh spoke of the misrepresentation of Islam. She said that it is extraordinary that anyone who knows anything about Islam can associate this faith with the actions of violent Islamic extremists. It is a terrible injustice to Islam as it is a peaceful religion. She mentioned that Islam is a religion based on tolerance and respect and it is a religion that encourages all people to practise their own faiths without hindrance and without threat.*

*This was followed by a speech by Dominic Grieve, MP for Beaconsfield and the Shadow Attorney General. He said that the Ahmadiyya Muslim community, in holding such events on a national scale, is making enormous contribution to our national life. He wished the community well and success in the future.*

## Some of the 500 guests attending the speech by Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V



**LOVE FOR ALL HATRED FOR NONE**



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