The National Peace Symposium on
Khilafat, Peace and Justice
The Difference Between True Islam and Extremist Groups
An Overview of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

The Ahmadiyya Muslim community is a religious organisation, with branches in more than 200 countries. It is the most dynamic denomination of Islam in modern history, with an estimated membership in the tens of millions worldwide.

It was established in 1889 by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908) 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 every year 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 Southfields). It is, therefore, one of the oldest and most established Muslim organisations in Britain and now has more than 105 branches across Britain.

The Khalifa of Islam: A Man of Peace

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad

His Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad was elected as the fifth Khalifa of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in 2003.

His Holiness inspires his community to serve humanity with the spirit of kindness and humility that is integral to Islam. In accordance with the teachings of Islam he upholds the honour of all prophets of God and highlights the role of religion in the promotion of peace.

His Holiness has delivered addresses at the House of Commons, Capitol Hill and the European Parliament and also written to world leaders urging them to inculcate a true sense of justice and peace in international relations to avoid regional conflicts from engulfing the entire world.

“...it is the duty of all powers to fulfil the requirements of justice and to unite together. All parties need to increase dialogue and open the lines of communication so that they can peacefully discuss the best means to solve the problems of the world. These steps are necessary so that global peace can be established. It is my prayer that Allah grants the people of the world the ability to do this.”

(National Peace Symposium 2013)
On 8th November 2014, the Worldwide Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, the Fifth Khalifa, His Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, delivered the keynote address at the 11th National Peace Symposium.

During his address, His Holiness categorically condemned the activities of ISIS and other extremists groups as “entirely un-Islamic” and said they were “viciously spreading a network of terror” in the world. Quoting extensively from the Holy Qur’an, His Holiness proved that Islam was a religion of peace that promoted tolerance, mutual respect and understanding at all levels of society. His Holiness also questioned how extremist groups such as ISIS were funded and supported. The event was held at the Baitul Futuh Mosque in London in front of an audience of more than 1000 guests comprising Government Ministers, Ambassadors of State, Members of both Houses of Parliament and various other dignitaries and guests. The theme of this year’s Peace Symposium was “Khilafat, Peace & Justice”. During the event, His Holiness also presented Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow, CEO of Mary’s Meals UK, with the Ahmadiyya Muslim Prize for the Advancement of Peace in recognition for his outstanding efforts to provide food and education to children in the developing world. Prior to the keynote address several dignitaries delivered brief remarks including Rafiq Hayat, National President of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community UK, Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister for Communities, Siobhain McDonagh, MP and Chair of the “All Party Parliamentary Group for the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community”, Rt. Hon. Ed Davey, MP, Secretary of State for Energy & Climate Change, Rt. Hon. Justine Greening, MP, Secretary of State for International Development and Most Reverend Kevin McDonald, Archbishop Emeritus of Southwark, who also read a special message from the Vatican.
After reciting Tashahhud, Ta’awwuz and Bismillah, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih Vaba said:

“All distinguished guests, Assalamo Alaikum Wa Rahmtullahe WaBarakatohu – peace and blessings of Allah be upon you all.

I would like to first of all take this opportunity to thank all of you who have come to attend this year’s Peace Symposium. As most of you are aware, this symposium has been taking place annually for the past decade and has become a permanent fixture in the calendar of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. Normally we hold this event in March, but for various reasons, this year it was delayed until November. Tonight there is also a national Remembrance Day function taking place, because of which some people whom we invited may not have been able to attend.

Nonetheless, I am very grateful to all of you who have come. Your participation certainly proves that you wish to hear about peace from the standpoint of a particular Muslim sect, because in today’s world there is so much said about world peace and the conflicts that have arisen across the globe.

Certainly, the current state of affairs has become a cause of fear and anxiety for much of the world. Whilst it is a cause of great regret, I have no hesitation in admitting that much of the disorder that we see in the world today is occurring due to the acts of certain so-called Muslims. For any peaceful Muslim, who understands his faith, this is a cause of great sorrow and despair. Over the past year, one particular group has viciously spread its network of terror and has become a cause of major concern for the world. I am speaking of the group of extremists commonly known as ISIS or IS.

The actions of this terrorist group are not only impacting Muslim countries, but also countries in Europe and further afield are being affected by its brutalities. We see a disturbing number of Muslim youths from Europe and other parts of the world, who have somehow come to believe that ISIS represents a true picture of Islam and support their ideology. For these reasons they have resolved to help and to even fight for them.

From here in the UK it is said that around 500 people, mostly young Muslims, have already travelled to Syria and Iraq to fight for ISIS, in a war that the terrorist group falsely claims is being fought
in the name of Islam. If we look at the numbers of Muslims in Europe who have travelled for this so-called Jihad then we observe that the proportion of Muslims going from the UK to Iraq and Syria is higher than the numbers who are travelling from Germany or most other European countries.

This is extremely alarming and a cause of major concern for the United Kingdom because the agenda and objectives of ISIS and their so-called Khalifa are utterly horrific and barbaric.

It is said that their Khalifa says he wants to take ‘revenge’ from the world and to conquer territories and nations. He says he wants to make the Muslims the masters of the entire world and to reduce all non-Muslims to slavery or to being the ‘property’ of Muslims. He says that punitive action should be taken against every person who offends a Muslim in any way and that Shariah Law should apply to every single person in every single land.

He desires to take away the rights of women belonging to other religions or sects; to suppress them and turn them into concubines or force them to become their wives. ISIS seeks to destroy every religion or sect that differs from its beliefs and wishes to remove current Muslim governments and seize power from them. Thus, if this is all true then their strategy and vision is far-reaching and their basic aim is to destroy the peace of the world.

It is quite absurd to suggest that ISIS or any other extremist group will ultimately ever be successful in taking over the world, because it is quite clear that their plans are completely senseless and based on wishful thinking, rather than reality. Nonetheless, if they are not stopped in their tracks then they could cause a great deal of damage and destruction before they die their own death.

We have witnessed in so many incidents the terror and devastation that even single individuals, without any backing or support, are able to cause. For example, every few months there are reports of another school-shooting tragedy in the United States where dozens of innocent children are killed due to the heinous acts of one lone individual.

Thus, consider just how much suffering and ruin can be caused by a terrorist group, which is gathering together frustrated and restless people from all parts of the world who are ready to give their lives for this unjust cause.

This is especially true given the fact that this group does not just have willing individuals, but is also heavily armed with sophisticated weapons systems and artillery. Indeed, it is not out of the question that they could eventually lay their hands on nuclear weapons. As I said these deranged groups will not attain permanent or long-lasting success but in the short-term it is quite possible that they could conquer certain regions and cause huge destruction. When all of this is considered there is no doubting the horrific threat to the world posed by ISIS and any of the groups that have similar ideologies.

The fact that all of this is being done in the name of Islam sincerely grieves and pains all true and peace loving Muslims because such brutal and inhumane ideologies have nothing to do with the religion whatsoever. Rather, in every way, and at every level, Islam’s real teachings are of peace and security for all people. If we look at the Holy Qur’an and also the life and character of the Prophet of Islam, the Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, it becomes clear that the early Muslims never initiated any war or violence. If ever the Muslims took part in a war it was purely defensive and their only objective was to stop the oppressors from their cruelty and never to assert their own superiority or to resort to injustice. They never sought to occupy lands or nations or to subjugate the people.

The life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ bears witness to the fact that during the early years of his prophethood in his hometown of Makkah, he only ever sought to spread Islam’s teachings through love and affection. However, the Makkans people not only rejected him but they treated him in the most cruel and merciless manner. He and his followers were brutally persecuted to the extent that, under divine command, the Holy Prophet ﷺ had to leave Makkah and migrate to the city of Madinah. However, even after migration, the Makkans did not leave the Muslims alone, but instead travelled with a fully-
equipped army and waged war against the Muslims. It was then that for the first time, on the command of Allah, the Muslims were given permission to fight to defend themselves.

The reason permission was granted is clearly stated in chapter 22, verses 40-41 of the Qur’an where Allah says that permission for a defensive war was granted because if the Muslims did not defend themselves, then the peace of the entire world would be at risk. The opponents did not just wish to eliminate Islam, but in fact wanted to eliminate all forms of religion from the world. Therefore the Qur’an states that if permission was not granted then no church, synagogue, temple, mosque or any other place of worship would remain safe. Hence, the Muslims were permitted to fight back not only to save Islam but to save religion itself on the basis of the aforementioned verse.

In light of this, you can understand for yourself how utterly wrong the so-called Muslims of today are when they claim that it is permissible to kill non-Muslims; seize their lands or to enslave them. The reality is that Islam is that religion which has guaranteed the right of every individual to live with liberty and freedom. And Islam is that religion which has guaranteed the right of every individual to live in peace and harmony, regardless of their faith or background.

I mentioned earlier how the Holy Prophet™ migrated to Madinah along with his followers and the manner in which the Muslims absorbed themselves into the local society was a perfect model of how to immigrate and integrate into a new society. Before the Muslims arrived there were two main groups who lived in the city of Madinah – the Jews and the Arabs. Upon the arrival of the Muslims there became three groups – the Muslims, the Jews and the non-Muslim Arabs. The Holy Prophet™ immediately stated that it was essential that they all lived together in peace and harmony and so he proposed a covenant of peace between them. According to the terms of this treaty each group and each tribe was given their due rights. The lives and wealth of all parties was guaranteed and any pre-existing inter-tribal customs were also respected. It was also agreed that if any person came from Makkah with the intention of causing harm or mischief he would not be provided sanctuary by anyone in Madinah and nor would they enter into any pact with them. Further, if a common enemy attacked Madinah all three groups would join together and defend the city as one, although it was also stipulated that non-Muslims would not be forced to fight alongside Muslims if the latter were ever attacked or fought outside Madinah. Furthermore, any agreements the Jews had with other groups would be honoured by the Muslims. The Jews would live by their religion and the Muslims would live by their religion.

When all three groups accepted the terms of this agreement it was also agreed through mutual consent that the Holy Prophet™ would serve as Head of State. Nonetheless, and as I said before, the Jews would not be bound by the Shariah but would be bound only by Jewish laws and customs. This was the perfect example of tolerance and mutual
respect of the Holy Founder of Islam and yet today ISIS claims that Shariah Law must be enforced on every person, no matter their religion or background. At that time, the Holy Prophet also established the rights of women within that covenant. It clearly stipulated that no woman was to be forcibly removed from her home or against her will. Thus, how can it be right for ISIS to claim that non-Muslim women can be considered their possessions or chattels? According to the covenant, no person would ever be compelled to accept Islam but rather it expressly stated that the Jews and the non-Muslims of Madinah, would be treated with love and compassion and as brothers by the Muslims. Therefore, this is a summary of the treaty which bound together the society of Madinah following the arrival of the Muslims.

History bears witness to the fact that the Muslims followed this agreement to the letter and if the covenant was ever breached it was done so by the other parties. As the accepted leader of Madinah, sometimes the Holy Prophet would have to deal with individuals or groups who had breached the covenant or been involved in wrongdoing. But such reprimands were given fairly, according to the terms of the covenant, and not due to any injustice. Thus, this is the true manifestation of government in Islam, whose foundation was laid by the Holy Prophet and following him was continued by the Four Rightly Guided Khalifas and throughout the first century of Islam.

And so today, if ISIS or any Muslim government acts against these principles of true justice and equality, then they are doing so only to fulfil their own personal or political interests.

Even if they claim to act in Islam’s name, the truth is that their actions have no link with Islam or the teachings of the Holy Prophet whatsoever.

If we look at the history of Arabia before the advent of the Holy Prophet it was a society in which every tribe sought to assert their rights through warfare and bloodshed. Yet, in that very same society the Holy Prophet brought about a revolution in which he established a proper system of judiciary in which each group was treated in accordance with its own traditions or religious beliefs. If one studies early Islamic history in a fair and unbiased manner then he or she will see that during the initial era of the Holy Prophet and his Four Rightly Guided Khalifas, the behaviour of the Muslims was impeccable.

Never were they the aggressor in any war and nor did they ever seek to conquer land. Where they sought to spread Islam’s teachings they did so only through preaching in an entirely peaceful manner. For example, Islam spread to China and South India and yet nowhere in history does it state that any Muslim armies ever attacked those nations; rather, Islam spread to those countries and other nations through peaceful means. In later periods, some Muslim monarchs initiated wars for various reasons for which they alone cannot be blamed and even in those wars the inhabitants of the captured countries were never forced to convert to Islam. Certainly, the Qur’an rejects such ventures and teaches only peaceful propagation.

As I have already said, where Allah gave permission for defensive religious wars, it was given only as a means of protecting all religions and not just Islam. In many different verses of the Qur’an, Allah the Almighty has laid down various principles of warfare. For example, in chapter 2, verse 191, Allah established the principle of defensive war whereby He said to fight only those who initiate war against you and never transgress or act cruelly, because Allah loves not those who are unjust.

Again, in chapter 16, verse 127, Allah the Almighty commands Muslims to never exceed the limits or to transgress during warfare. Allah says that any punishment must be proportionate to the extent to which you have been wronged.

In chapter 2, verse 194, Allah the Almighty says that during a war, a party should only fight until there is no more persecution and religion can once
again be professed freely. It says that if the oppressors desist and the disorder ends then no further hostility should be shown against them.

In chapter 8, verse 62, Allah the Almighty says that if oppressors incline towards peace and extend a hand of reconciliation then the Muslims should grasp it and not question whether they are being sincere.

Furthermore, in chapter 9, verse 4, the Qur’an stipulates that the Muslims must fulfil any covenants or pacts they form with idolaters if the latter have not acted aggressively and have kept the terms of their mutual agreements from their side. Allah says this is a necessary requirement of righteousness and Allah loves those who are righteous.

In chapter 5, verse 9, Allah instructs Muslims to always act fairly and with justice, even in a state of war. Allah says that the enmity of a nation or people should never lead a Muslim to act unjustly as that is against righteousness.

In chapter 8, verse 68, Allah says that it does not behove a prophet to keep captives outside a state of war because to do so would suggest that, rather than God’s love, they cared only for wealth or power. Thus, this proves very clearly that outside of war it is forbidden to keep anyone captive and yet today we see that these so-called ‘Islamists’ are forcibly imprisoning countless innocent people, whilst defenceless women are being made into concubines.

In chapter 47, verse 5 of the Holy Qur’an, Allah the Almighty has stated that prisoners of war should be freed following the conclusion of a war. In this verse, Allah has said that they should either be freed in return for a sum of money or it is even better that they should be released out of kindness and as a favour. Thus, when war ends prisoners should be freed and this applies both to males or females. In the early ages, women used to go to the battlefields to support and motivate the men who fought, and in this way, the women were also liable to being captured. The Qur’an, however, made it categorically clear that no woman was ever to be treated cruelly or to be violated in any way.

Regarding the payment of money to free a prisoner, in chapter 24, verse 34 the Qur’an states that if a person is unable to afford to free a prisoner then one should accept installments and free the person. These verses in relation to freeing prisoners of war should be understood in the context of warfare during the early period. At that time, individuals who fought in wars did so at their own expense and would bring their own weapons and so they were permitted to take payment in return for freeing their prisoners. However, in today’s wars, it is governments who fund the expeditions entirely and so there is no individual cost to the soldiers. Thus, the matter of how to treat prisoners of war is one for governments or international organisations to determine and not for individual soldiers. Prisoner exchange programmes may occur or other deals between nations may take place at a governmental level in an effort to bring long-lasting peace. Certainly the conditions to personally imprison anyone no longer exist and so to do so would be entirely against Islam.

In the Qur’an, Allah has also said that you should not cast envious glances at the wealth of others and this alone is a golden principle for peace in the world. If this one Islamic commandment is followed then there can never be any question of a Muslim ever taking over the land, territory or wealth of
others. In chapter 10, verse 100 of the Qur’ān, Allah has said that, as He is the All-Powerful, if He wanted He could make the entire world accept Islam. Yet Allah did not compel mankind and instructed the Holy Prophet ﷺ that force was not permitted to spread the message of Islam and that religion was a matter for each person’s heart and conscience.

Therefore it is quite clear that it is never permissible, in any circumstances, to force another person to accept Islam or indeed any religion. Of course, Muslims have been asked to preach the message of Islam, but that is all. Thus, in chapter 18, verse 30, Allah said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ to inform the world that a Truth had come from their Lord, which was a means of success and prosperity and they were free to accept or reject it. These words are crystal clear for all to see and hear. All people are free to believe or not to believe. And so when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was permitted only to convey the message of Islam and nothing further - how then can the so called Muslim leaders of today go beyond this and think they have more power, authority or rights than the Prophet of Islam?

I have therefore briefly given a summary of Islam’s teachings, based on various verses of the Holy Qur’ān, which prove that the acts of cruelty being conducted by certain Muslim groups and even nations are completely contrary to Islam.

You may wonder why - if it is against Islam’s teachings – they are acting in this way. The simple answer is, as I said before, that they are seeking only to fulfil their worldly interests. Their goals are not spiritual or religious at all. They seek to gain worldly pursuits in the name of religion through cruelty and bloodshed.

I say again that any Ahmadi Muslim or indeed any peace-loving Muslim feels great pain that their pure religion is being tarnished and exploited in this unjust way. However, I would also hereby like to question those people, organisations or politicians who claim that Islam is a religion of violence on the basis of the atrocities of the extremist groups.

I would ask them to consider how these groups are able to acquire such funds that allow them to continue their terrorist activities and warfare for so long? How do they acquire such sophisticated weapons? Do they have arms industries or factories? It is quite obvious that they are receiving the help and support of certain powers. This could be direct support from very oil-rich Muslim states or it could be other major powers covertly providing assistance.

When ISIS first came to prominence it was said they took over the weapons of the national army and captured some arms depots - this may be true but it would not be sufficient on its own for them to continue their activities until now. If the supply line of a regular army is cut off then it is impossible for them to continue and yet the supply line of ISIS seems to be continually increasing.

It is said that they now even possess anti-aircraft missiles and other sophisticated weaponry. This all points to a supply line supporting ISIS.

It is also common knowledge that they have huge funds totaling hundreds of millions of dollars and so it can only be assumed they have external support. Many officials, analysts and commentators have openly expressed support for this theory. For instance, a senior representative of the United States Government, David Cohen, who is the Under-Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, has publicly stated that ISIS is “the best funded terrorist group we have ever confronted.” He says they are spending tens of millions of dollars each month and making one million dollars daily selling oil on the black market.

We have to ask where and how are they getting such unfettered access to such large quantities of oil? In other parts of the world the transport and sale of oil is heavily monitored and sanctions have been levied against certain oil-rich states. Yet, somehow ISIS seems to be able to bypass all forms of regulation and acquire and sell vast quantities of oil without any interruption – even though we all know that transporting or trading such huge quantities of oil cannot be easily hidden.

It is also said that ISIS receives regular income through ransoms, but this is still a small amount compared to its other sources of revenue.

The funding of these groups is a major problem because it is through these funds that they are able to prey on vulnerable groups or individuals. For example, one recent report stated that if a family sends one of its members to join ISIS then that family is given thousands of dollars as an initial lump sum and then hundreds of dollars regularly thereafter.

Thus, something has to be done to stop the funding of these groups urgently. The West has now started to realise and acknowledge that this is a war that is actually directly affecting it as well. However,
this too is under-estimation – the truth is that this is a war against the entire world.

As a matter of routine, we see that the major powers are able to heavily influence or even dictate policies in Muslim countries on various matters and so the question is why have they not exerted their influence here where it is genuinely required?

Why is there not a joint, united and concerted effort to tackle all forms of extremism? Even the efforts being made now are too small compared to the devastation this group will cause. In my view, what is happening is not only the fault of the Muslim world, but there are also external powers and forces that are contributing to this devastating state of affairs.

For years there have been domestic conflicts taking place in countries like Syria and Iraq and outside powers have funded, armed or supported rebel groups and factions that have grown rapidly and gone beyond the control of their paymasters. They have gone on to wreak havoc and administer all forms of terror based on their extremist ideologies. By stating this I am not saying anything that is not already in the public domain or openly covered by the media. Militant groups such as ISIS are a product of such policies and are now spreading their networks of terror far and wide and affecting the entire world.

Again I say that it is a cause of great pain and concern to me that these evil acts are all being associated with Islam. Nowadays, it is a major concern that Muslim youths from the West are travelling to countries like Syria and Iraq where they are being radicalised. It is quite possible that they could eventually return to their home countries and launch attacks or cause great disorder in this part of the world. Thus, clearly this is no longer a local or Muslim issue – it is an international issue that requires a global and concerted effort to stop these extremist organisations.

Some prominent figures have suggested that it will take 30 or even 100 years for this war with extremism to conclude. Personally, I believe that the militant and extremist groups can be stopped in a much shorter period of time if the world is determined to eradicate them. We must not think that we are free from our personal responsibilities simply by saying it will take decades to end this war – rather everyone must join in this effort to counter global extremism. To simply lay the blame at the feet of Islam or particular groups will not save us from warfare or free us from our responsibilities.

Thus, all peaceful people should pressurise their governments and certainly all politicians and figures of influence should reflect on this and seek to develop peace in the world by promoting true justice in their respective spheres of influence, by taking firm action to prevent the destruction of world peace completely. If we want to save the world then true justice needs to be shown at every level of society and the problems faced in each country should be solved in a fair way that removes frustrations.

No country’s wealth should be looked upon enviously and mutual policies should be made to help one other. Most importantly the world must realise that it has forgotten its Creator and they must come back to Him. Only when this happens can true peace be established and without this there can be no guarantee of peace.

I have spoken many times previously about the horrific consequences of another global war and perhaps it will only be after such a war that the world will come to realise the destructive results of the unjust policies that were made only to satisfy personal ambitions and vested interests. I hope and pray that the world comes to its senses before such a disaster comes to pass. I hope and pray that world comes to recognise and accept its Creator. With these words I seek your leave. Thank you very much.”

Key for Salutations:

sa  
Sallallaho Alaihi wa Sallam – “May peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.” This is written after the name of the Holy Prophet.

as  
Alaihis Salaam– “May peace be upon him.” This is written after the name of Prophets other than the Holy Prophet.

ra  
Razi-Allaaho anhu/anha/anhum – “May Allah be pleased with him/her.” This is written after names of the Companions of the Holy Prophet and of the Promised Messiah.

aba  
Ayyadahullaahu Taa’ala binasrihil Aziz – “May Allah the Almighty help him with His powerful support” Written after the name of the current Khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama’at.
The 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 under the auspices of His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad. It is awarded in recognition of an individual’s or an organisation’s contribution for the advancement of the cause of peace.

The winner of the 2013 prize was Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow for his outstanding work to promote education and to relieve poverty. Magnus founded the charity Mary’s Meals (formerly Scottish International Relief) that has a wonderfully simple but profound aim of providing hungry children with one meal every school day.

The charity has its roots in a humanitarian response to 1990s Bosnian conflict and has since expanded to help hundreds of thousands of children internationally including Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and South America.

As a result of this initiative the children are able to attend school and focus on their studies rather than worry about whether they will be able to eat at all. This provides a unique opportunity for children to escape poverty. It also acts as an incentive for parents to ensure their children go to school, so they have one less mouth to feed every day.

Magnus’s noble work has seen more than 900,000 daily meals served in schools and what is truly astonishing is that Magnus and his team have managed to do this work with a single daily meal per child per year costing just over £12.

Also as part of the humanitarian work he has sent nearly 345,000 backpacks of food and aid, worked locally to heal tribal rifts, and helped to rebuild schools destroyed in natural disasters, provided boats and other aid to fishing communities devastated by floods.

Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow
Founder and CEO of Mary’s Meals

Your Holiness, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. I’m deeply honoured and very moved to receive this award and a little bit embarrassed too. I always like to describe the work of Mary’s Meals as lots and lots of little acts of love. None of us involved in this work do anything very spectacular. It’s only when you put it together, all those little things become this very amazing thing, very beautiful thing that’s changing the world.

I’ve got lots of reasons to feel very grateful and very privileged to do this work everyday as it so often gives me the opportunity to befriend people of different faiths and to work with them. One memory comes to mind this evening. In 2011 I went to Somalia for the first time during the terrible famine there. I travelled there with some Muslim
friends from South Africa who were doing incredible work there. We were working together to bring food to the people. I remember the first evening we arrived and I was very frightened to be honest as it was a scary place and I remember walking to where we were staying that night, led by our very kind Somali host. As we walked into our room there was an enormous explosion nearby and our host turned to me and very kindly spoke to me like I was a small boy, because I jumped, and he said “Don’t worry, don’t worry it was just a bomb.” It didn’t make me feel any better!

I have an even more vivid memory of waking up the next morning in Mogadishu and all my friends were on their prayer mats saying their morning prayers and I, as a Catholic from Scotland, was saying my rosary, my chosen form of daily prayer – it was a very beautiful experience for me to be united in that way in prayer, praying according to our own different traditions but being very united in that task that brought us to Somalia.

The work of Mary’s Meals is very simple and it was launched by the words of a child, a young boy I met in Malawi in 2002 during another famine there. I met a family that was living in a small mud brick house and the mother of the family was dying the father had already died. The mother had Aids and she had her six children around her and I began talking to her oldest son, he was called Edward and he was 14 years of age. I asked him, “Edward what are your hopes in life what are your ambitions?” And he said to me, “I would like to have enough food to eat and I would like to be able to go to school one day.” That was the extent of his ambition at 14 years of age. Over the years I’ve met so many children like Edward who are missing out on school because they’re hungry, because they have to work, because they have to beg for food and yet we all know that a basic education for all is the key to lifting the world’s poorest communities out of poverty.

So Mary’s Meals is this very simple response to try and intervene to try and break that cycle of poverty, by providing just one good meal everyday in school. All those meals are served by local volunteers in their own communities and as much as possible we buy that food locally to support the local farmer, to support the local economy. It never ceases to amaze me how this work grows. Today over 900,000 children eat Mary’s Meal every school day. We see children coming to school who had never been to school before and I have the great pleasure of meeting young people leaving school going onto college, university, paid employment who tell me they never would have gone to school had it not been for those meals and they are the people going to lift their countries and their communities out of poverty.

So our vision is that every child in the world can receive one good meal everyday in their place of education and I really do believe that is possible in this world of plenty, in this world where there is more than enough food for all of us and I ask the question, can there really be peace in this world when there are millions of children who are hungry? How can those children have peace in their lives without food, without education, and how can we have peace in our lives, those of us who have been blessed with so much, when our little brothers and sisters go hungry?

So I thank you Your Holiness for honouring me, more especially for honouring the work of Mary’s Meals in this way. I’m so impressed by your community and everything that you are doing here, working for peace and I just want to end by thanking God for creating this world and for giving all of us so many opportunities to make it better. Thank you.
Assalamo alaikum wa rahmatullah wa barakatohu, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon you. I am delighted and honoured to welcome you all this evening. The world is facing many challenges and each day we see on our screens and we read in our newspapers about the wars and conflicts and terrible acts of extremism. As a result there is a raging debate about Islam and more recently the issue of Khilafat has been highlighted.

When this mosque was opened in 2003, it was opened by His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the fifth Khalifa of the Promised Messiah and we are very honoured to have him with us this evening. At the opening ceremony he said the mosque would be a beacon of peace for all and we hope that all of you who are gathered here tonight will bear witness to this fact.

The reason why our community preaches peace is simple, because this is the message and clear direction of our Khalifa, as it is the message of all Khalifas before him. It was also the message of the founder of our community, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, whom we accept as the Promised Messiah and Mahdi when he founded the community 125 years ago. And it was the same message of peace of the Holy Founder of Islam, the Holy Prophet Muhammad 1400 years ago as it is the true message of Islam.

We, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, are truly blessed that we have Khilafat that is divinely guided, and through prayers and wisdom it unites the community that is now established in 206 countries of the world. The Khalifa leads us in our worldwide campaign for peace, through which we provide food, shelter, education, health services, disaster relief, clean water, electricity and much more to people the world over. It is under the guidance of our Khalifa that we engage in dialogue, train our youth to serve their country and to serve humanity, that we teach and promote the values of loyalty, respect and peace – for this is the path to peace.

His Holiness is a man of peace who has delivered keynote addresses at parliaments across the world including the UK, USA and EU. He regularly meets Heads of State, presidents and prime ministers as well as faith leaders urging the need for peace based on justice. And there could not be a more important message for the world today.

As you know this year marks 100 years after the outbreak of the First World War. As we honour those who sacrificed their lives for a future of peace and hope, we pray that their sacrifices do not go in vain. We honour the fallen and hope that it strengthens our resolve to do everything we can to ensure that the future does indeed remain one of peace and not war.

I am sure that it is through gatherings such as this and through people such as you that gives the world much hope. I take this opportunity to welcome you all once again to what I am sure will be an inspiring and special evening. Thank you.
It’s a pleasure to be here with His Holiness, and all of you and I know that I speak on behalf of my neighbouring MPs, Jane Ellison and Stephen Hammond who are also with us tonight.

I really wanted to make one point and to say two thank yous. The point that I wanted to make, very much built on comments by earlier speakers tonight. We live in extremely challenging times where there are so many forces that can pull communities apart and I think when you reach those times its always easy to look at the problems and perhaps to not see some of the solutions that are right under your nose. I think tonight is a good example of what some of those solutions look like, because it is a very simple but powerful event that is bringing people together from all over our local community, all over parts of London, to do a very simple thing; which is to come together for one night and to discuss important issues, to listen to one another, to get chance to talk to one another, to understand one another and then to do a simple thing – to eat together, which is what families do. That’s the point that I want to make. We need to look what good looks like as well as spending time understanding what’s going wrong.

The two thank yous I have are very simple ones as well. Thank you to Humanity First for all of the work you do, not just internationally but also the wonderful work of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Organisation that works here and helped critically with the floods last year doing amazing, amazing work in places like Surrey and indeed further afield in Devon. So a big thank you to all of the work you do for our local communities and communities all over the world. I know how much of difference it makes and I’m very proud that my department is looking at how we can work with Humanity First more closely in the future.

And then a second thank you on an issue that is often very difficult for people to talk about which is female genital mutilation (FGM). Earlier in the summer my department and our government held a Girl Summit that was all about how we can work together to end FGM but also to end child marriage. They are difficult topics that often get swept under the carpet but for the women they touch, they completely change their lives and we should stand up against those things. And it is very touching to me, that one of the first communities locally that was willing to put out a statement to say how they abhorred FGM was the Ahmadiyya Community. And I think being prepared to take those stands on such important issues that affect so many people means a lot and I think it says a lot about the Ahmadiyya Community and its place not just in Britain but in the wider world.

So thank you for all that you do, thank you for your good works, thank you for your leadership in bringing our community together and I hope that tonight we can have an enjoyable evening in one another’s company. Thank you.

“Thank you to Humanity First for all of the work you do, not just internationally but also the wonderful work of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Organisation that works here and helped critically with the floods last year doing amazing, amazing work in places like Surrey and indeed further afield in Devon.

... I’m very proud that my department is looking at how we can work with Humanity First more closely in the future”.

Rt Hon Justine Greening MP
Secretary of State for International Development
Your Holiness, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, it’s a great privilege to be here. As we listen to His Holiness tonight and for those of us who will be at remembrance services tomorrow, I hope we will reflect on the lessons of the past and of the challenges we face together. In the past and now in our world we see a politics of division, where there are people who don’t live by the creed of Love for All Hatred for None but they do want to divide communities. We saw that in the wars of the 20th century but we also see it in the wars of the 21st century, we see it in the wars that are happening now across the world.

When you think of the tensions in Ukraine, when you think of what’s happening in Syria, what’s happening in Afghanistan, what’s happening in Iraq and indeed in too many other countries, our hearts go out to those people who are suffering under the politics of division.

So it is important that we are coming together under your leadership Your Holiness tonight to be a politics of unity, of people coming together, to talk together, to work together, to pray together for a world of unity and that need for greater unity is across our country because I fear that the politics of division are not just in other parts of the world, they can be here. We see voices in our politics that want to divide our continent, want to divide our countries, want to divide communities. We have to say tonight, we have to say in the way we live our lives, do our politics that we stand together against that politics of division.

So Your Holiness, it is a great privilege and honour to be here, we look forward to your words and wisdom and guidance tonight and inshAllah we will be together. Thank you.

Beloved Huzur, Your Excellencies, fellow parliamentarians and ministers, ladies and gentlemen, it’s indeed a pleasure to be here with you this evening to be addressing the peace symposium for two significant reasons. One as Fareed said in his introduction is that this is my community, it is my home, it’s the place where I worship, it’s a place where I come with my family, it’s a place which really is part of my being. Therefore being a member of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is something that I’ve always worn with pride, with great identity because ultimately the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is that community, when you look at the history of Britain, in 1924 when the Second Successor, the Caliph then, Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmood Ahmad arrived here in London to lay the foundation stone of the first purpose built mosque in London, he commented then about our great nation, about the freedoms, the liberties, the progression that it did not matter who you were, where you came from, that Britain was an incredible country for everyone.

The second reason as to why I’m here today, and I do so with pride, is because I am now the Minister responsible for communities, for engagement with faith communities up and down the country. Last week I had the huge privilege of attending an event, commemorating the first Muslim recipient of the Victoria Cross Khudadad Khan who, in 1914, fought from the battlefields of France but his origins lay in what is present day Pakistan. This
demonstrates that the contributions of different people, of different faiths, of different communities is not new to Britain, it’s part of what defines Britain, not just today but in our history and InshAllah it will define our tomorrows as well.

I would also like to take this opportunity to extend on behalf of both the Prime Minister and indeed my boss the Secretary of State Eric Pickles, their regret that they cannot be here today and also their recognition of the incredible work the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community does. And if I again just share one element of both my portfolio and the community. Five or six years ago the youth of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community said, we want to do our part in showing that this isn’t about an adopted country, this is our country we want to show loyalty not just by words alone but by our actions, demonstrably standing with pride, with our troops. And it was the Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth who first engaged in the poppy appeal from different communities up and down the country. And I can inform you that six years on that single act of engagement results that this year we have communities, from mosques, from gurdwaras, from temples up and down the country. Again showing that it doesn’t matter what your faith is, that we are united together as the being part of this incredible country that we call Britain.

Thank you very much.

I have two tasks this evening, Your Holiness, Your Excellencies and guests. The organisers did invite His Eminence Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, who is Pope Francis’ principal advisor on inter-religious matters to be here this evening, he’s not able to come but he has sent a message which I shall read and then I shall make some comments on my own account, (see next page for message from the Cardinal).

I would like to add, just on behalf of the Catholic Church in England and Wales, my own warmest greetings to His Holiness and to this gathering. As was mentioned I was at the previous gathering in the Guildhall in London earlier this year and I strongly commend the huge contribution being made by the Ahmadiyya Community to peace.

Everybody has a role to play and the question I think we need to ask is what has been entrusted to me as an individual, and to the community to which I belong? Tonight, Mary’s Meals is being honoured and though it’s not for me to speak about it, it is worth saying that what has been entrusted to that organisation is to ensure that people who would otherwise go hungry are actually fed. Each one of us and each one of our communities represented here tonight has something entrusted in us to do for the course of peace and justice in the world.

So I thank very much the organisers of this event for giving us such a lead and for creating this occasion which I hope will actually inspire each one of us in different ways to discern what has been entrusted to us and to pursue it with confidence and faith. Thank you very much.

Most Rev Kevin McDonald
Archbishop Emeritus of Southwark, Catholic Church

“Each one of us and each one of our communities represented here tonight has something entrusted in us to do for the course of peace and justice in the world.”
Message by the President of
the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (Vatican City)
His Eminence Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran

To the Participants at the Symposium “Khilafat, Peace and Justice”
London (UK), 8 November 2014

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to send you this message at the request of the organizers of this Symposium.

I would like to make some brief points on the topics of your reflection and sharing.

I am aware of the Islamic vision of man as God’s khalifa (vicegerent) on earth. For Christians, as you know, the human being, created in God’s image and resemblance (cf. Genesis 1, 26-27), has been entrusted with the whole of the universe, for his benefit; but he is required to be always in gratitude and with respect for the laws the Creator established for all that exists. Pope Francis likes the term “guardian” (Italian: custode). The creation has been entrusted to us for our good and that of the future generations. We are all its guardians. But what did we do to it? What are we doing? What kind of world will we leave for our sons and grandsons? Nevertheless, we are all aware that we should care more and better for the world to keep the air, soil, the environment and the earth’s all resources healthy and safe. It is the responsibility not only of the governments and politicians, but also of each of us, believers and persons of good will without professing any religion.

Regarding peace, it is a good of prime importance for humanity. Without it, people cannot live in serenity nor can have the possibility of proceeding on the path of progress. Peace is honoured in all religions, although in varying ways. For Christians, peace is at the same time a divine gift as well as the result of human efforts. It is like the work of an artisan. On 27th April 2014, Pope Francis declared Pope John XXIII a saint. The “good pope” lived in a particular, delicate moment of modern history, with the possibility of a disastrous nuclear war taking place. In his Encyclical letter Pacem in terris (Peace on earth), the saintly Pope indicated four pillars of peace: Truth, justice, love and liberty. It is noteworthy that these four values so important for peace have been the theme of a Colloquium jointly organized by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and its Muslim partners in Iran. Unfortunately, in our days, we observe with much pain, that peace and security are under severe threat in our world. We read and hear every day of violence against persons and groups belonging to other religions or even of the same religious community. What makes these crimes more heinous is that they are committed sometimes in the name of religion, thereby offending God, this specific religion and the persons who are its victims as well at the same time. We all, religious leaders as well as believers, should denounce loudly and without any ambiguity such crimes, defending respect for human life and dignity and the rights that are derived from them.

Justice is a value dear to all human beings, but has a special consideration for followers of religions. Therefore, Christians and Muslims, along with other religious people, must consider it fundamental, also for religious reasons. We all know that the absence of justice, be it among individuals, communities or states, generates resentments, tensions and other negative feelings that can result in conflicts and wars. This is why we should educate the youth to be respectful of justice and to engage themselves to be its promoters, for a peaceful world. We are in fact aware that there can be no peace without justice, and no peace nor justice without mutual respect.

Let us all therefore be vigilant guardians of the creation, instruments of peace, promoters of justice. By doing so, we glorify God and make all brothers and sisters in humanity happy.
Your Holiness, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, fellow MPs, thank you for inviting me to the Peace Symposium, the eleventh to be held since they were launched ten years ago in 2004 by His Holiness following his election as head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in 2003.

It is significant that we are gathered together this Remembrance weekend when we commemorate the beginning of World War One and remember the lives of those who have died in order that others can live in peace. I acknowledge and thank the Ahmadiyya Community for their support for the British Legion through the sale of poppies and raising funds. The British Legion recognised this by designating last Saturday as Ahmadiyya Muslim Poppy Appeal Day.

This evening is also significant because it marks the 125th anniversary of the founding of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, with its total commitment to peace and interfaith harmony. This commitment to peace by the worldwide Ahmadiyya Community contrasts starkly to the stance recently taken by the state of Pakistan. As you know only too well, it is now thirty years since Pakistan implemented the Ordinance XX which enshrined the state sponsored religious persecution of the Ahmadiyya Community. In a further worrying development earlier this year in response to a growing number of asylum seekers entering their country, the Government of Sri Lanka started to deport Ahmadis seeking asylum, back to Pakistan. Although this is being challenged by the courts in Sri Lanka, it is a worrying and for some a terrifying development. Terrifying in the light of the atrocities such as the murder of a grandmother and her two young grandchildren who were burnt alive in their home in Pakistan in July of this year.

I applaud and support the Ahmadi aim of the separation of state and religion as I believe this is a step towards removing religious persecution in the world. By choosing Merton as the UK and worldwide headquarters, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, we are honoured to have you.

Thank you for the contribution you make to the richness and diversity of our community in Merton and the UK, and once again I thank you for inviting me to speak.

“I acknowledge and thank the Ahmadiyya Community for their support for the British Legion through the sale of poppies and raising funds.

The British Legion recognised this by designating last Saturday as Ahmadiyya Muslim Poppy Appeal Day.”
The 2014 National Peace Symposium

Meeting with members of the British army

Meeting with members of the Asian press

Meeting with members of the British press

Meeting with members of the British army

The Most Rev Kevin McDonald and Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow with His Holiness
Loyalty

Freedom

Equality

Respect

Peace

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