

THE
CRITICAL
NEED FOR PEACE



The 16th National Peace Symposium was held on Saturday 9 March 2019 at the Baitul Futuh Mosque . The keynote address entitled:
‘TRUE AND SUSTAINABLE WORLD 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 210 countries.

It was established in 1889 by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (peace be upon him) (1835-1908) (*photo right*) 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.



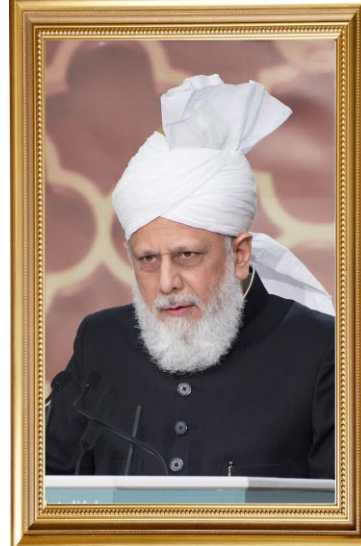
With this conviction, within 130 years, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has expanded globally and it serves mankind by raising millions of pounds every year for charities, building schools and hospitals open to all, providing energy to remote villages, encouraging learning through interfaith dialogue 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 136 branches across the UK.

The Khalifa of Islam: 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.

“ *Ultimately, to bring about peace, whether in Muslim nations or at a broader international level, it is necessary that, at the very minimum, the demands of justice are fulfilled by governments so that all people are given their due rights and that selfish vested interests give way to what is fair and right. Furthermore, international institutions, such as the United Nations, should treat each country equally, rather than bend to the will of certain powers. This is the means of peace. This is the roadmap to a better world.* **”**

(National Peace Symposium 2019)

THE 16th NATIONAL PEACE SYMPOSIUM



On Saturday, 9 March 2019, His Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (may Allah be his Helper), the Worldwide Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, the Fifth Khalifa (Caliph), delivered the keynote address at the 16th National Peace Symposium UK, hosted by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community UK. The event was held at the Baitul Futuh Mosque in London and was attended by over 1000 guests from 31 countries. The guests included government ministers, ambassadors of state, members of both Houses of Parliament and various other dignitaries and guests. The full transcript of the address delivered by His Holiness on this occasion is presented in this brochure.

TRUE & SUSTAINABLE WORLD PEACE

Keynote address by the worldwide head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community at the 16th National Peace Symposium, organised by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community UK, on 9 March 2019 at the Baitul Futuh Mosque in London.

His Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Worldwide Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Fifth Successor to the Promised Messiah, said:

'Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem, in the Name of Allah, the Gracious, Ever Merciful.

All distinguished guests, *Assalamo Alaikum Wa Rahmatullahe Wa Barakatohu* - peace and blessings of Allah be upon you all.

Each year, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community hosts this Peace Symposium, in which current

issues and the overall state of the world are analysed and, in my address, I seek to present answers to these contemporary issues in light of the teachings of Islam. In terms of what impact this event has on the wider world, I have said before that I do not know. However, regardless of its effect, we shall never give up our efforts to promote peace and justice and certainly, I am sure all of you share our ardent desire for true and long-lasting peace to be established in the world.

Indeed, I am sure all of you hope to see an end to the many conflicts and wars that have blighted the world in recent times and for a peaceful world to

emerge in which all people and all nations live amicably and fulfil the rights of one another. Yet, the tragic and devastating truth is that each year, instead of pulling back from war and conflict, the opposite is proving true. Rivalries are intensifying, new battle lines are being drawn, whilst existing hostilities show little sign of abating.

Though we are all aware that we are passing through difficult times, most people do not realise the extent to which the relations between certain nations have deteriorated and how potentially disastrous the consequences could prove to be. For example, in a recent column published by *Bloomberg Businessweek*, the journalist Peter Coy writes:

‘Nuclear war gets surprisingly little attention considering there are enough nukes to end human civilisation in hours... The reason to pay attention is that arms control – especially between the US and Russia – has broken down. A fresh nuclear arms race appears to be taking shape. As for what anyone can do: arms control moves forward in response to public pressure when humanity speaks louder than arms merchants and bellicose world leaders.’

In his article, he also quotes a senior fellow of the Middlebury Institute of International Studies, Nikolai Sokov, who warns:

‘All signs point in the direction of a serious combined nuclear-conventional arms race in Europe.’

The rest of the article reinforces the point that another global arms race has begun and that the threat of nuclear war should not be underestimated. In recent days, the world witnessed a sudden escalation and tension between India and Pakistan. Both countries are nuclear powers and both have built alliances with other nations, whether openly or in secret, which means that the potential consequences of a war would be extensive and far-reaching.

I have expressed my view on many occasions that the leaders of some of the nuclear powers are trigger-happy and appear not to appreciate the truly grave consequences of nuclear warfare. Not only do such weapons have the power to annihilate the countries targeted, but also have the potential to destroy the peace and stability of the entire world. Thus, it is imperative that nations and their leaders do not focus only on their own national interests, but consider what is best for the world at large. Dialogue with other nations and communities is vital and each party should work together with a spirit of tolerance and with the shared objective of developing true and sustainable peace in the world.

In a recent interview with *Spiegel Online*, the former Foreign Minister of Germany, Sigmar Gabriel, has warned of underestimating the dangers posed by the current geopolitical situation and he compares the current political state to the circumstances of the world in 1945 and 1989. The former German Foreign Minister said:

‘The world is changing dramatically...the old West has broken apart...It is a drastic change from the past 70 years, when we could depend on the U.S. as a leading nation. We are going through a fight for European sovereignty in a completely changed world.’

Similarly, in a *New York Times* article, the former leader of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev writes that following the recent suspension of the I.N.F. Treaty by the United States and Russia, a new nuclear arms race has begun. Mr Gorbachev writes:

‘A new arms race has been announced. The I.N.F. Treaty is not the first victim of the militarisation of world affairs. In 2002, the United States withdrew from the Antiballistic Missile Treaty; this year, from the Iran nuclear deal. Military expenditures have soared to astronomical levels and keep rising.’



“ If we glance at just a few of today’s pressing issues it is clear that the world is heading in an ominous direction. During the past year, the United States claimed, with a degree of confidence, that it was close to securing a historic peace deal with North Korea, but in recent days, it has become clear that nothing of substance has been achieved. Conflict in the Middle East continues to rage. ”

Warning about the risk of a nuclear war, Mr Gorbachev writes:

‘There will be no winner in a “war of all against all” — particularly if it ends in a nuclear war. And that is a possibility that cannot be ruled out. An unrelenting arms race, international tensions, hostility and universal mistrust will only increase the risk.’

Hence, expert commentators and experienced politicians are reaching the conclusion that nuclear war no longer remains a remote and distant prospect, but is a growing threat that can no longer be discounted.

If we glance at just a few of today’s pressing issues it is clear that the world is heading in an ominous direction. During the past year, the United States claimed, with a degree of confidence, that it was close to securing a historic peace deal with North

Korea, but in recent days, it has become clear that nothing of substance has been achieved. Conflict in the Middle East continues to rage.

Over almost a decade, Syria has been ravaged by bloodshed and torn asunder. It is said that the civil war is now edging towards an end, but what has the past decade achieved except the death of hundreds of thousands of innocent people and the displacement of millions of others? Nothing positive has emerged and the future remains uncertain and precarious, as tensions rise between nations who have their own vested interests tied into the future of Syria.

On one side, Russia and Turkey are aligning, whilst on the other side, the United States and Saudi Arabia are joining together and are ratcheting up pressure on Iran and seeking further sanctions against them. Political experts are openly expressing that the objective of these

nations is to dominate the Middle East. Another flashpoint and source of conflict are the worsening relations between Turkey and the Kurdish groups who seek autonomy.

Thus, the world is stuck in a vicious cycle of conflict and counter-conflict, as rivalries ferment and hatreds become ever more deeply entrenched. No one knows where such issues will finally lead us or how horrific the consequences will prove to be. What I have mentioned is just the tip of the iceberg. There are many other issues of concern that threaten the peace and well-being of the world.

For example, it is said that the terrorist group Daesh is on the verge of collapse and that their so-called Khilafat is finished. Yet, experts also warn that though Daesh has lost its territory, its hateful ideology persists and its members who have survived are now scattering and could eventually regroup and perpetrate attacks in Europe or elsewhere. Furthermore, nationalism has reared its ugly head again and far-right parties are gaining popularity across the Western world.

They may not have secured outright political majorities, but unless justice at all levels of society prevails, they will continue to gain support. One of the core reasons underpinning their popularity has been widespread immigration, which has caused resentment and a belief that existing indigenous citizens are being short-changed in order to fund and support immigrants. I have spoken on this issue at length in the past and so I do not need to go over old ground. Suffice to say, that if genuine efforts are made to cultivate peace and to help all countries achieve their potential, the desperation of people to flee their homes would automatically subside.

All that most people desire is the ability to provide for their families and it is only when such opportunities are denied to them that they seek to leave their homes in search of a better life. Accordingly, the long-term solution to the

immigration crisis has to be to establish peace in war-torn countries and to help the local people, who have been forced to endure lives of misery and danger, to live peacefully.

In the short term, where refugees or asylum seekers come to the West due to the prevailing political or religious conditions in their own countries, they should be treated with dignity and respect. At the same time, whatever support they are given should not be at the expense of existing citizens.

Immigrants should be strongly encouraged to enter employment as soon as possible, rather than living off benefits for long periods. They should work hard, seek to stand upon their own two feet and contribute positively to their new society. Otherwise, if they are continually funded by taxpayers' money it will inevitably lead to grievances. Indeed, it is my belief that the underlying cause of most resentment in society tends to be economic and financial frustration. Certain groups take advantage of such anxiety by laying the blame at the feet of immigrants or at the followers of religion and incite sentiments of hatred towards them.

Thus, an impression has developed in Europe that Asians, Africans and particularly Muslim immigrants are a threat to society. In the United States, there are similar fears regarding Muslims and also Hispanics seeking to enter the country through Mexico. Nonetheless, I firmly believe that if the major powers set aside their own vested interests and strive earnestly towards improving the economic conditions of poorer nations and treat them with sympathy and respect, such issues would never arise.

Here in the United Kingdom, there is currently a great deal of uncertainty regarding Brexit and the UK's future relationship with the European Union. I made my own views on this topic clear during an address at the European Parliament in 2012. Whilst addressing, I said:



“ ‘From an Islamic perspective, we should strive for the entire world to unite together. In terms of currency, the world should be united...In terms of free business and trade, the world should be united and in terms of freedom of movement and immigration, cohesive and practical policies should be developed, so that the world can become united.’ ”

‘You should make all possible efforts to preserve this unity by honouring each other’s rights. The fears and worries held by members of the general public must be removed.’

I also said:

‘Remember that the strength of Europe lies in its remaining united and together as one. Such unity will not only benefit you here in Europe, but at a global level, will be the means for this continent to maintain its strength and influence.’

In my speech seven years ago, I focused upon the importance of removing the fears of the public about immigration and emphasising the benefits of unity.

However, people’s concerns were not adequately addressed and so, increasingly, people across Europe have come to question the benefits of the European Union. The starkest example is, of course, Brexit but in many European countries, such as Italy and Spain and even Germany, far-right or nationalist parties are gaining popularity and winning seats at the political table through which they are striving to further weaken the European Union and pursuing an anti-immigrant agenda.

Hence, where I had hoped for greater unity in Europe, the past few years have witnessed increased division and turmoil. Why have such frustrations come to the fore? They are derived from economic difficulties and a failure of governments to act with justice and to protect the rights of their citizens. My own view remains that international co-operation is a positive and unifying force for good. Thus, at the European Parliament, I also said:

‘From an Islamic perspective, we should strive for the entire world to unite together. In terms of currency, the world should be united...In terms of free business and trade, the world should be united and in terms of freedom of movement and immigration, cohesive and practical policies should be developed, so that the world can become united.’

Consequently, the Islamic viewpoint is that peace can best be achieved through unity. Yet, regretfully, instead of uniting, we are seeking separation and prioritising our individual interests over the collective interests of the world. I believe that such policies will, and already are, undermining the world’s peace and security. According to Islam, for peace to prevail, justice between nations is a prerequisite.

Where countries face difficulties, other nations should seek to help them selflessly without pushing their own agendas. For example, the Holy Quran states that if there is a war or conflict between two parties, other nations should mediate impartially and seek to bring about a peaceful settlement. However, if one side continues to be unjust and does not move towards a peaceful outcome, then the other nations should unite together to stop the aggressor. Once the aggressive nations or party refrains from wrongdoing, Islam categorically instructs that revenge should not be sought through unjust sanctions or by plundering their resources.

However, time and again, we have seen examples of countries that have intervened in war-torn nations or given aid to deprived countries on the pretext of bringing peace, but have attached strings that enable them to take control of the weaker country's resources. Rather than being content with their own wealth, powerful countries seek to assert their control over weaker nations.

As I have said, the root cause of frustration and the resulting hostility, whether in the East or the West, is economic injustice and so it is essential that a concerted effort is made to bridge the economic divide amongst nations and their people. Furthermore, we must unite in our efforts to end all forms of extremism and prejudice, whether religious, racial or of any other kind.

Where it is clear that people are suffering and that their leaders are not protecting their rights, those international organisations founded for the sake of preserving the peace of the world, notably the United Nations, should exercise lawful and proportionate pressure in order to defend the rights of law-abiding citizens and to push for peace and justice.

In terms of Islam, you may wonder what it can teach us about bringing peace in the world when much of the instability and conflict in recent years

has centred around Muslim countries. Yet the sorry state of those nations is because they have moved far away from the true teachings of Islam.

To get an accurate portrayal of Islamic governance and leadership we should look to the era of the Founder of Islam, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him). After the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) migrated to the city of Madinah, he formed a covenant with the Jewish people, whereby the Muslims and the Jewish citizens were to live together peacefully and with a spirit of mutual sympathy, tolerance and equity.

The covenant proved to be a magnificent charter of human rights and governance and ensured peace between the different communities living in Madinah. According to its terms, all people, regardless of their faith or ethnicity, were bound to respect the rights of one another. Freedom of belief and freedom of conscience were cornerstones of that treaty.

Unity underpinned the agreement, whereby if Madinah was attacked or threatened, the Muslims and Jews would join forces to defend it together and as one. Further, each community had the right to solve their internal issues according to their respective beliefs and customs. History testifies to the fact that the Holy Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him) upheld every aspect of that agreement.

As immigrants, the Muslims sought to serve their new society and to respect the rights of all the citizens of Madinah. It was an outstanding example of successful integration and a manifestation of a peaceful and tolerant multi-cultural society. The Treaty of Madinah was based directly upon the teachings of the Holy Quran. For example, chapter 16, verse 91 of the Holy Quran states:

‘Verily, Allah enjoins justice, and the doing of good

“

‘In terms of Islam, you may wonder what it can teach us about bringing peace in the world when much of the instability and conflict in recent years has centred around Muslim countries. Yet the sorry state of those nations is because they have moved far away from the true teachings of Islam.

”



to others; and giving like kindred...’

Thus, the Holy Quran has outlined three levels of engagement with other people and other communities. The first and minimum level is of justice, whereby the Holy Quran advocates the need to treat everyone fairly and equitably. The standards of justice required by Islam are outlined in chapter 4, verse 136 of the Holy Quran, which states:

‘O ye who believe! Be strict in observing justice, *and* be witnesses for Allah, even though it be against yourselves or *against* parents and kindred. Whether he be rich or poor, Allah is more regardful of them both *than you are*. Therefore, follow not low desires so that you may be *able to* act equitably. And if you conceal *the truth* or evade *it*, then *remember that* Allah is well aware of what you do.’

Hence, according to the Quran, justice requires that a person is willing to testify even against himself and his most loved ones in order to guard and protect the truth. The second level of engagement advocated by the Holy Quran is that

a person should not only be just, but should go beyond it by doing ‘good to others’ by manifesting generosity and forgiveness. As I have already mentioned, the Holy Quran teaches that once you have successfully stopped an aggressive nation from inflicting further cruelties, you should not seek revenge or impose hardship upon it.

Rather, you should seek to help them build up their economy and infrastructure. Where this will help them, it will also help you in the long term. If those countries, who have been centres of war or division, are enabled to prosper economically, they will no longer harbour frustrations or bear hatred for other countries. Nor will their people be forced to migrate.

This is the wisdom underpinning the Islamic teaching of going beyond basic justice and exhibiting kindness and compassion. The third level of engagement taught by the Holy Quran is to treat others in the same way that a mother treats her child, which is the most selfless form of love, as it is rendered without any expectations of reward. To treat others with this benevolent

spirit is not easy, but this should be our constant aspiration.

Ultimately, to bring about peace, whether in Muslim nations or at a broader international level, it is necessary that, at the very minimum, the demands of justice are fulfilled by governments so that all people are given their due rights and that selfish vested interests give way to what is fair and right. Furthermore, international institutions, such as the United Nations, should treat each country equally, rather than bend to the will of certain powers. This is the means of peace. This is the roadmap to a better world.

This is the only way we can prevent mankind from sliding further towards grave peril.

With these few words, it is my heartfelt prayer that may Allah the Almighty enable true peace to emerge and may the long shadows of war and conflict that hover above us be replaced by blue skies of peace and prosperity. I pray for an end to the frustrations and deprivation that have plagued the lives of countless people and have fuelled devastating wars and grievances across the world.

Instead of seeking to dominate others and assert their own rights, I pray that nations and their leaders come to see the benefit of fulfilling the rights of one another. Instead of laying the blame for the world's problems on certain religions or people of particular ethnicities, I pray that we show tolerance of each other's beliefs and customs and value the diversity within our societies.

I pray that we come to see the best in humanity and use each other's strengths and skills to build a better world for our children and to cultivate lasting peace in society. Surely, the alternatives do not bear thinking about. Earlier, I quoted several experts who have warned of nuclear warfare and

of a spiralling global arms race. Those articles, and many others, give weight to the belief that the world is hurtling towards a titanic catastrophe, the like of which mankind has never seen before and one that will be impossible to contain.

According to some estimates, the effects of a nuclear war could reach 90% of the world. Furthermore, if there is a nuclear war, we will not only be destroying the world today, but we will also be leaving behind a lasting trail of destruction and misery for our future generations. Hence, we must pause and reflect on the consequences of our actions.

We should not consider any issue or conflict, whether within a country or at an international level, to be insignificant. Whether we are dealing with economic issues, or immigration or any other crisis we must show tolerance and strive to break down the barriers that divide us. We should utilise all of our energies and faculties to pursue peace by seeking to end every conflict amicably, through dialogue and mutual compromise and by fulfilling the rights of one another.

May Allah the Almighty enable us to do so – *Ameen*. With these words, I would like to thank all of our guests for joining us here this evening. Thank you very much.'

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 by His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (may Allah be his Helper). It is awarded in recognition of an individual's or an organisation's contribution for the advancement of the cause of peace.



YEAR	RECIPIENT
2009	Lord Eric Avebury – UK
2010	Abdul Sattar Edhi – Pakistan
2011	SOS Children's Villages – UK
2012	Dr Boachie-Adjei – Ghana
2013	Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow – Scotland
2014	Mrs Sindhutai Sapkal – India
2015	Hadeel Qassim – Iraq
2016	Mrs Setsuko Thurlow – Canada
2017	Dr Leonid Roshal – Russia
2018	Dr Fred Mednick – USA

DR FRED MEDNICK – 2018 Peace Prize Winner

Peace Prize Winner Introduction – Dr Fred Mednick - USA

Launched in 2000, the mission of *Teachers Without Borders* is to connect teachers to information and each other in order to close the educational divide. It is based on the premise that teachers are community change agents and key drivers of global development.

Initiatives include education in emergencies, education for girls, peace and human rights education, bullying, ICT in education and child friendly spaces.

Teachers Without Borders programmes and resources have been adopted by teachers and communities worldwide including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Brazil, Brunei, Cameroon, China, Ghana, Haiti, Mexico, Nigeria, Turkey and United States of America.

All *Teachers Without Borders* programmes are conceived and led by teacher leaders. Programmes are designed to be adaptable, adoptable, affordable, and accessible so that local leaders can ensure relevance for the communities they serve.

Today, *Teachers Without Borders* members represent 171 countries and its social networks are flourishing. They are a local action organisation — on a global scale, and it is completely free.

It was founded by Dr Fred Mednick, who is a former English teacher and a high school principal.



INTRODUCTION AND GUEST SPEAKERS



RAFIQ AHMAD HAYAT

Amir (National President),

Ahmadiyya Muslim Community UK

The world is passing through grim times, the rise of nationalism, the increased threat of terrorism, and endless injustice towards nations and fellow human beings, has resulted in strife and global unrest on a large scale. It is frightening that minor political incidents between nations has the potential to trigger a nuclear conflict. It is clear that the world lacks leadership to direct us towards peace and away from conflict.

Time and again, the Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, His Holiness Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, may Allah be his Helper, has highlighted the need to tackle extremism at its grass roots, and to engage communities and nations across the globe and highlight, in no uncertain terms that a concentrated effort is required for the establishment of lasting peace.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim community was founded in 1889 by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, peace and blessings be upon him, whom we accept as the Promised Messiah and the reformer of the time. His main objective was to revive the true peaceful teachings of Islam and to bring faiths together under one umbrella in order to achieve lasting peace. His whole life revolved around this purpose, to establish peace not only amongst people with the same faith but with people from different and all points of view.

Since the passing of the founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been truly blessed to have the institution of the divinely guided Khilafat. Through prayer and wisdom, the Khalifa unites the community and this community is now established in 210 countries of the world. The Khalifa of Islam, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, leads us in our worldwide campaign for peace, through which we provide food, shelters, education, health services, disaster relief, clean water, electricity, and much more to people all over the world, and it is under the guidance of our Khalifa that we engage in dialogue, train our youth to serve their country, and to serve humanity and promote the values of loyalty, respect and peace.



THE MOST REVEREND KEVIN MCDONALD
Archbishop Emeritus of Southwark (Catholic Church)

Your Holiness, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. It is a great pleasure for me and I think it is very appropriate that on behalf of all the guests here this evening I say a big thank you to the Ahmadiyya community for this initiative which is quite unusual and different and imaginative, bringing together people of different religions, different faiths, people in the public and private sector, people of different walks of life, to reflect on peace because peace is an issue for all of us, or perhaps to say more precisely, the lack of peace is an issue for all of us.

There is a particular timeliness about this year's peace symposium. We think of the prevalence of knife crime, which is causing such perplexity and such concern, in this city. We think of the Brexit crisis, and the incredible animosity and resentment and anger and all that, that it has unleashed. And of course we think of the wider world, particularly in places like Yemen and Syria, and the ongoing appalling suffering of so many of our men and women. And so simply to have an event which focuses on peace and puts peace at the centre is particularly important.

I think the Ahmadiyya faith focuses on peace. And it is right I think that religions, faiths, step up at this moment. We live in a time when there is profound unease and unhappiness with the political culture in which we live, and it is particularly appropriate therefore that people of faith step up.

Particularly also since we live in a time of great religious illiteracy, where people seem to feel free to pontificate about religion, while knowing absolutely nothing about it.

One particular thing I would say is this, peace in one form or another is a fundamental feature of all religions, whether it's the Eastern religions or the West Asian religions, Christianity, Judaism, Islam. And what I think is particularly important is the relationship between inner peace and peace in the world. Peace in the world is not something that can be created by negotiation or by force, the situation of conflict can only change if people change, if people are people of peace.

I have been involved in a number of conferences, in which Buddhists, Hindus, Christians and others have explored the way in which finding peace, discovering peace, through prayer, contemplation, through

religious practice changes us as people, and that's the crucial thing, because if we are not transformed and become people of love and of peace and of concern, it doesn't happen naturally, it's worked on, we would say by the grace of God but certainly, through prayer. The alternative to that is that our actions, our responses, what we do is fuelled and motivated by aggression, anger, jealousies.

All the things that are part and parcel of being human, which are in need of transformation, which are in need of change. And so I thank the Ahmadiyya community for drawing attention to the centrality of peace, for inviting people of different faiths, and none to come together. And I hope we can come together around this conviction that there can only be peace in the world if there is peace within us. In saying that I'm speaking to the spirit of this gathering because I think this is an invitation to focus on peace and to put peace centre stage and to ask the question of what I can do as a person in terms of changing myself, changing my society, changing my community to bring peace in the world.



DR FRED MEDNICK

*Founder of Teachers Without Borders
Peace Prize Winner*

Assalamo Alaikum.

Your Holiness, a Man of Peace, esteemed members of the Ahmadiyya community, organisers of the National Peace Symposium, colleagues, friends, and I hope fellow teachers. I am deeply honoured and privileged to receive this award, and I do so on behalf of Teachers Without Borders. We are really moved and profoundly grateful for your commitment to peace making through education.

Teachers are the largest professionally trained group of people in the world; they know who is sick, who is missing, they know who is orphaned by AIDS, they know who is susceptible to the scourge of human trafficking, or who may be forced into military conscription or brainwashing. Teachers are a development army in one's own backyard. They yield powerful, powerful lessons and weapons indeed – literacy and numeracy, critical thinking and love. Their voices, however, are not often heard. 20 years ago, my organisation recognised the converging lines of education, connectivity and development, because brains are evenly distributed around the world and education is not and we need to depend upon those brains. We sought then as we do today to connect those teachers to information and each other to transform the teaching profession into something that connects to human development and to human welfare.

So from the very beginning this organisation started, perfect strangers reached out, and they reached

out across those borders, motivated and sustained, not by any sense of self aggrandisement and certainly not for money, but by a deeply resonant song of reciprocity and hospitality and human agency. Many of these members risk their lives to hear that song, they convene teachers from regions and conflict in five continents. They created education centres for gang members and prisoners and refugees and child soldiers and the marginalised. Following a genocidal act in northern Nigeria, it took only three people to launch a radio show, and that radio show was the voice of teachers and it was filled with stories of peace making and love. Just three people and it reached 1.7 million listeners a week because it is a resonant song for everyone. They connected earthquake, science and safety for the most seismically vulnerable communities in the world, so that children can learn in peace. And those child-friendly spaces at great risk, during natural and national disasters and they do this as volunteers.

The teachers educate where there are no schools, or when schools have been ransacked or destroyed or transformed into sham polling stations, they find ways to teach even when thugs and pickup trucks wave black flags or wear white hoods in a savage attempt to shred any kind of fragile social contract we have. And today, today as a rising tide of xenophobia and hate speech attempts to dismantle global agreements and infiltrate social networks with these pernicious messages of violence against the “other”, teachers step up to affirm the values of civil discourse and inclusion, and when asked why they do this they say that education, like peace itself, is a fundamental human right. For them all this work is an act of joyful, restorative justice.

At the launch of the Universal Declaration of Human rights 70 years ago, Eleanor Roosevelt posed a very critical, important challenge. She asked, “Where after all, do universal human rights begin?” Her answer? In the small places, close to home, so small and so close to home that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world and unless these rights have meaning there, she said, they will have little meaning anywhere. So those small places for me, for my organisation, have always been classrooms. There, in those mini democracies and laboratories of hope, the education of girls lifts everyone. There, in those small palaces, children learn to protect and cherish their local environment and by doing so they learn to protect and cherish each other. It’s there when children have faith in one another, they can learn respect for all faiths. There, in those small places, lessons in hygiene bolster and entire communities the immune system, there the arts cultivate courage and possibility and in those small places, in those small places, children practice how to address small conflicts, and so they grow up to learn how to mend and repair the world.

My organisation is 19 - 20 years old. We have a long way to go, all of us have a long way to go. But with this award, Your Holiness, the Ahmadiyya community has heard the teachers’ voice and has heard the teachers’ song and has made visible those precious small places. And I can only say here today, honoured by the hospitality and warmth and openness of this community, it is a special honour to receive this award, and we shall do our best inshAllah [God Willing] to reach each teacher we can on this planet and even more teachers and more children in those small places everywhere on earth. Thank you.

**The symposium receives many messages of support.
Two such messages are featured below.**

Video message to the National Peace Symposium from:

**H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca -
President of Malta**

“The theme of this symposium, The Critical Need for Peace, is particularly close to my heart...I believe our faith communities are essential stakeholders to create an environment of sustainable peace and holistic well-being in all of our communities, our countries and our world. One important way to achieve this is by focusing on interfaith dialogue...Underlying the diversity of our faith traditions there are common values. I believe that these common values should be the connections that must exist amongst us and amongst our human family, because they are critical for peace. At a period in our history when the world is facing increasing uncertainties and social tensions, I believe that our religious leaders have an important responsibility to encourage dialogue among our respective communities. It is by promoting dialogue and exploring opportunities for cooperation that we can all achieve sustainable peace for our world. I look forward to joining you at a future edition of this important gathering. May you continue to promote an environment of dialogue and respect for the benefit of our entire human family.”



**Message of Support from Emanuela Del Rae,
Italian Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs and
International Cooperation.**

“Let me express my deep appreciation for the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community engagement in activities dedicated to protect and promote universal human rights in the world and to recognise efforts made by those who seek to advance the cause of peace...”

“The 16th Ahmadiyya Muslim Community UK National Peace Symposium is a very significant event, which makes us all understand how fundamental it is to understand the responsibility that we have in reaffirming universal values within the framework of Human Rights. The challenges posed by our globalized society at all levels – social, economic, political, cultural – call upon us the need to be united for peace and to strive together for the improvement of the conditions of people today and of future generations. The leadership of His Holiness the Khalifa is strongly significant in this complex context.”



PRESS CONFERENCE

Prior to the main event, a press conference was held with His Holiness. Journalists from the UK and international media organisations were in attendance and asked His Holiness a number of questions on a range of issues.

On the question of nuclear weapons beings necessary as deterrents, His Holiness stated that this was just a “flimsy excuse” as nuclear weapons were not saving countries, but destroying them, especially due to the economic disturbances they cause. In this regard His Holiness cited the example of the Cold War between Russia and the USA.



Loyalty

Freedom

Equality

Respect

Peace



www.LoveForAllHatredForNone.org

Ahmadiyya Muslim Community UK

The London Mosque
16 Gressenhall Road
London SW18 5QL

Tel: 020 8874 5836

Fax: 020 8874 4779

www.alislam.org • www.mta.tv • VoiceOfIslam.co.uk

Email: ExternalAffairs@ahmadiyya.org.uk

Twitter: [@AhmadiyyaUK](https://twitter.com/AhmadiyyaUK)