

NATIONAL PEACE SYMPOSIUM 2023

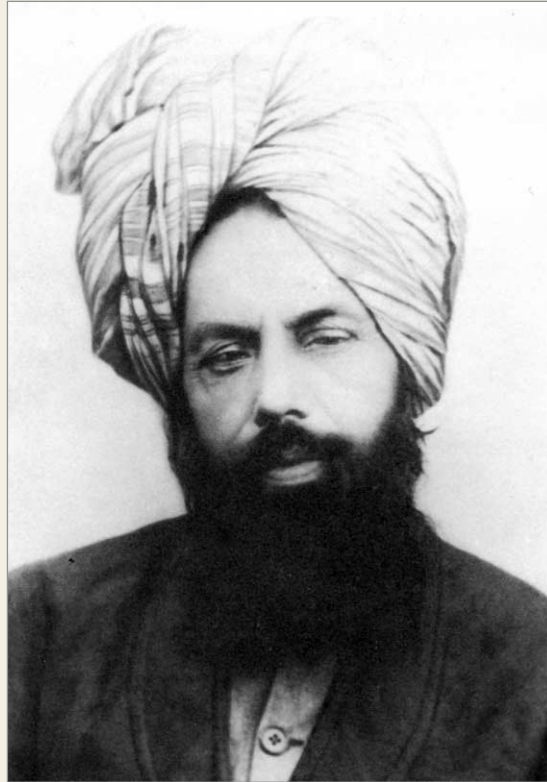


Marking the Inaugural Reception of the Baitul Futuh Mosque Headquarters Building (Saturday 4 March 2023)



THE FOUNDATIONS FOR TRUE PEACE

The keynote address entitled: 'Recognising God – The Key to Unlocking Peace' was delivered by the Worldwide Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad.



An Overview of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is the most dynamic denomination of Islam in modern history, with an estimated membership in the tens of millions spread across 212 countries. It was established in 1889 by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (peace be upon him, photo above)(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, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has expanded globally and it serves mankind by raising millions of pounds every year for charities, building schools and hospitals open to all, providing energy to remote villages, encouraging learning through interfaith dialogue and by providing food and water to those in need across the world.

The UK chapter of the community was established in 1913 and in 1924 it built London's first purpose-built mosque (in Southfields), that became a Grade II listed building in 2018 in recognition of its historical significance to the UK. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is, therefore, one of the oldest and most established Muslim communities in Britain and it now has 147 branches. In 2003 it opened, in London, the Baitul Futuh Mosque, the largest mosque in Western Europe. This administrative block of the mosque was rebuilt after a major fire and was opened in 2023 as part of the National Peace Symposium, and the landmark building serves as the headquarters of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in the UK.



His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad: *A Man of Peace*

His Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (may Allah be his Helper) was elected as the fifth Khalifa (Caliph) 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, the Canadian Parliament and the European Parliament and also written to world leaders urging them to inculcate absolute justice and peace in international relations, to avoid regional conflicts from engulfing the entire world.

“..we hold similar conferences and events all around the world, seeking to bring people together, irrespective of their caste, creed or colour, under the banner of humanity and strive to identify solutions to the problems faced in the world. Our motivation is for true and lasting peace to emerge so that mankind can save itself from self- destruction. Our objective is to raise awareness of the fact that the world stands at the precipice of disaster and to urge humanity to take a step back and consider our responsibilities, not only to the people of today, but also to our future generations.” (*National Peace Symposium, 2023*)

National Peace Symposium 2023



On 4 March 2023, the Worldwide Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, the Fifth Khalifa (Caliph), His Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (may Allah be his Helper) delivered the keynote address at the 17th National Peace Symposium hosted by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community UK. The event also served as the inauguration of the new five-storey building in the Baitul Futuh Mosque, which was rebuilt after a fire in 2015. The event was attended by more than 1,500 people including 500 dignitaries and guests who had gathered from 40 countries, comprising Ministers, Ambassadors of State, and Members of Parliament. The event was broadcast live globally via the satellite television channel MTA International.

Recognising God – The Key to Unlocking Peace

With the world hurtling rapidly towards a catastrophic world war and the Ukraine-Russia conflict showing no signs of abating, threatening to explode into a wider conflict, all current solutions seem to have proved unmeaningful. The potential for the unthinkable, nuclear war, is now being commonly spoken about as a possibility. A different solution is required to stem the tide of fast gathering clouds of destruction to establish lasting peace.

After reciting Ta`awwuz and Bismillah, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, (may Allah be his Helper), Worldwide Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Fifth Successor to the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) said:

'All distinguished guests *Assalamo Alaikum Wa Rahmatullahe Wa Barakatuhu* – peace and blessings of Allah be upon you all.

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of our guests who have joined us here this evening. Due to the COVID pandemic, we were unable to hold such a guest reception for the last few years. Given this, we are extremely pleased that today, after an interval of four years, we are able to host all of you, old and new friends alike, once again. This event is being held to inaugurate the reconstruction of the administrative block of the Baitul Futuh Mosque complex, and alongside the inauguration, we are holding our National Peace Symposium. Therefore, I will seek to briefly mention the objectives of a mosque and also offer my thoughts on the current state of the world and how to achieve global peace and security.

The Core Values of a True Muslim

According to my belief, it is not possible to fulfil the rights of Allah the Almighty or attain His nearness without fulfilling the rights of our fellow human beings and all of God's creation. True Muslims, therefore, live their lives peacefully and seek to propagate peace, tolerance, and mutual understanding in society. Indeed, Ahmadi Muslims believe that the founder of our community was sent by Allah the Almighty to draw the attention of mankind towards

these core fundamental Islamic principles of fulfilling the rights of worship of God Almighty, fulfilling the rights of humanity, and seeking to spread peace and harmony throughout the world. He bequeathed us a legacy of peace by making it clear that there is a direct correlation between the worship of God Almighty and fulfilling the rights of mankind.

This is something to keep in mind as we gather in this building that stands adjacent to the main mosque, and so forms part of the mosque complex. Mosques are built for the worship of Allah the Almighty, and it is stated in the Holy Qur'an that if a person does not fulfil the rights of God's creation, their prayers and worship will be rejected. Indeed, the Qur'an states that the worship of those who fail to pay heed to other people's rights will be the means of their downfall and humiliation rather than the means of their salvation.

Mosques – Entering a State of Peace

Furthermore, it is essential to note that Muslims are commanded to build a mosque in the direction of the Holy Ka'bah, the sacred house of Makkah, and to worship towards it. Yet, it is not enough to merely turn one's physical direction towards the Holy Ka'bah, rather Muslims and their mosques must fulfil the objectives of the Ka'bah, outlined in chapter 3, verse 98 of the Holy Qur'an, where it states that whosoever enters the sacred house of Allah enters peace. This Qur'anic verse means that a true Muslim, upon entering a mosque shall himself enter a state of peace and shall, by fulfilling the rights and commands of God, prove a beacon of peace and security for others. All of our mosques spiritually

mirror the Holy Ka'bah, wherein they serve not only as an abode of worshipping God Almighty, but are also a means of fulfilling the rights of mankind and establishing peace in the world.

As Muslims, we pray five times a day, and in each prayer, it is incumbent upon us to recite the first chapter of the Holy Qur'an. In its second verse, Allah the Almighty proclaims that He is the Lord of all the Worlds and of all people. He is not just the Provider and Sustainer of Muslims, but He provides for, and sustains Christians, Jews, Hindus, Sikhs, and indeed people of all religions and beliefs. He grants them life, and He fulfils their basic needs through His grace and compassion. Consequently, from the very start of the Holy Qur'an, Muslims are taught that the fundamental pillar of Islamic teaching is that a sincere Muslim must never harm the people of other faiths or religions, harbour any form of hatred or speak ill of them in any way, as we are all the creation of God Almighty.

Indeed, it is our conviction and teaching that Allah the Almighty fulfils the needs of those who do not appreciate His grace and reject His very existence. Not only does He provide for them, but He also grants them the fruits of their labour. This is the concept of the All-Merciful God in Whom we believe. Surely, those who have faith in such a Gracious God can never seek to undermine the peace and well-being of others. Thus, it is purely to attain the nearness and love of such a Benevolent and Loving God that the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community strives to foster peace and harmony around the world. Ever since our community was founded in the late 19th Century, alongside inviting others towards God Almighty, we have consistently practised and preached a message of mutual understanding and tolerance and sought to establish true peace in the world.

Peace – A Golden Key

As I mentioned earlier, prior to the pandemic, we held this National Peace Symposium each year, and we are grateful to have the opportunity to resume this event in an effort to advance the cause of peace. In addition, we hold similar conferences and events all around the world, seeking to bring people together, irrespective of their caste, creed or colour, under the banner of humanity and strive to identify solutions to the problems faced in the world. Our

motivation is for true and lasting peace to emerge so that mankind can save itself from self-destruction. Our objective is to raise awareness of the fact that the world stands at the precipice of disaster and to urge humanity to take a step back and consider our responsibilities, not only to the people of today, but also to our future generations.

We hold such events so we can proclaim our firm conviction that only in peace lies the salvation of the world. Peace is a golden key to unlocking the door to societal progress and development and ensuring that our future generations can thrive and prosper. Though we have long preached this message, it seems to have fallen upon deaf ears. I believe the fundamental reason is that the vast majority of the world has turned away from God Almighty and consider materialistic gains and worldly pursuits to be their ultimate objective. It was due to such vain and covetous pursuits that mankind was dragged into two calamitous and harrowing world wars during the 20th Century. Rather than learn from the horrors of the past, the world is once again engulfed by warfare and conflict.

At this point, I should clarify that I do not believe that the blame lies exclusively with Muslims or non-Muslims, nor do I say that cruelties or injustices are the sole preserve of any one group or nation. Any Muslims or so-called Islamic groups who inflict cruelties or conduct barbaric acts violate their religious teachings and are fully culpable to be condemned in the strongest terms. According to Islam's teachings, permission for war is only granted under extreme circumstances as a defensive measure where a concerted effort is made to destroy the institution of religion and freedom of belief through warfare. Islam has never, and never will, permit aggressive warfare for the sake of territorial gains or fulfilling geopolitical ambitions.

Practical Methods for Reconciliation in Times of War

Furthermore, the Holy Qur'an has instructed that every possible opportunity to achieve peace must be pursued no matter how remote the chances of success are. In chapter 49, verse 10, Allah the Almighty states that when two nations are at war, third parties should seek to reconcile them and draw them to a peaceful settlement. If the aggressor



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continues to wage war, it is up to other nations to join forces and use proportionate and legitimate force to stop the oppressor. However, once their cruelties cease, unjust retribution or revenge must not be exacted. Regarding this principle, chapter 5, verse 9 of the Holy Qur’an categorically states that you must not let the enmity of any nation or party prevent you from upholding the true standards of justice and equity.

Accordingly, punitive sanctions or other unjust measures that prevent a nation from moving forward post-war and limit its freedom and prosperity should be avoided at all costs. Just a few days ago marked the first anniversary of the war in Ukraine, and sadly there is no sign of how or when the war will end. Nonetheless, this has not stopped certain political leaders from stating that once the war does end, Russia should be subjected to extreme sanctions and made to pay for its actions.

Recently, a column by the journalist Matthew Parris was published in *The Times* stating that such statements in advance of any meaningful peace talks are ill-judged and serve only to further inflame a volatile situation and reduce the chances of a peaceful settlement. The columnist wrote that political leaders should be above seeking short-term media acclaim and recognise, as he puts it, that the words spoken now can cast long shadows across a future terrain of which we are still ignorant. He

writes that now is not the time to speak of reparations from a defeated Russia or to call for Nuremberg-style war crimes tribunals. I believe he is right to serve this warning. What incentive will Russia and its leaders have to cease hostilities if they know that their withdrawal will lead to their certain ruin?

As I have said, Islamic teachings require every effort to be made to bring a peaceful solution to a conflict. For this reason, I believe it is essential to keep the channels of communication open and to strive to find mutually acceptable terms of agreement. If, however, the aggressor remains bent on causing misery and destruction and refuses to withdraw, Islam teaches that other nations should join together as one and use proportionate and necessary force to end the cruelties.

The objective of the intervening parties must remain at all times to establish peace instead of seeking revenge or humiliating the aggressor, nor should their underlying intention ever be to line one’s pockets or to exploit the conflict to advance vested interests. Otherwise, those who have been demeaned will undoubtedly harbour a sense of injustice and resentment. Such frustrations are bound to eventually boil over and lead to further conflict, and so the cycle of incessant violence will continue to rotate with ever greater fury.



“The truth is that war often begets war. There are genuine concerns that the Ukraine conflict could spread, or that other nations could be emboldened to abandon diplomatic efforts to resolve their disputes and resort to force.”

Regrettably, as the columnist noted, rather than acting wisely, certain leaders and officials are making statements or pledges that serve only to pour petrol on the fire. Instead of helping to end the war, their comments reduce the long-term chances of peace. In a similar vein, an extremely dangerous consequence of the war in Ukraine has been the solidification of opposing political blocs and alliances, and the rhetoric being used in international relations is becoming increasingly hostile on all sides. For example, much has been written about how Russia and China are forging closer ties bonded by their mutual antagonism towards the West.

Bringing an End to the Cycle of Bloodshed

The truth is that war often begets war. There are genuine concerns that the Ukraine conflict could spread, or that other nations could be emboldened to abandon diplomatic efforts to resolve their disputes and resort to force. For example, the situation in Taiwan is becoming increasingly precarious as China seeks to assert its control. Hence, world leaders, the media, and others should not fall into the trap of thinking that the war in Ukraine can be easily contained.

In this regard, the journalist Peter Hitchens recently wrote in a national newspaper about the decision of several Western countries to send their tanks to Ukraine. He wrote, “If they (the tanks being given to Ukraine) cross into what Russia regards as its own

territory, then do not be surprised by anything which happens.” He continues, “There is the real possibility that a large chunk of Europe might be turned into a radioactive graveyard and that American conventional retaliation for this (which will be furious and powerful) will take us a stage further into the world of horror, loss, flight, pestilence, and poverty which always follows war.” Regarding Russia and Ukraine, he says, “Two countries are in a furious grapple because their deep, hard and unalterable interests conflict. The sane and decent policy for any outside power is to help push them into a lasting compromise, as the world did to France and Germany after 1945. Instead, we send tanks. It is as if the fire brigade went about starting fires.”

Other commentators are reaching similar conclusions. During a recent interview, the renowned economist Professor Jeffrey Sachs said, “I did contact the White House (at the end of 2021) and said there will be war unless the US enters diplomatic talks with President Putin over this question of NATO enlargement. I was told the US will never do that. That is off the table. Now we have a war that is extraordinarily dangerous. And we are taking exactly the same tactics in East Asia that led to the war in Ukraine. We’re organising alliances, building up weaponry.” He continues, “The Chinese government said, ‘Please lower the temperature, lower the tensions.’ We say, ‘No, we do what we want,’ and now send more arms. This is the recipe for yet another war, and to my mind it is terrifying.”



Increasingly, academics, political experts, and respected analysts are warning that we are approaching a grave period in the history of humanity. For example, the symbolic Doomsday Clock controlled by an international panel of scientists, which forecasts the likelihood of a human-made global catastrophe, was recently turned to just 90 seconds until midnight, the closest to a global disaster it has ever predicted. The scientists stated that we are living in a time of unprecedented danger and warned that there is a significant risk of global war triggered either by accident, miscalculation or even intentionally.

As we ponder over such dire warnings, the obvious question is how can the world bring an end to the cycle of warfare and bloodshed that we witness today. The world is well-versed in supporting victims and those suffering injustice, as is the case with the Ukrainian nation at this time, yet it may surprise you to hear that Islam teaches Muslims to help not only the victim of the persecuted but also the perpetrator and oppressor. Of course, this does not mean that you provide the aggressor with the means of freedom to inflict further cruelties. Rather, to help an aggressor means to stop them from committing further brutalities and injustice.

Whatever wrongs are being committed by the Russian state, we must keep in mind the broader picture that if the war is not brought to an end, it will lead to a

deepening global crisis with potentially catastrophic results. Opposing blocs will become further entrenched. Hatreds will become even more deeply rooted, increasing the likelihood of a world war. Hence, as they continue to support Ukraine as it defends itself, world powers should also be making every possible effort to end the war through peace talks and good-faith negotiations. Otherwise, I fear the war will spread beyond Europe and eastwards towards Asia, and who knows where it will stop.

For many years, I have warned of the risks of a full-scale world war and have spoken of how its deadly and destructive consequences are far beyond our comprehension. Having long warned of such a war, I take no satisfaction in the fact that we are moving ever closer to it and that others are now expressing similar sentiments and fears. Rather, I feel only grief and anguish as I see the world hurtling ever-faster towards a terrifying world war in which the lives of millions of innocent people will be lost or permanently destroyed.

Leaving a Legacy for Future Generations

Moreover, what kind of future will we leave behind for those who are yet to come? Instead of bestowing a legacy of peace and prosperity to our future generations, our parting gift to them will be nothing except death, destruction, and misery.

Certainly, it is my grave fear that today's geopolitical



“Thus, with all my heart, I pray that may Allah Almighty have mercy upon humanity and may the people of the world, especially its leaders and policymakers, see sense before it is too late. I pray that instead of warmongering and sabre-rattling, they utilise all their faculties and resources to foster peace and security for all peoples and nations, rather than seeking to feed their egos and satisfy their lust for power by fueling wars.”

tensions could spiral out of all control and ultimately lead to a nuclear war. We should be under no illusion about the fact that if God forbid, a nuclear weapon is ever used, it will strike the earth with such velocity and force that its toxic effects will be felt for decades to come. Hundreds of thousands or even millions will surely die either instantly or in the aftermath. Those who survive will suffer miserable and tortuous lives as they seek to pick up the shattered pieces of humanity. As for the devastating impact on future generations, countless infants will be born with genetic defects and disabilities as a result of the perpetual effects of radiation.

Thus, with all my heart, I pray that may Allah Almighty have mercy upon humanity and may the people of the world, especially its leaders and policymakers, see sense before it is too late. I pray that instead of warmongering and sabre-rattling, they utilise all their faculties and resources to foster peace and security for all peoples and nations, rather than

seeking to feed their egos and satisfy their lust for power by fueling wars. May they recognise their responsibilities to safeguard humanity for the sake of people today and for our future generations by making policies that end all forms of conflict. May they be the guardians of peace and prosperity rather than the agents of war and bloodshed.

As a religious person, I firmly believe that this can only happen when mankind sets aside its selfish ways and materialistic desires and comes to recognise and worship the One God and strives to fulfil His rights and act upon His teachings. I pray that may Allah the Almighty grant people wisdom and may all mankind manifest those principle objectives that the Creator and Master of this world, Allah the Almighty, desires from us – to fulfil His rights and those of His creations. Ameen. With these words, I thank you all once again for joining us this evening. Thank you very much.’

INTRODUCTION, MESSAGE OF SUPPORT FROM THE PRIME MINISTER AND GUEST SPEAKERS



**RAFIQ HAYAT –
National President
of the Ahmadiyya
Muslim Community
UK**

It gives me great honour and privilege to welcome you to mark the inauguration of our new headquarters building located at the Baitul Futuh Mosque - the largest mosque in Western Europe.

The Baitul Futuh Mosque complex, was inaugurated in 2003 by our Caliph and worldwide Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad.

In September 2015, a major fire broke out at the administrative side of the mosque complex which destroyed most of the building. By the Grace of God the mosque itself was safe and unaffected and there were no injuries and no loss of life. Whilst this was a devastating incident for the community, our members came together and pulled together to fundraise for the £20m redevelopment of the complex. Today marks the completion of that journey of redevelopment and I hope you all agree that it is a landmark building for London and the UK and one that will be a beacon of peace and harmony.

Today, also features the National Peace Symposium returning after a gap of four years due to the Covid pandemic. The theme for this year's event is 'The Foundations for True Peace', and with the world recently marking one year since the start of the Russia-Ukraine conflict there is a pressing need to seek guidance for establishing peace.

Our community, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, continues to play its part in the promotion of peace and harmony and the main reason is because our founder, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam

Ahmad (peace be upon him) – whom we accept as the Promised Messiah and Mahdi – came with a very clear and special mission; to revive the true peaceful teachings of Islam and to rejuvenate the link between man and God. The community has flourished and is now established in more than 212 countries and our global work is inspired by our Caliph, His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (may Allah be his Helper), and we are truly honoured that he has joined us this evening and will deliver the keynote address. He has addressed parliaments across the world including Westminster the European Parliament and Capitol Hill in the US.

His Holiness is a man of peace who works tirelessly for the good of mankind. His Holiness instructs his followers to use mosques as a means of building interfaith harmony and peace. Indeed, it is under His Holiness's wise leadership that the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has instigated campaigns for interfaith dialogue and opening up its mosques to the wider public. This is the true essence of Islam and indeed of all faiths and at a time of rising global injustice it is a message that offers hope for humanity.

I welcome you once again and thank you for taking time out this evening to join us.



10 DOWNING STREET

MESSAGE FROM RISHI SUNAK:
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

“It is wonderful to see that the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and wider community will come together in celebration of this time. It is encouraging to see how the mosque serves local and national communities with its tireless charity work and its commendable efforts to inspire lasting global peace. I take this opportunity to send my best wishes and I’m sure it will be enjoyed by all who attend here.”



Assalamo Alaikum. It’s a great honour to be here tonight to join with His Holiness, the Ahmadiyya community and everyone here tonight and those watching our proceedings to celebrate the opening of this amazing building. Many of you will have memories of the night when we heard of the fire and our alarm at that event. And so its great to be here tonight to celebrate this most beautiful building, for which so many people have worked so hard.

I want to congratulate everyone involved in this landmark building for this area, but also for our country and for the Ahmadiyya community. I also want to say how pleased I am that we have another Peace Symposium after a few years break, and it's such an important time to have this Peace Symposium. Obviously, we think about the war in Ukraine and the people on the front line, whether it's in Bakhmut, where some appalling fighting is happening as we meet, or across Ukraine. But we should also remember the many other conflicts that are across our world. And I know His Holiness has spoken very much of the seven-year war in Yemen, where so many people have been killed, and so many people are starving as a result of that war. And we mustn't forget these wars, even if our attention is

drawn to the conflict in Ukraine. We have to remember the impact of these wars, not just in the immediate communities and people who are affected by that, but the impact on the whole world. We’ve seen the impact on hunger and starvation because of these wars. The starvation in Yemen is quite extraordinary and appalling. But we know the impact on food prices and energy bills because of the Ukrainian war has left so many people starving and we know even in our own communities, the numbers of people going to food banks has rocketed. So, the need for us to reflect on that and to continue our acts of compassion and the charitable works that the Ahmadiyya community is so well known for, have been so important. So thanks again to the community for the leadership that you show in reaching out to all communities with your charitable work here and abroad.

The theme of today’s Peace Symposium is ‘*The Foundations for True Peace*’ and one can reflect on that in many ways. But I think the teachings of the Ahmadiyya Community point the way forward. ‘Love for all, hatred for none’; if that could be a saying in all governments and all communities around the world, I think we could bring people together in true peace. So I want to thank His Holiness for the leadership he has shown across the world, wherever he is speaking about the importance of peace, his warnings that too often have been proven correct, that without true leadership, we will see conflict and we will see war. And let us hope by the leadership of events like tonight, we will manage to reduce that conflict and we will get towards true peace.



PAUL SCULLY
 MP – *Minister for Tech
 and the Digital
 Economy at the
 Department for
 Science, Innovation
 and Technology*

It is such a pleasure to be with you, it really is. Ed was saying earlier, about how we remember the memory of that fire. So much has happened in seven years and I think I was a new MP, and my first visit here, as an MP was unfortunately to commiserate with you in the aftermath of the fire. And in the spirit of the National Peace Symposium, I've had other sad occasions to join you, whether it's the aftermath of the Westminster Bridge attack, the Charlie Hebdo attack, and a number of other atrocities around the UK and around the world, when it has been your community that were the first to reach out always to understand, to empathise and really to reach out with a hand of peace and friendship, and camaraderie.

So I'm so delighted that we're able to be here, not just to talk about the foundations for true peace but to celebrate what we have in this beautiful building – what we have in this building is a truly beautiful building, which is representative of the relationship that the original mission of the Ahmadiyya community to rebuild that relationship with man and God. I congratulate all of you who were involved in the fundraising, the planning and the building and the rebuilding of this, which is just so much more than bricks and mortar.

Now, we heard as well about the conflicts that continue to go around the world and their implications, such as the plight of the Ukrainians, who are still facing hardship, death, and so many difficulties on the front line. Don't forget the Russian young men who are being pushed onto the front line by Vladimir Putin, as well, and the difficulties that their families are facing. We've heard about Yemen, we see the effects of the earthquake within the war zone of Syria, and of course, Turkey as well. And many of you will know that I'm half-Burmese so the civil war within Myanmar continues to go on and we must therefore make sure that we remind ourselves of all of these things that are going on around the world in people's name.

As a minister, I can't be part of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, however my attention will never be diverted from the pressures that the Ahmadiyya community has around the world. Yes, 'Love for all, hatred for none' is an amazing mantra, but it's much more than that for the community. It comes from the heart, it comes from your actions, and your actions should not be held against you. You should be able to say 'Assalamo Alaikum', you should be able to worship in any country in the world, and most of all in Pakistan. So we will make sure that we work for you on this.

Finally, as we're talking about the foundations to peace, my role now in technology actually does look at some of the foundations, the little small cogs within that. I'm pushing through the online safety bill, at the moment. Incredibly difficult. Some of you will know it's been five years in the making. But what we're trying to do there in this new online world, is to make sure that we can nip in the bud the building blocks of conflict, abuse, hatred, bullying, these kinds of things, coercive control, but also we can tackle misinformation, and disinformation, which again, can just twist what is going out into the minds of our young people, which will then fuel such conflicts. It's so important that we get this right, that we work together to make sure that as a government, as a country, as a community, that we can work out all of these issues to ensure that conflicts can be extinguished, and that we can live in a truly peaceful society.



**FLEUR
 ANDERSON MP –**
*Shadow Paymaster
 General, and Vice-
 Chair of the All-Party
 Parliamentary Group
 for the Ahmadiyya
 Muslim Community*

Your Holiness, distinguished guests, everyone here and watching in other parts of the mosque and around the world, it is a real honour to be here and what a wonderful celebration of a beautiful building. I just came out of the Tube station down the road and looking up at the building lit up at night, it just looks absolutely beautiful and says something very striking about the Ahmadiyya community here in Britain. Such a warm and

welcoming community. And such a symbol of peace as this building is.

I'm so proud in my constituency of Putney that we have The London Mosque, the mosque opened in 1926, where we have been welcoming and celebrating as a diverse community ever since then. Three weeks ago, I was able to go to Pakistan, to Islamabad, to Rabwah and to Lahore to visit many members of the Ahmadiyya community, and also to talk with Ministers and to learn more about all of the issues facing the Ahmadiyya community. Now I knew about them, I've met many people here, but it wasn't until I went to Pakistan that I understood so much more. The persecution being faced by your community, the persecution based on faith for a community that only wants to live in peace. The persecution, right from birth, in education, in the workplace, on the streets, and even not being able to vote. And it's something that we as politicians do take up on your behalf and will continue to do so.

And so I am delighted that here we can be free. We can be politicians, faith leaders, there are so many community leaders here today from so many walks of life, to be here to say that we want to build peace. I also echo the words of other speakers to thank His Holiness for all you have done to speak out for peace around the world. I worked in Bosnia during the war and there I learned that peace can disintegrate so quickly. Amongst the community there, they felt that they were diverse, and they were living together in harmony, but so quickly went into war. And that peace needs to be built every single day. It doesn't just happen. So today, peace is being built by us coming together and saying that this is what we want. We want harmony, we want everyone to be able to live their best lives in freedom. Whether it's in Pakistan, all of the countries mentioned, and here in the UK, we will do our best to do that. But thank you so much for having me here this evening and congratulations.



Prior to the Peace Symposium taking place, various dignitaries had the opportunity to have a group meeting with His Holiness.

THE AHMADIYYA MUSLIM PRIZE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF PEACE

This is an international award that was launched in 2009. It is an award in recognition of an individual's or an organisation's contribution for the advancement of the cause of peace. The 2023 National Peace Symposium was the first to be held after 2019 due to the Covid pandemic, so two peace prizes were presented, for 2019 and for 2022.

2019 Peace Prize Winner

Barbara Karoline Hofmann, Mozambique/Switzerland: Barbara is originally from Switzerland and after almost seven years of work at an international bank and other companies, Barbara participated in a humanitarian mission to Mozambique in 1989. Struck by the terrible situation of children, who were innocent victims of war that had lasted for 30 years in the country, she decided to dedicate her life to helping children, with the conviction that 'if the roots are not cared for, a tree will not be able to live'. By following this principle Barbara's work has become known and respected throughout the world.



In 2001, she survived a near death experience, but recovered and renewed her focus on her charitable work with even greater vigour. In 1990, Barbara developed a project to build a children's centre in Beira in Mozambique. It provides a centre for child victims of war, the orphans and abandoned children.

In 1991, Barbara founded ASEM Switzerland, a non-profit organisation providing education and poverty relief to children. Between 1995 and 2005, she founded ASEM branches in Portugal, New York, Italy, Canada and the USA to support the work. All this enables children of war to have hope and life, chances for a better future and her work has helped over 180,000 children so far.

2022 Peace Prize Winner

Dr Tadatoshi Akiba, Japan: For many years Dr Akiba was an academic teaching in both US and Japan, after having gained his PhD from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Whilst at Tufts University, he developed a keen interest in nuclear disarmament, and established the Hibakusha travel grant programme to bring American journalists annually to Hiroshima to spotlight the experiences of those exposed to nuclear weapons in 1945.



Over the years, he continuously developed his conviction for the abolition of nuclear weapons, and in 1999, became the Mayor of Hiroshima, serving the city for over a decade. He was previously elected as the president of the World Conference for Mayors for Peace Organisation. During his tenure, he went on to win the world citizen award for the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation 2004 and also the Sean McBride Award for the International Peace in 2006. He has served on the board of advisors of the Global Security Institute, is a counsellor at the World Future Council and in 2012, was appointed as the chairman of the Middle Powers Initiative to work with influential middle power countries to bridge the political divide between nuclear weapons states and non-nuclear weapon states, thus advancing practical proposals for nuclear disarmament.

During his last 15 years, he has received international recognition for his tireless work as an advocate for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Being awarded the international Nuclear Free Future Award in 2007, the Raymon Magsaysay award in 2010, and the Otto Hahn Peace Medal for the United Nations Association of Germany.

His work is to raise the world's awareness for the consequences of nuclear war, and is more relevant than ever today and his efforts to advance practical proposals for nuclear disarmament are vital to help reduce the threat of nuclear war.

2019 Peace Prize Winner



Barbara Karoline Hofmann

Assalamo Alaikum. I'm very honoured, pleased, and full of emotion to be here tonight. And to share these moments with all of you. I'm here - not 'me', I'm here - 'we'. We, all the people, that made possible what we have achieved. You can be one person having an idea, you can be one person defending an idea, but it's not one person who is going to do it. And if you want to have it last, then it's always we, and never, I or me. So, I am very pleased to share this award, this honour you gave me tonight with all my people. Because I didn't do it alone. We did it together.

I would like to share with you that I'm still learning, I'm learning every day. I consider myself to be very lucky, because I am studying at the most important and prestigious university of the world, that is the university of children. The children are great teachers, the children wherever, have great knowledge, great vision. And we adults, I think, we could learn wherever we are in the world to be their students. Because I'm sure if we do so, peace would come much quicker and would last and put its seeds in the soil and grow. And no one would be able to destroy it.

I have seen different situations. I just want to give you one example. We had a little girl who was brought to us, she was six. She was a prostitute because she was hungry, because she was an orphan. And because most of the people couldn't give help for free, they had to give with something in return. And that's why at the age of six, she became a prostitute. I have met her again. We were in contact. But one day we spent some time together. She was

18. And she looked at me and said "Mom" with a smile, happy. She said: "Mom, it doesn't hurt anymore, whatever I went through, because I have forgiven them". Isn't that a great lesson? That's why I say, I'm honoured to be the student of the children and still learn. And there is not one day that I'm not learning something new. And I know that I still have everything to learn.

So just before leaving, I would like to share a message with you. We talk about peace, we need peace. We talk about harmony, we need harmony. We talk about all those beautiful things that we know can change the world. The message I would like to give, the experience I myself made, is I cannot give peace if I do not have peace inside of myself. I cannot give love and harmony if I do not love myself with all my qualities and all my faults. So that's the message I would like to leave. It's not talk our walk, but walk our talk. And to start with ourselves, because the day I know myself, the day I love me, myself, how I am, I don't need to point the finger at anyone because everything will be harmony. And that's the message I would like to leave with you. But that's how we can really change the world for the better.

Take care. Don't worry about the wrinkles you can have in your face. But take care that your hearts never get wrinkled. I thank you so much to all of you, and I'm very honoured.

2022 Peace Prize Winner



Dr Tadatoshi Akiba, Former Mayor of Hiroshima
Assalamo Alaikum! Your Holiness, members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, distinguished guests, fellow peace workers, and ladies and

gentlemen: With humility and fresh determination, I stand here today to participate in the Peace Symposium and accept the prize on behalf of the hibakusha, the atomic bomb survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and all peace workers of the world.

It has been a year since Russia invaded Ukraine and threatened the possible use of nuclear weapons, which President Putin repeated over the past year. And when the hibakusha heard his words, this came to their mind – a Nagasaki boy thrown into the living hell caused by a small nuclear weapon. We should not let this happen again anywhere, anytime, to anyone. I know that the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community felt the same way a year ago because you were one of the first in the world to recognise and protest nuclear weapons' inhumanity and evilness back on August 10, 1945. The second [Ahmadiyya Muslim] Caliph declared on that day that: *"It is our religious and moral duty to proclaim to the whole world, that we do not consider lawful such bloodshed."* Belatedly, the world finally came to the same conclusion when the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) took legal effect on January 21, 2021.

Unfortunately, nuclear weapons and dependent states are adamantly opposed to the TPNW by pledging never to sign or ratify it. They believe that the possession of and threat of use of nuclear weapons guarantee that no nuclear powers will use such weapons.

Their belief is just a fantasy. It is not the false deterrence paradigm that did the trick. The hibakusha's power deterred their use. John Hersey, who wrote the inspiring book *Hiroshima* in 1946, confirmed this fact in 1985 during his second visit to Hiroshima. Cities and mayors agree because they are the targets of nuclear weapons by any nuclear weapons country and were the direct victims of past wars. That is why Mayors for Peace, an organisation of mayors worldwide dedicated to peace and the abolition of nuclear weapons, with the Mayor of Hiroshima as its head, strongly advocates "Never again!" to war and nuclear weapons.

We hope that Prime Minister Kishida, who represents Hiroshima and therefore should have internalised such voices of cities and hibakusha, will

lead the May G7 Summit to persuade President Putin away from using nuclear weapons. The success will accelerate the end of the war.

There are signs that Prime Minister Kishida and the other six leaders should aim higher: The G7 Hiroshima Declaration should be the starting point for the universal "No First Use" of nuclear weapons. One such sign is the G20 Bali Summit Declaration last November that affirmed, "The use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is inadmissible." All the G7 leaders lent their names to this.

China and India have adhered to no-first-use policies since acquiring nuclear weapons. China recently released a twelve-point peace proposal on February 24, stating, among other things, "nuclear weapons must not be used and nuclear wars must not be fought. The threat or use of nuclear weapons should be opposed."

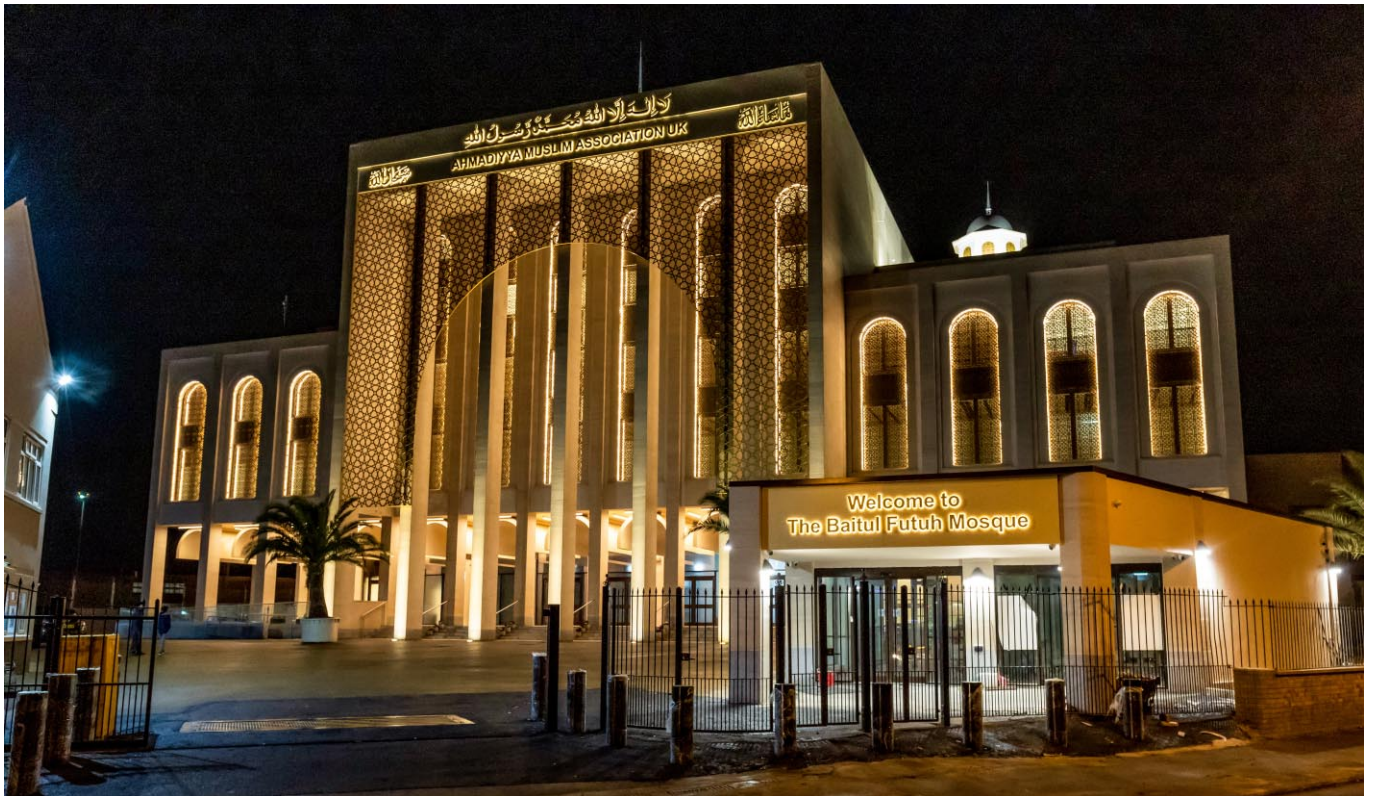
Prime Minister Modi of India coined the phrase: "This era must not be of war," which left its mark in the Bali Declaration. If Japan, India, and China together can create a path to end the Russia/Ukraine war and spearhead global no-first-use and the eventual abolition of nuclear weapons, the world would more than welcome their heroic and historical status. When more than 50,000 people died in a massive earthquake, and tens of thousands need help in Turkey and Syria, why are we wasting away precious human and material resources for war efforts instead of utilising them for rescuing those people? Words of Your Holiness give us direction: "regardless of its effect, we shall never give up our efforts to promote peace and justice."

Let me close by quoting another elder from Hiroshima: Sunao Tsuboi, a hibakusha leader who died two years ago: "Never again, and never give up!"

THE NEW ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING AT THE BAITUL FUTUH COMPLEX

(Inaugurated on 4 March 2023)

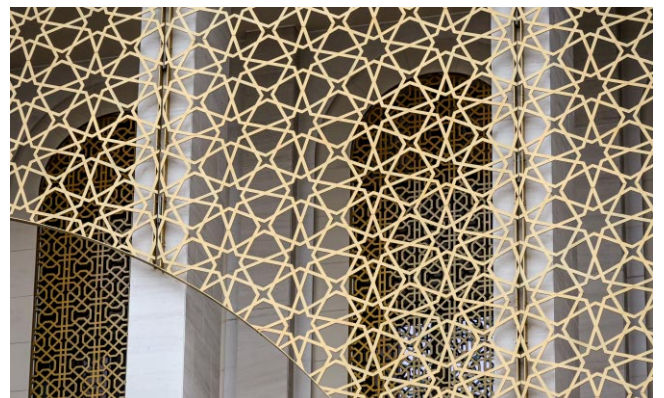




The £20m project was funded by members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and the design provides a timeless architecture for this landmark building. The building has a striking elevation, creating a formal civic frontage to the main entry into the mosque complex. It also brings together Islamic and British architecture and its colonnades provide an impressive civic frontage that enable permeability into the ground floor spaces, and serve as a sheltered area for congregation.

The elegant stone façade, with its deep recesses, is layered with decorative screens thereby adding a richness to the facades and providing privacy for those inside the building.

The five-storey complex features includes two large multipurpose halls, offices and guest rooms. It incorporates naturally ventilated spaces and has low energy and sustainable technologies including, solar panels, efficient heating and cooling systems, and other energy and water saving features which contribute towards its green footprint.



Loyalty

Freedom

Equality

Respect

Peace



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