

Challenging Intolerance

The 8th Annual Peace Symposium

26th March 2011 • Baitul Futuh Mosque, London

Loyalty

Freedom

Equality

Respect

Peace

Love For All Hatred For None



An Overview of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

The Ahmadiyya Muslim community is a religious organisation, with branches in more than 193 countries. It is the most dynamic denomination of Islam in modern history, with an estimated membership of one hundred and sixty million worldwide.

It was established by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908) in 1889 in a small and remote village called Qadian in Punjab, India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days and the awaited one of the world community of religions (the *Mahdi* and Messiah of the latter days). The community he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam in its pristine purity that promotes peace and universal brotherhood

based on a belief in the Gracious and Ever-Merciful God.

With this conviction, within a century, the Ahmadiyya Muslim community has expanded globally and it endeavours to practice the peaceful teachings of Islam by raising hundreds of thousands of pounds for charities, building schools and hospitals open to all and by encouraging learning through interfaith dialogue.

The UK chapter of the community was established in 1913 and in 1924 it built London's first purpose built mosque (in Putney). It is therefore one of the oldest and most established Muslim organisations in Britain and now has more than 90 branches across Britain.



Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad
(The Promised Messiah & Mahdi)
(peace be upon him)

A Man of Peace

Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad was elected as the fifth Khalifa of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in 2003.

His life has been a reflection of dedication, steadfastness, prayer and success. His bond with God leads him to urge his community never to forget the Almighty and never to despair. His focus on prayer is evident for all to see and the fruits of the success of such prayer bear testament to his faith. His sympathy for mankind drives him and his community to serve humanity in the same spirit that the early Muslims served the poor and the needy. His sense of sacrifice mirrors the spirit of sacrifice integral to Islam. Indeed his very life and mission reflect a pure spirit that is ever wary of its responsibilities and

ever vigilant for the honour of Islam, its Prophet^(saw) and the prophet of the latter days.

"His Holiness eloquently and persistently returns to these themes of peace and tolerance love and understanding among the followers of different faiths..."

...We desperately need the moral leadership and guidance that we can look for to His Holiness to provide..."

(Lord Avebury on Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad)

The community stands at one with the Khalifa in the remembrance of God and service of mankind.



Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad
(Head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim community)

Recognition of the Creator Required for World Peace

Keynote address delivered by His Holiness, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V, Head of the Worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim community (may Allah strengthen his hand) at the Ahmadiyya Muslim community's Peace Symposium held at the Baitul Futuh Mosque on 26th March 2011. The event attracted an audience of more than 1000, including government ministers, MPs, Lords, diplomatic officials representing nine countries and senior members of the army and navy. Faith and civic leaders; professionals including doctors, lawyers, writers and teachers, as well as residents from local communities were all in attendance.

After reciting Tashhahud, Ta'awwudh and Bismillah, Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah strengthen his hand) said:

"All distinguished guests, Assalamo 'Alaikum Wa Rahmatullah – peace and blessings of Allah be upon you.

Today, we are gathered here again after a period of one year in accordance with our now annual tradition. This gathering has now become a permanent fixture in the calendar of the Ahmadiyya community and the majority of people who attend are our dear friends from outside of the community.

This event has just one purpose, which is for us to come and sit together in a friendly environment, to talk about that one goal and shared objective that we hold.

And this shared objective is to promote love, affection, brotherhood and peace.

Even though we are Ahmadi Muslims who organise this Peace Conference, and although we are not liked all that much by some Muslim communities or some other sects of Muslims, we have among our audience quite a number of Muslim friends, who happily attend this function.

Similarly, our Christian friends, Jewish friends, Hindu friends and Sikh friends are in attendance and have been attending this function. Even some atheists come and attend.

Furthermore, people of different countries and nations come to attend this event. I am told that today we have the representation of almost ten countries.

Thus, this gathering is a demonstration that good natured people come together to sustain and develop their human

values, irrespective of religious, cultural, political and national differences and viewpoints, and so prove their humanity.

People come here to try and adopt that shared value through which peace and harmony can be established in the world. In other words, this is a small example of a multicultural and multinational gathering for the same cause.

Although this gathering cannot immediately improve the peace of the world, but nonetheless, by mutually coming together we can enhance the human values within us.

Nowadays, many countries of the world have multicultural societies and are home to various religions. By listening to each other's views and opinions, and by regularly meeting one another, doubts and suspicions are naturally eliminated and it also increases tolerance.

When you become acquainted with others even to a limited degree, then very minor and small matters are not made an issue of, in fact they are ignored.

Further, when we interact with one another, it naturally leads us towards being more openhearted and generous.

The UK is one of those countries that has become home to people of many different nations, cultures and religions of the world. Although in comparison to many larger countries, the UK is relatively small in size, the broadmindedness of its people has made it like a world in itself.

In general, some European countries hold significant reservations regarding the teachings and traditions of Islam. Indeed, some countries have placed certain restrictions on its teachings and traditions, whilst others



are considering how to do so. However, in the United Kingdom this is not the case.

Due to the open-minded and progressive nature of the UK public, there is a positive influence here, which means that whichever political party comes into power, it does not toy with the sentiments of religious followers when discussing religious issues.

It is my prayer that this desire for justice remains their guiding principle.

At the time when the British ruled India, the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community (*peace be upon him*) appreciated the British nation's desire for justice and he repeatedly praised them for this. In particular, he praised the Government for not interfering with the principle of religious liberty. If the Christian Missionaries had full freedom to preach their faith, then so too did the Muslims similarly have full freedom to practise and propagate their religion.

During that period a number of court cases were filed against the Founder of the Ahmadiyya community (*peace be upon him*). The main reason underlying these allegations was the active religious opposition of other sects of Muslims, Christians and Hindus, towards the Founder of our community (*peace be upon him*). These cases were presided over by Christian, British Judges in the Court and some of the cases were filed by Christians themselves. But the British judiciary adopted justice and issued judgements against those people who belonged to their religion.

Thus, under the British Government, every citizen was granted equal rights. It is only through such integrity that peace can be established in a society. I hope and expect that the British nation will continue to hold onto this precious trait and that even in the current world situation they play their role in the same manner.

I have just mentioned that this gathering is a meeting of different nations and its purpose is to try and strive for peace, and to foster love and brotherhood. But we can only strive in our own societies and environments. Tonight the guests here have come from many different segments of society. For instance, some are linked to politics, some with the Government and some have come from diplomatic circles.

Others hail from organisations and groups that are trying to achieve world peace, such as our esteemed friend, Lord Eric Avelby, who is always at the forefront of promoting human rights.

Similarly, we have with us our local MP, Siobhain McDonagh, who is fulfilling the rights of both friendship and justice. I should also mention the Right Honourable Dominic Grieve MP, and Ed Davey MP. They are all helping us in promoting peace as much as we can. Sometimes it becomes very difficult to discharge the rights of friendship, whilst at the same time to discharge justice with justice. But I appreciate all of these friends and political leaders who are discharging both of these duties.

I truly believe that if all our distinguished guests strive for this common objective of peace in their respective circles, then – with the passage of time, they can expand and indeed go further and play a role in establishing peace in the entire world.

In terms of the role of our community, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at, we hold a passionate desire to establish peace and to end cruelty in light of the true Islamic teachings. Unfortunately, however, in practical terms we cannot achieve this because we do not have any power in worldly terms.

We are a relatively small religious community who, for the time being, is not considered significant by the world. Nevertheless, our elevated goals will ultimately lead us to playing a true role for peace, whose foundation is based upon the real teachings of Islam.

The world will come to recognise the name of "Islam" itself as a beacon of peace and security.

Islamic teachings instruct us to help both the oppressor and the oppressed. When the Companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (*peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*) were taught this, they asked him: how could a cruel oppressor be helped?

He responded simply, by saying that you can help him by stopping his hand, which means preventing him from wrongdoing.

The oppressor thinks that through force he can subjugate his opponent, but those who are religious minded believe that God Almighty is the possessor of all powers, and that He will surely punish the cruel.

Thus, the way to help an oppressor is to stop him from his cruelty, and therefore save him from God's Wrath.

Despite the fact that currently our Jama'at does not have the apparent means to stop the cruel from their cruelty, by virtue of which the rights owed to both the oppressor and oppressed would be discharged, we continue to try and stop all forms of cruelty by guiding others to whatever extent possible, by drawing the attention of those in power or through our prayers.

If governments and organisations in power, or indeed international organisations do not fulfil their roles to establish peace in the world, then despite holding power, such powers are ultimately rendered useless.

Now, if we assess and examine the United Nations, then we see that in its history – apart from a few occasions, it has never fulfilled the requirements of justice and therefore has failed to fulfil its role properly.

This is because factors such as materialism, the forming of blocs and alliances, vested interests, personal enmity and grudges, have all proved obstacles to acting with due justice.

And so the United Nations has not been able to establish peace, because it has not displayed true impartiality and fair dealing.

As I have said, even the majority of us who are seated here today, cannot bring peace to the world because we have neither the power nor the resources to do so.

Despite this, we are not disheartened by the current state of affairs in the world.

At every level we try our utmost and will always continue to do so. If in small areas we can influence others to desire and work for justice, then we will never miss such an opportunity.

That is why we hold this Peace Symposium each year, and why in general terms whenever the opportunity arises, we call for peace in society.

Therefore, one day even people in large areas will come to desire justice, because the basic lesson that the Founder of the Ahmadiyya community (*peace be upon him*), has given us is that peace cannot be established without justice.

And justice cannot be established without forming a relationship with the Higher Being. A relationship with the Creator of this world is a prerequisite for justice.

God Almighty has granted us countless blessings of all kinds. And He has taught us that, apart from establishing a relationship with Him, the most important duty is to fulfil the rights due to our fellow men and women.

Indeed, the Founder of the Ahmadiyya community (*peace be upon him*) has instructed us that in certain circumstances, the rights owed to mankind are even more important than those owed to God. We find many examples of this in the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (*peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*), where the rights owed to mankind were fulfilled before the rights owed to God; for example, obligatory prayers (worship) were offered at a later time and the service to humankind was given preference.

We Ahmadis believe that in this era, the Founder of the Ahmadiyya community (*peace be upon him*), who we believe is the Promised Messiah and Mahdi, has been sent by Allah the Almighty to re-establish the true teachings of Islam. He has written in one of his books:

'The task for which God has appointed me is that I should remove the malaise that afflicts the relationship between God and His creatures and restore the relationship of love and sincerity between them. Through the proclamation of truth and by putting an end to religious conflicts, I should bring about peace and manifest the Divine verities that have become hidden from the eyes of the world.¹

Thus, if mankind grasps this principle that it needs to develop a loving relationship with God, and if you understand that God is He who loves His creation, then man will naturally develop love for others without concern for his own vested interests.

Another extremely wise exhortation made by him is that by manifesting the truth, religious wars will come to an end.

Indeed, not only will religious wars come to an end, but in fact, the foundation for peace and reconciliation will be laid.

Although in the world we find that there are some efforts made towards peace and reconciliation, yet certain grievances continue to simmer.

As a result, the grievances that are removed or the peace that is established is not based on honesty.

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It may seem as though the two major blocs that existed in the world in the past have broken up, but in reality they never broke up, but instead became dormant....

.... In the current emerging political and economic landscape of the world we find that, once again, these blocs are very clearly shaping into formation....

... In reality, a major factor underlying the political circumstances of these countries is the current international economic situation, which is pulling us towards another world war.

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The real foundation for peace is honesty which emanates from the heart.

Although we observe that in today's world religious wars do not really occur, yet vindictiveness and ill-will are meted out against each other.

As I mentioned earlier, one unfortunate consequence of this weaponless war is transpiring in some countries, where certain completely harmless religious practices and traditions of Muslims are being restricted or prohibited.

It is then claimed that these measures have no connection to religion but are necessary restrictions to assist Muslims to integrate into the local society.

Anyway, this is a lengthy debate which I do not wish to enter at this time.

In response to these measures however, some Muslims indulge in activities that are completely against the teachings of Islam. So on both sides honesty is not being displayed.

Mutual love is developed though exhibiting honesty. And honesty entails that there is no difference between what is in your heart and the way you act to the outside world. A person should not give a false account of himself.

Such high standards of truth are not usually found at either a national or international level.

For example, observe how in certain countries of the world today there is domestic, political turmoil. The people have stood up against their government leaders and rulers. We find examples of this in certain Arab, Gulf,

North African and even West African countries, where we see internal discord and strife.

This could be a threat to international peace and security and that is why the wider world is very concerned. International organisations are putting pressure on governments to fulfil the rights of the public and to stop the rulers from oppressing their people in order to sustain human values.

But a real expression of integrity requires that if you wish to help the people of a country in order to save them from the oppression of their rulers, and you wish to save the world from major disorder, then it is necessary that the public too should be advised that they should not partake in violent disorder, or proceed with acts that will damage the nation's economy.

Once peace is established then it should be maintained by following this principle.

However, true virtue and honesty is not shown. This is why there may be two different countries facing exactly the same circumstances, but in one instance, the international community supports the government, and in the other instance they are firing missiles on the government forces, on the pretext of liberating the people.

A few days ago, a BBC journalist interviewed a White House representative about the current state of affairs in the world.

The journalist posed the question that he could not understand why the US was taking such a different approach to Libya in comparison to Bahrain, Yemen and other countries.



The spokesperson had no clear or proper answer to this question.

Now both you and I are well aware of the fact that vested interests are given preference to honesty and justice, time and time again. The powerful countries of the world desire to maintain easy access to the wealth and resources of certain countries, and wish to avoid competing countries from having complete access to these same resources. That is why decisions are made on the pretext of helping the people, or on the pretext of establishing world peace.

It may seem as though the two major blocs that existed in the world in the past have broken up, but in reality they never broke up, but instead became dormant.

In the current emerging political and economic landscape of the world we find that, once again, these blocs are very clearly shaping into formation.

In reality, a major factor underlying the political circumstances of these countries is the current international economic situation, which is pulling us towards another world war.

If truth was really being displayed then these countries would derive benefit from each other in a just way, by forming proper industrial and economic ties based on fair dealing.

They should not try to derive illegitimate benefit from the resources of one another, but instead should seek to come together and mutually assist one another.

The Holy Qur'an teaches us about the wealth of other countries or others, in verse 132 of Chapter 20, where it states:

And strain not thy eyes after what We have bestowed on some classes of them to enjoy for a short time – the splendour of the present world – that We may try them thereby. And the provision of thy Lord is better and more lasting.

This commandment is given because restlessness within a country, and jealousy and enmity between countries is created mainly as a result of the wealth and resources of each other. Due to this greed quarrels break out which can have grave consequences.

One of the biggest causes of the past world wars was such envy.

So, in an effort to avoid such acrimony the commandment is given that those with less resources should not cast their eyes jealously towards the resources of others, and similarly it is commanded that those with plentiful resources should look after those in need and less well off.

Nations have been taught to follow the principle that they should derive benefit from the resources of others, in a legitimate manner.

Anyway, this topic is such that it cannot be covered fully in a limited time.

In short, the disorder taking place these days in the world, whether on a national or international scale, is based upon just one factor – and that is a complete lack of justice, which is causing anxiety and restlessness to develop.

The question arises that how can the present situation in the world be resolved? I have given the answer to this earlier when quoting the writings of the Founder of the Ahmadiyya community (*peace be upon him*), in which he advised us to establish a relationship with God and exhibit the truth.

It is with great regret that I have to say that, leaving aside the materialistic people, some of those who claim to follow religion, and in fact those who claim to represent Islam, are actually spreading religious fanaticism.

However, in spite of this, it does not follow that having a relationship with God is not the solution.

The Ahmadiyya community claims, and indeed those who are closely associated with us are witness to this, that not only do we raise a slogan for peace, but in fact, we make practical efforts to establish tolerance, peace and patience, so that the true teachings of Islam are correctly followed and so that attaining God's pleasure is given precedence.

Whenever our community is caused emotional suffering or pain we exhibit patience and tolerance. When we are deprived of our due rights as citizens, we display patience and tolerance. When financial harm is purposely inflicted upon us, we display patience and tolerance. When our properties and possessions are looted or destroyed, we display patience and tolerance. Even when our lives are taken, we display patience and tolerance.

In Pakistan we are forbidden from practising our religion, but despite this we do not create any disorder.

In May last year 86 Ahmadi Muslims were martyred whilst offering their Friday prayers. We bore this tragedy with patience.

In Indonesia, our Ahmadis were recently martyred in the most barbaric and cruel manner. We did not respond violently nor did we conduct any covert attacks.

Nevertheless, the Ahmadis living in Pakistan, Indonesia and in other countries are still citizens of those countries.

The Ahmadis are also from among the same local people and groups. Those Ahmadis are from the same societies where all of this terrorism is taking place.

If not openly, then secretly some of our members could have carried out undesirable or unpleasant activities.

But we have never displayed a harsh reaction or wrong response of any kind, because we have been taught to adopt patience and tolerance.

We have always implemented the teaching of Islam that you should never take the law into your own hands, and always keep the best interests of your country in view and never create disorder, because this is a requirement of true love for your country.

Wherever in the world Ahmadis reside, no matter which country they originate from, be they Asian or African, Arab, European or American, their behaviour is always the same.

For the sake of attaining Allah's Pleasure they always steer clear of all forms of disorder. And this is the conduct that one day will not only save the world from anarchy, in fact it will be the guarantor for world peace.

Today, the world is in desperate need that it should adopt this attitude at every level, of recognising its Creator and fulfilling the rights due to His Creation.

The people of the world should not only be concerned for their own rights, but should also look at their own obligations and be concerned for the welfare of others.

This principle should apply at an individual level, a national level and an international level. It should be adopted by national leaders and should also be observed by the major nations of the world.

Without this any effort that takes place will only have a temporary effect, and will not guarantee permanent peace.

It is my prayer that the desire both you and I hold for peace to be established in the world, is soon achieved.

At the end, I would like to once again thank all of you from the bottom of my heart for having enlightened this evening and for listening to my words.

Thank you."

¹ (*Lecture Lahore, Ruhani Khaza'in*, vol.20, p.180)

Extracts of other speeches delivered at the 2011 Peace Symposium

The event was attended by many distinguished guests including Paul Burstow MP (Sutton and Cheam), Minister of State for Care Services, Stephen Hammond MP (Wimbledon), Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Govt, Jane Ellison MP (Battersea), Matthew Offord MP (Hendon), Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon, Rt. Rev Bishop Paul Hendricks, the Auxiliary Bishop of Southwark, HE Mr Miguel Angel Solano Lopez, the Ambassador of Paraguay, Mr Tamba M Ngegba, the Deputy High Commissioner of Sierra Leone, Mr Nezir Karabas MP, Member of the Turkish Parliament and diplomats from Iran, Russia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Indonesia, Sudan, Uganda and Zambia. A few dignitaries also had the opportunity to speak and extracts of their speeches are given below.

Rafiq Hayat – National President, Ahmadiyya Muslim Association UK

We are today living in a multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-racial society. To live in harmony and peace and friendship it is important that we understand each other's beliefs and traditions, which have great impact on human sensitivities and emotions.

Islam encourages inter-faith dialogue and advocates peace, tolerance love and understanding amongst the followers of different faiths. The Promised Messiah (*peace be upon him*), the founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community declared more than 100 years ago that irrespective of whether you are Muslims or non-Muslims and although we have many differences we believe in one God Who has created this world and all that's contained in it.

We also claim commonality as human beings and we live in one country as neighbours. It is our duty that we should become friends and have a clear conscience and honest intentions. We should sympathise with each other on all matters temporal or religious. A human being is not human unless he displays some element of sympathy. Our God has made no distinction in any nation. Narrow-mindedness or hard-heartedness has no place in human relations.

The ethos of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is summed up in our motto 'Love for all, hatred for none'. It is our firm belief that we must work together for greater cause of peace, putting aside our minor differences. I'm sure that we can achieve unity without disarray, diversity without division and be one world community without hatred, oppression, poverty and war.



Siobhain McDonagh MP (Mitcham and Morden) and Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

Let me say how pleased I am to be speaking here today and that it's a particular honour to be in the presence of His Holiness Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, *Assalamo alaikum*.

It may surprise you to hear this but in my world, the political world, tolerance is a very debatable concept. Politically speaking there are always limits to tolerance, immigration is a classic example. Time and time again surveys show that the UK is actually a very tolerant community in comparison to others, we are happy to live in areas with other racial, ethnic or faith groups and we have more tolerant views to Muslims than many other countries, but when it comes to immigration we are less welcoming. Tolerance is conditional. The British believe that immigrants need to earn the right to stay and that immigrants should be made to learn English thus the subject of immigration if you like manifests a reoccurring issue with the concept of tolerance. Should there be any limits? There are no easy answers.

On the one hand the argument is straightforward; tolerance is about allowing diversity and difference to exist. It is about



Diversity and difference should be considered as strengths in a society not a weakness. People should be allowed freedom of expression, freedom of speech and freedom to practice their faith in any way they chose but it must be their choice. These values are as integral to the concept of tolerance as they are to a democratic society and I know these values are integral to the teachings of Islam

Siobhain McDonagh MP

recognising that others are equal and that we need to treat them with dignity and respect as we would expect to be treated. Everything I have learnt about your faith tells me that this is what Islam is about. The Qur'an emphasises the importance of tolerance and forgiveness, 'and let not a people's enmity incite you to act otherwise than with justice. Be always just, that is nearer to righteousness' Chapter 5, verse 9.

Tolerance like the teaching of Islam is about diversity, unity, peace and harmony and of course I hope that I share those values with you and your faith. I believe that tolerance is based on the rights of life, dignity, equality and justice. I believe that tolerance is about allowing people to have freedom of expression, freedom of speech and freedom to practice their religion without hindrance and without threats. So from this perspective I believe that tolerance has no limit but it's a tricky concept because tolerance is about giving people a choice and not coercing them.

That is why the issue of Muslim women wearing or not wearing the burka or niqab is so fascinating to me. In France the political choice has been to ban women from wearing the veil or niqab in public institutions including schools, but in Saudi Arabia and Iran strict Islamic codes on clothes and other areas of life are enforced in both the public and the private sphere. We condemn countries like Iran for controlling what women wear but we do not complain too much about the path taken by France. I have to admit I'm not entirely comfortable when I come face to face with a woman who's wearing a niqab, after all why would she have to take responsibility for men who are unable to control themselves? But truthfully I am equally uncomfortable when I come face to face with a woman who has very little on or leaves very little to the imagination. There is perhaps a balance to be struck with modesty but most important we have to ask, is this a choice that a woman has made for herself? I have met women who have chosen to wear the veil or niqab because they feel it brings them closer to their faith and I am comfortable with that but equally I have met women who tell me in private that wearing the burka or niqab allows them more freedom outside the home and if they were forced not to wear it they would be restricted to their homes by their community or by the men in their households. I am not comfortable with that, so in these instances I believe tolerance of others practices must have limits. Tolerance should be about giving people a choice and not forcing them to comply.

The argument is further complicated by the fact that intolerance, that is the lack of recognition of difference, the lack of equality of treatment, the lack of respect of rights and sanctity and dignity comes in many guises, so we cannot ignore the fact that girls and women still constitute a large majority of the world's educationally excluded. That poverty, exclusion and discrimination are still experienced disproportionately by women all over the world. The youth in countries such as Egypt and Libya are being ruthlessly suppressed by governments who will not stand for opposition or dissent of any kind. That girls as young as age three are being sexualised and being forced to wear the hijab outside their homes for me, in all of these situations, rights are being ignored, choices are being limited and people are being coerced.

Challenging intolerance will not be easy, not only because it is disguised in many forms but also because the opposing concepts, tolerance and equality of treatment, do not just happen. It is easier to resist difference than to accommodate it. It is easier to mistrust than to trust. Diversity and difference should be considered as strengths in a society not a weakness. People should be allowed freedom of expression, freedom of speech and freedom to practice their faith in any way they chose but it must be their choice. These values are as integral to the concept of tolerance as they are to a democratic society and I know these values are integral to the teachings of Islam.

So we must work in practice to fight intolerance wherever we see it, in whatever guise, in order to achieve the social justice that we aspire to. As Islam and other faiths teach us, you cannot find peace with God unless you are at peace with other human beings. Love for all, hatred for none. Thank you once again for inviting me back and giving me the opportunity to speak.

Lord Avebury – Vice-Chair of the Parliamentary Human Rights Group

Your Holiness, your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen Assalamo alaikum. I'm delighted to be here and to recognise amongst others, the enormous contribution that Mr Edhi has made to reducing suffering all over the world. I was a guest at one of his centres in Karachi when I first went there, I think it was in the early 90's, and I saw the wonderful work that he's done with the underprivileged. Looking at Karachi today I'm sorry to say that intolerance there leads to many instances of violence and murder and I should imagine the task confronting the Edhi Foundation must have grown enormously as deprivation has grown and that the same thing is true of Pakistan as a whole.



But if you look over the whole world you see that intolerance is at the root of internal conflicts, many of them large enough to engage the attentions of the United Nations. In Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cote d'Ivoire for instance, there are differences between clans. In North Africa and the Middle East there are complicated patterns of discrimination which have finally boiled over into revolutions against rulers who thought they could avoid the tide of history. Perhaps it was partially because the International community failed to challenge intolerance in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen and Bahrain that serious unrest has erupted throughout the whole of that region and where rulers have promised reforms, as they did in Yemen and Bahrain in response to huge demonstrations, the people no longer have any faith in the promises that they make.

What this teaches us is that existing UN mechanisms need reform in the direction of more robust ways of pursuing the more grievous violation of human rights that are uncovered by the UN's universal periodic review. And what I'm absolutely certain of is the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community could play a key role in that process and in discussing the ways in which the UN could move forward.

Ed Davey MP (Kingston and Surbiton) and Minister for Employment Relations

Your Holiness, ladies and gentlemen assalamo alaikum. Can I pay tribute to the Ahmadi community for the way it has shown great leadership across the world in championing the cause of peace, through peace symposiums and the teachings of your community.



Challenging intolerance is about challenging intolerance in the hearts and minds of men and women across the world and religious teachings are in many ways best placed to challenge that intolerance. Your motto 'Love for all, hatred for none' is inspiring to many. As a Christian the teaching I take 'Love thy neighbour as thyself' I believe reflects the underlying morality in your teachings.

When we think of challenging intolerance at home and abroad we know we have a struggle. Abroad we do see conflict and diversity between peoples. We often reach for standards and guiding stars to try to help us tackle these different diversities and these divisions. I as a Liberal Democrat often think about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a key guiding star to how we should approach these different issues. Sometime we hear that cultural relativism, the differences between different cultures and religions means that these types of high notions are not acceptable but I believe we should challenge that and I believe that if we applied those sorts of ideas we would see your community, whether it's in Indonesia or Pakistan or elsewhere not suffering the intolerance that it sees and I think we wouldn't see the Christian community in a number of countries, for example Iran, seeing the intolerance that it suffers. So I think internationally we have to struggle to get the right guiding stars and the right guiding moral principles.

At home, yes I believe we are a tolerant nation but we all know that there is intolerance here in our society in Britain too. From the playground and bullying to the workplace and harassment, we see intolerance sometimes in our ordinary lives. In a political sphere we see it in the far right and we do also see it in the attitude to immigrants and asylum seekers as Siobhain spoke so eloquently about and I know your community also suffers intolerance because I think even within the religions here in Britain we see different types of different parts of the same religion being intolerant to each other and we need at least to face up to that and make sure that governments and community leaders are prepared to speak out on that.

Maqsood Ahmed OBE, Senior Faith Advisor, Department for Communities and Local Government

Your Holiness Hudhur, my Lords, Ladies, Member of Parliament, Ministers, my friends, brothers and sisters assalamo alaikum. Normally this stage is left for the ministers and the VIP but I've been charged to deliver a message from Andrew Stunell MP [Minister for Communities] and I quote:

'Your Holiness, I'm grateful for your kind invitation to the peace symposium. Due to the heavy diary and constituency commitment in this month I'm afraid neither Grant Shapps nor I will be able to participate on this occasion. The government welcomes the values and contribution faith communities make in the United Kingdom, including the Ahmadiyya Muslim Communities.

I commend the work of Ahmadiyya Muslim Association UK and its commitment to working with the people of all faith and no faith, promoting tolerance and respect and for its support for charities.'

Hudhur, you have many friends within the government and within the opposition including many of us humble civil servants. We are determined to deal with any incident when minorities within the Muslim community are persecuted or demonised. Our message is that the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has taken a lead and been a role model in civic participation in our society and we value very much and the work of Siobhain, and her work on the [Ahmadiyya] Parliamentary group. The prejudice and bigotry of certain communities needs to be challenged and all communities need to be respected [on the basis of] self-definition regarding what they want to call themselves and how they want to practice.

We fully endorse the work of your charity, particularly the fact that you and your Jama'at is not asking for funding [rather] you are reciprocating to the local society. Thank you very much for inviting me sir.



Rt Hon Dominic Grieve QC MP, The Attorney General

Good evening and Assalamo alaikum. Your Holiness, ladies and gentlemen, it's a great pleasure once again to be present at one of your peace symposiums, something that I've enjoyed attending on a number of years in the past.

When we come to consider the issue of tolerance we have to recognise that the last year, as we look round the world, has provided many example of intolerance. Intolerance affecting the Ahmadiyya Community, intolerance affecting Christians in Pakistan and in other places in the Middle East, examples of inhumane behaviour by one group against another or by the state against their own citizens. It's a constant challenge and indeed as we look at the Middle East at the moment from one end to the other, one can see waves of protest as people demand individual rights and defy the state which they see suppressing them.

How can we from this country influence the outcomes of those debates so as to emphasise the rights of the individuals, their human rights and their civic rights and also avoid the descent into chaos that can so often be attendant when violence breaks out? It's a great challenge for us in the country and of course although we may enjoy priding ourselves on our own tolerance, the simple fact of the matter is that we only got where we are today through a lot of polemical argument and indeed if one looks back over a 500 year period, persecution, outbreaks of violence and often I suspect the requirement of individuals to exercise a great deal of forbearance in the face of things that they disliked in other people. But we did come through it and there is not doubt that it has coloured this country and its ethical principles very much, helped create the society in which we live today.

I often think that when we're talking about tolerance there's sometimes a slight danger that we end up, and this seems to be a worldwide phenomenon, on talking about tolerance between groups. Ultimately that cannot be the foundation of tolerance because tolerance is about the rights of the individual; the rights of an individual to manifest their faith whether as has been suggested by wearing a niqab or not wearing a niqab according to choice, the right of a person to change their faith if they wish to even in defiance of the group or family from which they come, the right of people to



exercise their own consciousness and have a direct relationship with their own maker in terms of how they wish to manifest the faith or none at all. That I think is actually one of the key underpinnings of the tolerance that we have striven for and actually enjoy in this country.

It's not, unfortunately, the model of tolerance that is often described elsewhere. And here therefore your holiness is our great opportunity because the fact that Britain has diversified so much in the last decades, that people have come here of different faiths from every corner of the planet and the fact that we all live together and strive together to achieve good works does provide us with a most remarkable opportunity to spread the distinctive brand of tolerance that brings us together and emphasise it on a worldwide basis as a model which far from creating chaos actually is the foundation on which respect, love between individuals, can be based and with it of course the bringing of people together for the common good.



Top & left: Addressing the audience of 1000 guests including politicians, mayors and members from various local and faith communities.



Private audience with senior army and navy officers who attended the function.

The 2010 Ahmadiyya Muslim Prize for the Advancement of Peace

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Prize for the Advancement of Peace is an international award that was launched in 2009. It is an award in recognition of an individual or an organisation's contribution to the advancement of the cause of peace. On the occasion of the community's annual convention in July 2010, Mr Abdul Sattar Edhi of Pakistan was announced as the winner of the 2010 prize.

Mr Edhi founded an amazing organisation that started by dispensing free medicine and then went on to develop a maternity home and emergency service, initially to serve Karachi but then to the whole of Pakistan and other countries. His wife, Mrs Bilquis Edhi is equally devoted to this work and through their joint vision the organisation has flourished and saved hundreds of thousands of lives.

A simple humble man to this day, despite being nearly 83 years of age, Mr Edhi has a youthful spirit of sacrifice that drives him to serve humanity every single day. His organisation has a fleet of 1,800 ambulances, 335 welfare centres, 28 marine rescue ambulances, shelter homes providing refuge for 7,500 people, animal shelters and free food kitchens in 20 cities, immunisation centres and adoption centres and it also has a well established international organisation having served in Pakistan, Russia, Lebanon, Bangladesh, Egypt, Bosnia and the United States.

The Edhi Foundation is a shining example of a success through sacrifice and determination for the love of God and service to humanity. True to his life long service and due to the demands on his time for humanitarian work, Mr Edhi was in Japan and unable to attend the event but sent a message to the conference and the award was received on his behalf by Tariq Awan, Head of the European Section of the Edhi Foundation.



Video Message from Abdul Sattar Edhi

I am extremely pleased that for the sake of humanity the [Ahmadiyya Muslim] community has considered me worthy of being given this award.

I am happy that for the sake of humanity someone makes a bond with me. I do not believe in any differences. My work is not a mere past-time or hobby, but it is about humanity.

Humanity is the most important religion. When a person becomes a true human being, then no other relationships matter except for the relationship between man and God.

So many people come here [for help], I do not ask them what their religion is, [rather] I consider that this person is a human being.

Secondly, people who kill newborn babies, I constantly appeal to those parents not to do so, they too are human beings and they have a soul. [Instead] leave those children at our centres as there are countless people who are anxious as they are childless.

Today the best thing for peace is humanity and for the sake of humanity, love mankind and try to spread this message.

I am grateful to the Ahmadiyya Jama'at for giving me this award for the sake of humanity. This award will *Inshallah* (God willing) be used for the sake of humanity.

When I am working for humanity I feel happy that I am pleasing God. This step that you have taken is to please Allah. The work you and your Jama'at is doing for humanity I pray that may Allah grant you success in it

Thank you



Tariq Awan – Head of the European Section of the Edhi Foundation

Thank you very much. Honourable Leader of Jama'at Ahmadiyya Muslim, Mirza Masroor Ahmad sahib, Members of Parliament and House of Lords, Excellencies, Mayoral consuls, community leaders, media and distinguished guests, *Assalamo alaikum*.

On behalf of the Edhi Foundation I would like to thank you for nominating Maulana Abdul Sattar Edhi for the Peace Prize 2010.

While I receive the peace award for Edhi sahib he is processing the aid for the support for the victims of the tsunami in Japan. He continues to spread the message of peace and protect those who are vulnerable. I will take this opportunity to appreciate the efforts of all those in national and international organisations, personalities who always protect the rights of the weakest. From healthcare to building homes for orphans and from social to educational, Edhi sahib inspired the communities across ethnic religions and national divides.

His tireless efforts to reach the entire world community makes him one of the most effective human beings in the field of philanthropy. I believe he is the perfect model for every citizen of the world.

Once again let me thank you all, especially honourable leader of Jama'at Ahmadiyya Muslim, Mirza Masroor Ahmad sahib. Wishing you a very good evening, thank you.



Loyalty

Freedom

Equality

Respect

Peace



www.LoveForAllHatredForNone.org

Ahmadiyya Muslim Association UK

The London Mosque
16 Gressenhall Road
London SW18 5QL

Tel: 020 8874 5836

Fax: 020 8874 4779

www.ahmadiyya.org.uk
www.alislam.org • www.mta.tv

Email: ExternalAffairs@ahmadiyya.org.uk