

Invitation



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH MOST GRACIOUS,
MOST MERCIFUL

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ
عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ
سورة آل عمران آية رقم ١١٠

“You are the best community raised up for mankind - you
enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and believe in
Allah. “

The Quran 3: 110

وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا
سورة آل عمران آية رقم ١٠٣

“Hold fast, all together, to the bond with Allah and
not be divided.”

The Quran 3: 103

وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى
الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ
سورة المائدة آية رقم ٢

“Help one another to virtue and God-consciousness and
do not help one other to sin and transgression.”

The Quran 5: 2

An invitation to form The Muslim Council of Britain

A meeting was held in Bradford at the beginning of the new Islamic year, on 8 Muharram 1417 / 25 May 1996. It was attended by representatives of many national, regional and local Muslim organisations in Britain. They had been meeting and consulting for a long period of time before this. They decided unanimously to form *The Muslim Council of Britain*.

The meeting, described as an “historic event in the life of the Muslim community of Britain”, adopted a Constitution and Standing Orders for the new body. It also set up a Preparatory Committee to inform the Muslim public and organised bodies throughout the country about the proposed Muslim Council of Britain and invite their support and participation. The Preparatory Committee is also to prepare for and convene the Inaugural Meeting of the Muslim Council of Britain in the near future. At this Inaugural Meeting, it is proposed that the Constitution and Standing Orders will be ratified by all participating organisations and the new body formally launched, *in sha Allah*.

All national, regional and local Muslim organisations including mosques, specialist bodies and institutions, youth and women’s organisations are now being invited to form *The Muslim Council of Britain*. They will be able to join together in its launching, and take an active part in its functioning.

A large number of these organisations have supported this initiative from the beginning and many others continue to do so. A list of these organisations is included here. Those who have not yet participated in the process will naturally want to know more about the proposed new body. They will want to know something about its background, how it will be formed, how it will function and what would be its main concerns.

What is The Muslim Council of Britain?

Declaration of Intent The proposed MCB is a representative body of established national and regional bodies as well as local mosques, organisations and specialist institutions. The Declaration of Intent as set out in the MCB Constitution tells what the MCB will be.

- The Muslim Council of Britain is an accord of mosques, Muslim associations and institutions in the UK. It shall be informed and guided by the Qur'an and the Sunnah in all its aims, policies and procedures.
- It is an independent body working for the pleasure of Allah to promote consultation, cooperation and coordination on Muslim affairs in the UK.
- It is a non-sectarian body working for the common good without interfering in, displacing or isolating any existing Muslim work in the community.
- It is a broad-based, representative organisation of Muslims in Britain, accommodating and reflecting the variety of social and cultural backgrounds and outlook of the community.
- It is a body that will base its policies and decisions on consensus and the largest practicable measure of common agreement.
- It is a formally constituted body with a system of representation and accountability.
- It is a body that will seek to draw on the talents and specialist skills of individuals and the strengths of organised bodies to meet the great challenges ahead in preparing the case for, and advocating, the responsibilities and rights of Muslims living in Britain.

The aims of the MCB as stated in the Constitution are:

- i** to promote cooperation, consensus and unity on Muslim affairs in the UK.
- ii** to encourage and strengthen all existing efforts being made for the benefit of the Muslim community.
- iii** to work for a more enlightened appreciation of Islam and Muslims in the wider society.
- iv** to establish a position for the Muslim community within British society that is fair and based on due rights.
- v** to work for the eradication of disadvantages and forms of discrimination faced by Muslims.
- vi** to foster better community relations and work for the good of society as a whole.

The MCB's structure The MCB has been carefully structured to make it an open and representative body that is committed to service. It gives due recognition to national and regional bodies and organised activities. There will always be room and a welcome in the MCB for any national or other organisation which accepts the articles of association. A system of zonal representation will ensure that every Muslim, no matter how isolated, can be involved in the process of consultation and representation. The structure is such that no single organisation may dominate the MCB. It is not personality driven - the secretary-general cannot be re-appointed for a second consecutive term. Elements of continuity and change are built into the structure. Through the Board of Counsellors, opportunity is given for persons of experience and knowledge to be of permanent use in an advisory capacity. There is room too for the talents and skills of individuals through co-option into the Central Working Committee and other specialist committees. For more details see pages 10-11.

Relationship with non-participating bodies It is characteristic of the MCB's approach that it clearly states that it will "seek a relationship of good-will and mutual respect" with all Muslim organisations. The door will remain open for them to join.

The MCB and the wider society The Muslim community in Britain is not and cannot be a ghetto community. The meeting in Bradford stressed that Muslims must be concerned with the wider society in which we live and that we have a positive contribution to make. The MCB hopes to develop this positive identity and approach. It seeks the understanding and goodwill of all.

What will the MCB be doing in practice? The participating bodies in the MCB include many organisations that are national bodies in their own right, as well as specialist bodies that focus on specific needs of the Muslim community. The MCB's General Assembly will need to decide what is most appropriately done under its aegis. There are several fields of work for the MCB to pursue, including:

- establishing mechanisms by which Muslim organisations can be rapidly informed of matters of concern, so enabling the community to respond promptly and effectively in times of crisis.
- sponsoring social policy planning and demographic research, so that the community can prepare for the challenges ahead. The Muslim population of Britain has a significantly greater proportion of young persons. Large numbers are growing up in deprived conditions. There is a time bomb ticking away, and unless organisations unite and take preparatory steps now in creating an infrastructure of social and economic support, we would have failed the next generation.

- presenting and communicating the Muslim case to the media and the public at large. Each day raises issues of concern which require a well-informed response. The MCB will be well-placed to draw on experts in the community and its specialist member bodies to provide the required information. Muslims have an important contribution to make in many of the public debates affecting the Muslim community and the wider society and in setting an ethical and responsible agenda.
- effective public campaigning on issues of shared concern, so that there is never any doubt that the million Muslims or more in Britain can, when necessary, be mobilised.

**Why should
Organisations join the
MCB**

As Muslims we have a duty to ourselves, to our families, to our neighbourhoods, our communities and the wider society in which we live. We have a duty to work together in jamaa‘ah, to help one another to righteousness and taqwa. Jama‘ah is an obligation, not a personal choice. The benefits of working together will be seen at various levels, *in sha Allah*.

An invitation

In this spirit, we invite all Muslim organisations in the UK to participate in this initiative.

Let us do our duty together.

**List of Organisations
participating in the
NICMU initiative**

Organisations which participated in the National Interim Committee for Muslim Unity (NICMU) initiative leading to the proposed Muslim Council of Britain (MCB). This includes national and regional organisations and specialist bodies. The number of local mosques and institutions is more than those listed.

Albanian Muslim Society
Da'watul Islam, UK
FOSIS - Federation of the Students Islamic Societies in the UK & Eire
Ghana Muslim Union, UK
Hizbul Ulama UK
Indian Muslim Federation, UK
Islamic Forum Europe
Islamic Society of Britain
Jamiat-e-Ulama Britain
Markazi Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith UK
Markazi Jamiat Ulama
Memon Association UK
Muslim Solidarity Committee
Muslim Welfare House
Nigerian Muslim Association of UK
Sudanese Muslim Society
UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs
UK Islamic Mission
World Islamic Forum
World Islamic Mission
Young Muslim Organisation UK
Young Muslims UK

Bradford Council of Mosques
Confederation of Sunni Mosques in Birmingham
Federation of Muslim Organisations in Leicestershire
Federation of Pakistani & Muslim Organisations, Reading
Islamic Defence Council, Scotland
Lancashire Council of Mosques
Sussex Muslim Society

Al Hijra School, Birmingham
AlAsar Foundation, Hounslow
AlKhoei Foundation
Anjuman-e-Haideria
Anjuman-Faiz-ul-Qur'an, Birmingham
Association of Muslim Lawyers
Association of Muslim Schools of the UK & Eire
Association of UK Muslims, London
Birmingham Central Mosque
Birmingham Jami Mosque & Islamic Centre
Blackpool Islamic Society
British Shia Muslim Action Committee
Darul Uloom Islamia, Bury
East London Mosque
Institute of Islamic Studies & Da'wah, Birmingham
Interpal
Iqra Trust, London
Islamia Schools Trust, London
Islamic Centre, Nottingham

Islamic Cultural Centre, London
Islamic Da'wah Academy, Leicester
Islamic Defence Council, Derby
Islamic Education Centre, St. Leonards on Sea, Hastings
Islamic Foundation, Markfield
Islamic Institute of Policy Studies, London
Islamic Medical Association
Islamic Relief
Islamic Shari'ah Council, UK
Jinnah Community Centre, Leicester
Kashmiri Council for Human Rights
Liverpool Islamic Society
Madrasa Qasim Ulam, Birmingham
MECC - Muslim Education Coordinating Council
Minhaj al-Qur'an, London
Mosque & Islamic Centre, Walsall
Muslim Aid
Muslim Care, London
Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre, London
Muslim Doctors and Dentists Association
Muslim Education Forum UK
Muslim Welfare Trust, Leicester
North Kirkles Muslim Assoc, Batley
Redbridge & Chigwell Muslim Association, Essex

What is the background of the MCB?

The MCB is the result of a long period of consultation within the Muslim community. For several years in fact, there has been a keenly felt desire to have a greater degree of coordination among Muslims in Britain to deal with the many issues and problems that constantly face the community. Increasingly, coordination and unity is now seen as a question of the very survival of the community.

Various attempts have been made over the years to achieve some measure of coordination with some positive results. But it is probably true to say that these attempts have not kept pace with the rapid growth and rich diversity of the community. On specific issues of common concern, various initiatives from time to time have shown the potential for a unified Muslim response. For example, events like the publication of grossly abusive and sacrilegious material have shown the need and the value of greater coordination within the Muslim community.

The community's expectations from a coordinating body - from NICMU Survey findings, 1995.

'SPOKESPERSON' ROLE

- to be a representative voice of Muslims in Britain in relation to government, local authorities and media
- to represent the Muslim community nationally and internationally, with the interests of the Muslims and Islam paramount

'NEGOTIATION & REPRESENTATION' ROLE

- to liaise with government and other bodies to obtain the best results for the Muslim community

LOBBYING ROLE

- to serve as a lobby group to deal with major and minor crisis situations
- to obtain political support for common interests and opinions of Muslims in Britain

'ANALYSIS, PLANNING & INFORMATION DISSEMINATION' ROLE

- to constantly monitor trends and study the needs and problems of Muslims in the UK
- to recommend and initiate courses of action where appropriate on a long-term basis as opposed to mere crisis management
- to ensure research on issues vital to the continuity of Muslim life in Britain
- to provide access to reliable information about Islam and Muslims in Britain
- to prepare a national database of Muslims and Muslim organisations in the UK

'RESOURCE MANAGEMENT' ROLE

- to coordinate the work of the Muslim community to avoid duplication and wasting of resources, and promote useful work

CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ROLE

- to help solve disputes among Muslim organisations

'MEDIA RELATIONSHIP' ROLE

- to develop a media policy and programme for the common good
- to counter false and malicious propaganda against Islam and Muslims

'LEADERSHIP' ROLE

- to provide a sincere leadership that is capable of solving problems and providing guidance and support where appropriate

'COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMMES' ROLE

- to prepare Muslim youth for future challenges
- to address the educational problems and needs of Muslim children
- to create more avenues for Muslims of all cultural backgrounds to associate and interact to remove racial, ethnic and national barriers and develop true Islamic identity and strength on the basis of that identity
- to promote Muslim trade associations and cooperative commercial ventures catering for Muslim needs
- to promote regulatory bodies (certification for compliance with Islamic requirements)
- to undertake a teaching programme to convey to Muslims what their religion is about
- to make da'wah to non-Muslims through appropriate methods
- to coordinate the Islamic calendar and 'Id dates

But issue after issue and crisis after crisis continue to emphasise that Muslims are not at all well-prepared to deal with these issues and crises, much less even to think of long-term needs and objectives.

NICMU It was this growing realization of the need for a greater degree of coordination among Muslims in the UK which led to a meeting in **Birmingham on 30 April 1994**. This meeting formed the National Interim Committee on Muslim Unity (NICMU) to find out the views and ideas of organisations and individuals on the problems facing the Muslim community and their role in the wider society.

A country-wide process of consultation followed. A Consultation Paper was printed and circulated to Muslim organisations, mosques, Islamic centres and institutions and individuals active in the community. Translations of the Consultation Paper were done in community languages and circulated. Members of the NICMU working party had **meetings with all the major Muslim organisations in the country and with prominent persons**. However, because there is still sadly no up-to-date and comprehensive list of Muslim organisations in the country, some organisations may not have received the consultation paper.

Survey of Muslim Opinion The NICMU Survey has been described as “broad-based and representative”. It was the first of its kind to poll Muslim opinion across the whole of the United Kingdom. The survey findings pointed to **a fund of good-will** for the unity initiative. They also pointed to **a spirit of seriousness and deep concern** for the future of the Muslim community and the younger generations in particular. The general feeling was that something must be done and that there was little time to waste. There was also **a sense of commitment** on the part of those who responded and a willingness to work for the benefit of the community as a whole.

Three options The consultation process provided a clear signal from the community. It showed that the majority of Muslims in Britain felt that there is a need for greater coordination and unity.

There were three options then before the NICMU: 1. A Do-Nothing Option; 2. Adapt an existing national body option and 3. Inaugurate a new national body option. The do-nothing option was obviously discarded. The second option was examined in detail but proved to be unacceptable. The majority felt that a new national representative body should be inaugurated.

In the light of these findings, NICMU continued the process of consultation and was required to draft a Constitution to give shape to the consensus that emerged. Many meetings were held in various parts of the country. **The Muslim Council of Britain is a practical outcome of this process of consultation**. With its mandate completed, the NICMU was formally dissolved by the meeting in Bradford.

The General Assembly will set the policy guidelines for the MCB.

2. The Central Working Committee. This will comprise (i) members elected by the General Assembly (ii) members nominated by recognized national and regional organisations, each making one nomination and (iii) co-opted members.

The elected members of the CWC will appoint the Secretary General, the Deputy Secretary General, the Assistant Secretary General and the Treasurer of the MCB. The structure of the CWC is such that no single organisation may dominate the MCB. Also, it is not personality driven - the Secretary-General cannot be re-appointed for a second consecutive term. Elements of continuity and change are built into the structure.

3. Specialist Committees. There will be at least three such committees - finance and general purpose, research and documentation, and the media committee. These will be appointed by the CWC which will seek to benefit from the talents and skills of individuals who may not be members of any organisations.

4. The Board of Counsellors. This will comprise heads of Muslim national bodies, experts in the Shari'ah and various other fields and past Secretary-Generals of the Central Working Committee.

The Board of Counsellors will provide counsel and guidance to the CWC. Its composition will reflect the standing of national organisations and the expertise of individuals in the community. It will provide elements of continuity to the decision making processes of the MCB.

How to join the MCB? Membership of the MCB is open to organisations. (Individuals not belonging to organisations, however, are welcome to participate in the work of the MCB).

CRITERIA FOR DEFINING 'NATIONAL BODY'

An organisation is deemed to be a 'national Muslim body' if

- (a) its headquarters is located in Britain
- (b) its scope of activity and membership are countrywide
- (c) it has an established and recognised presence within the Muslim community
- (d) it has been operating for at least two years
- (e) it has a constitution and produces its annual report and/or statements of accounts (or an explanation if this documentation is not available).

CRITERIA FOR DEFINING A 'REGIONAL BODY'

An organisation is deemed to be a 'regional Muslim body' if

- (a) its headquarters is located in Britain
- (b) its scope of activity and its membership cover (i) all or part of a county or a number of adjacent counties, or (ii) it is an association or council of mosques operating within a town, city or county.
- (c) it provides its constitution with annual reports and/or statements of accounts (or an explanation if this documentation is not available).

There are three categories of membership:

1. National Bodies
2. Regional Bodies
3. Other bodies - specialist institutions, local organisations, mosques.

Organisations under each category have to satisfy certain criteria under the Constitution. Each organisation will be required to fill out an Affiliation Form obtainable from the Preparatory Committee. The Preparatory Committee in the first instance will determine the category of membership of each organisation.

What happens next? All organisations, institutions and mosques satisfying the criteria for membership will send the required number of delegates to the Inaugural Meeting of the MCB - date to be fixed. The Inaugural Meeting will ratify the Constitution and Standing Orders of the MCB, and provide an opportunity for delegates throughout the country to get to know one another and discuss issues and policies of the MCB. There will be no elections at this meeting.

First General Assembly Meeting This will take place at least two months after the Inaugural Meeting and the main purpose will be to elect the Central Working Committee (CWC). The CWC will in turn select the office-bearers, including the first Secretary-General.

How can you help? All individuals and organisations in the UK are invited to support the initiative of the MCB and help in its formation and effective functioning.

- Please keep the MCB Preparatory Committee informed of the up-to-date addresses, telephone & fax numbers of individuals and organisations willing to help.
- Send any comments and suggestions on the MCB to the Preparatory Committee.
- Be prepared to help in any tasks where your aptitude, skills and contacts can benefit the common good.

We look forward to your support.

We pray to Allah Subhaanahu wa Ta'ala to guide us all and strengthen our efforts in the cause of righteousness and obedience to His will.

Address and Fax Numbers of the Preparatory Committee
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MCB

THE MUSLIM COUNCIL OF BRITAIN

A step towards greater consultation, cooperation and