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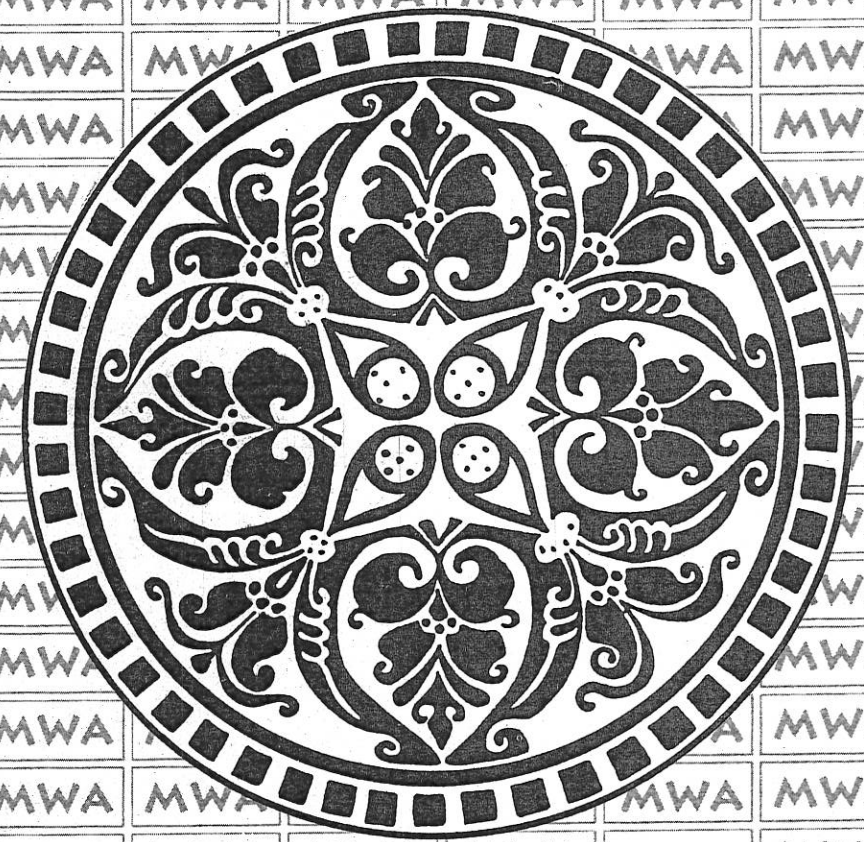
The Muslim Woman

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The MUSLIM WOMAN

VOLUME XXIV- No.3

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Front Cover Picture

Pottery design, Iran, 12th century



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Muslim Women's
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THE EXECUTIVE

FOR THE PERIOD DECEMBER 1993 TO NOVEMBER 1995

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عيد مبارك

Eid Mubarak

**THE MUSLIM WOMEN'S
ASSOCIATION
WISHES ALL MUSLIMS
EID MUBARAK**

Meetings of the MWA take place on the second Sunday of each month

EDITORIAL

Dr. Zubeda Osman

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
ولكل وجهة هو موليها فاستبقوا الخيرات أين ما تكونوا يأت بكم
الله جميعا إن الله على كل شيء قدير . (البقرة : ١٤٨)

"To each is a goal to which Allah turns him; then strive together (as in a race) towards all that is good. Wheresoever ye are, Allah will bring you together. For Allah has power over all things." (Qur'an: 2:148)

This is from sura Baqara of the Holy Qur'an and it comforts each one of us that we can all do our bit in striving towards the good of mankind. It tells us not to feel helpless against the forces of Evil.

When we hear of the atrocities committed against innocent people all over the world we tend to feel helpless - we ask ourselves what can one person do against such powerful tyrant - But Allah has sent this message through the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) saying that each one of us has a goal towards which we can turn, and our goal is to do good, to help the orphans, and needy people, to pray regularly, to establish regular charity (zakat) and to get together and form charitable organisations.

Allah has promised us that if we do this He will bring us all together wherever we are, as he does at the time of the Pilgrimage to Makka.

Then we can worship Him together and pray for the triumph of good over evil, the success of justice over injustice, and the establishment of Peace on Earth..

I too pray humbly dear Sisters and Brothers for strength and courage for all of us. Please give generously to all charities and also to Madina House - our Children's Home.

May Allah bless you and Eid Mubarak to you all. Amin.

EID AL-FITR

"Ēīd - festival. The word is derived by the Arab lexicographers from the root √WD and explained as "the (periodically) returning". But it is really one of those Aramaic loanwords, which are particularly numerous in the domain of religion; for example the Syriac "īda "festival, holiday".

"The Muslim year has two festivals ... the Ēīd al-Fitr" Festival of Breaking the Fast which falls on the 1st Shawwal (the 10th month of the Islamic calendar - editor). Common to both festivals is the Ṣalāt al-Ēīd (ain) festival of public prayer of the whole community, which is considered sunna. In many ways it has preserved older forms of the ṣalāt than the daily or even the Friday ṣalāt (although in other points it has come to resemble the latter). It consists only of two rak'a and contains several takbir more than the ordinary ṣalāt. After a khutba in two parts is held. It has no adhān and no iqāma; as in the oldest times the only summons to it is the words al-ṣalāt jāmi'at. It should be celebrated in the open air on the musalla, which is still often done, though mosques are frequently now preferred. The time for its performance is between sunrise and the moment when the sun has reached its zenith." (First Encyclopaedia of Islam 1913-1936, pp. 444-445)

Eid al-Fitr (al-Eid al-Saghir - the minor festival), küçük-bairam or sheker-bairam (Turkish): The Festival of Breaking the Fast is also the day of alms-giving (see Junior's Corner, Zakat). As the name implies, this festival marks the end of fasting (Ramadan). Although Eid al-Fitr is the minor festival, it is much more joyfully celebrated after the hardship of the month of fasting. The celebrations are a kind of thanksgiving for the successful end of Ramadan, and remembering God's favour for His Revelation, the first part of it which was revealed during this holy month. The whole community takes part in festivities. The actual activities may differ from one Muslim country to another.

"In Istanbul (Turkey), early in the nineteenth century, cannons were fired from the castles in salute of Eid and ships would sound their sirens just before prayer time. An army parade would take place to the sound of marital music; then the sultan, on a decorated horse, would ride to the mosque to be received by the imam and the nobles of the society. On that day the nobles threw open their houses and all were able to join them in the festivity without any formal invitation. In Malaysia all members of the family go to the mosque where they make their donations and then offer Eid prayer, after which they go to the cemetery to visit the graves of relatives. On returning home more charity is distributed. In Tanzania, Kenya and (former) Zanzibar, the head of the family distributes presents on returning home from Eid prayer." (Festivals in World Religions, Shap Working Party, p. 220-223).



THEY SEEK HIM HERE, THEY SEEK HER THERE ...

Sumayyah Hassan

Finding a marriage partner is no easy task for Muslims in Britain. Many people have lost sight of the Islamic perspective and become entangled in cultural notions. It's no longer simply a question of "arranged" versus "love" matches, there are many factors involved.

The cradle factor. Attitudes to marriage are formed in people's minds, long before they reach marriage age. Little boys may be given tales of how wonderful it will be for them once they are married because their wives will do this and that for them. Are girls ever told what their husbands will do for them? No: they're told not to ask too many questions or be too confident or they may lessen their chances in the marriage market.

The age factor. Contrary to the Sunna, we do everything to discourage people from marrying young. Pressures from the community and from the wider society prevent young people from marrying early, even though many young people are known to want early marriage. Some parents push their children to achieve so much (academically and economically) in their late teens and early twenties, that thoughts of marriage are pushed to the back of their minds, but at the same time these young people are subject to the same pressures and temptations as everybody else in this "open" society, and may be pushed into un-Islamic actions. Some may even adopt the western-type attitude to marriage, that it's something to be put off for as long as possible, and only entered upon after you've "lived a little".

Ironically, while we seem reluctant to let our children marry young, we also allow age to work against them. Once a woman reaches 25, she may well be considered "past it" and be rejected in favour of younger brides. Some brothers may be attracted to a more confident partner, but feel compelled by what they think the community expects of them, and so choose a quieter, meeker partner.

Another problem comes into play when people marry late - after years of being unattached, they may be set in their ways and find it hard to adapt to life with a partner. Surely this is an argument for letting people marry at a younger age so they can grow and adapt together.

The divorce factor The most un-Islamic attitude harboured by the community when it comes to marriage has to do with those amongst us who are divorced. Divorce is regarded as a stigma, and it is divorced women with children who come off worst. The general attitude seems to be that such women should only marry divorced men (with or without children), but the same doesn't apply to men. Women in this situation are seen as "second-hand goods" (probably by people who know nothing of the circumstances of the divorce, and are in no position to pass judgement in this way), and their chances of remarriage are greatly reduced. It is interesting to note that all but one of the Nabi's (saw) wives were either divorced or widowed; this is

one particular aspect of the Sunna which seems to be neglected!

The generation factor. The convention currently seems to be for a woman to get married at 21 and for the man to be 5-6 years older. But a shift seems to be occurring: men want to marry earlier and women later. According to Islam, there are no set age differences for marriage. Khadija (ra) was 15 years older than the Nabi (saw) - it seems that the Sunna is more "open-minded" than current attitudes among Muslims!

The race factor. Muslims' attitudes towards inter-racial marriages seem more in tune with the attitudes in wider British society than with the tenet of Islam. I once asked a very religious Asian brother whether he would marry a Muslim woman from Africa. He paused (really!) then said "Yes but no", and went on to explain that while he had nothing against the idea, there would be too many cultural differences between them! But if a real commitment to Islam is the basis of the marriage, then in sha Allah any problems caused by cultural differences can be overcome. We need to question our own prejudices and attitudes; inter-racial marriages within an Islamic context are to be encouraged, as this diversity can bring us strength.

We need to examine our attitude to marriage and the search for a marriage partner; by imposing restrictive un-Islamic conditions as regards age or race we may be shutting ourselves off from the opportunity to find the right partner. There are many eligible brothers and sisters out there, with a sincere commitment to Islam and who would make fine spouses, in sha Allah. They may not be the colour or age you originally had in mind, but widen your search and give them a chance!

USRA, No. 53, January 1992 (Adapted from an article which originally appeared in MuslimWise; gratefully acknowledged)

BARTERED BRIDES

The forced marriage of a British citizen in Bangladesh (page 5, last week) is unfortunately only one instance among many. All the more lamentable, as both countries have laws which clearly outlaw such a practice.

Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which states that men and women have the right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent.

Lesley Roberts, Director, Anti-Slavery International, London SW9.
The Times, Letter to the Editor, recently, 1994.



THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MUSLIMS

Um Yahya

The current theme running through Muslim writing today is one of negativism. Everything and anything is criticised, from individuals to organisations to governments except the state of affairs of one's own society.

How does the older Muslim generation in London, with a rural background and often semi-illiterate, thus with a poor command of English, cope with the complexity of life in London? To whom turn their children when they need help with schoolwork, career decisions, and personal problems? What about the women who are often left alone at home with young children for long periods of time, how are they coping in cases of emergencies when their command of English is nil? The problem of finding so-called "suitable" spouses for young Muslims born and brought up in this country is a very serious and pressing issue. Many young Muslims who regard themselves as British or Europeans having been borne here, are reluctant to go to mosques which are known as 'Arab', 'Pakistani', or 'Bangladeshi', because of cultural/language barriers. More often than not they are made to feel like intruders/outsideers. Far too much time is spent on trivial cliché issues whether a woman wears a scarf or not while there are many elderly Muslim women and men in bad health struggling alone, abandoned by their peers, having to depend on basic necessities offered by their non-Muslim neighbours. The degree of importance needs to be sorted out..

It is much easier to scream at all the ills of one's neighbours than to address the problems of one's own community. A kind of escapism from one's own responsibilities. By feeding the younger generation an image of doom of Western civilization one should not be surprised if a new generation of reactionaries (fundamentalists in western parlance) is bred. The trouble with this is that sooner or later it will backfire. Thus all the work of goodwill by so many honest people will have been in vain.

The first responsibility of Muslims is not to solve the problems of the world at large but to improve the situation of the Muslim community. Let us turn our attention and efforts to nearer home. We as members of the Muslim Women's Association must play our part fully in the betterment of our fellow Muslims.

We should aim "at producing men and women of integrity, good citizens and scholars who, within the range of their own capacity, are competent and well disciplined; women and men who can face and overcome difficulties and who understand that permanent satisfaction in life are to be had only through the service of God and of their fellow men".¹

1 John Corlette, Founder and Headmaster of Aiglon College (1911-1977), speaking about the aims of the School. It may equally apply to Muslims' responsibilities.

APPEAL

NEW PREMISES

Please donate generously for the Madina House Project, started by the Muslim Women's Association (Regd. Charity No: 264608), in 1980. We hope (insha-Allah) to raise at least £300,000 to buy a new home for children in need. The present house is inadequate for the needs of the youngsters.

CONVERSION

We propose to convert the present premises into flats for letting as a future income for Madina House. For the conversion and refurbishment of the house we need to raise funds in the region of £100,000.

Please support this important project of the MWA by sending your donations, however small or big.

Cheques should be made payable to "The Muslim Women's Association (U.K.)" and should be crossed "Account Madina House". Please send it either to:

Madina House
146 Gloucester Place, London NW1 6DT

or to

The National Westminster Bank,
Royal Garden Branch, Kensington High Street,
London W8 5EQ

(Acc. no. 25941364; Sort Number 50-30-10).

May Allah reward you. Amin.

APPEAL

دار لرعاية اطفال المسلمين في بريطانيا

بمناسبة عيد الفطر المبارك

تعلن جمعية المرأة المسلمة أنها تعتزم شراء دار جديدة لرعاية اطفال المسلمين في بريطانيا. والجدير بالذكر ان الدار الحالية المعروفة بـ "مدينة هاوس" قد اشترت في عام ١٩٨٠ وهي لا تفي بالحاجة المستجدة. وإننا نأمل بعون الله تعالى وتعاونكم جمع

مبلغ ٣٠٠,٠٠٠ جنيه استرليني

تحويل الدار القديمة لتغطية النفقات

كما تقرر تحويل الدار القديمة الى شقق سكن للايجار لتغطية نفقات الدار الجديدة لرعاية الاطفال المسلمين وعليه فاننا نحتاج

مبلغ ١٠٠,٠٠٠ جنيه استرليني

وإننا إذ نهيب كافة المسلمين لتقديم التبرعات في هذا العيد المبارك نسأل الله العون ، والله في عون العبد مادام العبد في عون اخيه.

ترسل الشيكات باسم جمعية المرأة المسلمة إلى

Madina House
146 Gloucester Place, London NW1 6DT

أو إلى الحساب في البنك مباشرة

The National Westminster Bank,
Royal Garden Branch, Kensington High Street,
London W8 5EQ
(Acc. no. 25941364; Sort Number 50-30-10).

Juniors's Corner

ZAKAT

After the Prayer, Zakat or the Almsgiving is the most important pillar of Islam. The Qur'an makes the importance of Zakat abundantly clear, although in popular imagination the Fasting is ranked after the Prayer, because it is usually so listed. On these two great pillars rests the edifice of Islam. If they are demolished Islam can hardly survive.

Meaning of Zakat

Primarily the word zakat means purity and cleanliness. Islam uses this very word for the act of setting aside a portion of your wealth for the needy and poor. This is very significant. For it means that it is by 'giving' to others that your wealth is purified. And, along with it, your own self (*nafs*) too. If anyone does not give to the poor and needy what is their due, his wealth remains impure. And that person's inner self, too, is impure. His heart is too narrow; it is filled with ingratitude. He is too selfish. He almost worships wealth. While God has been kind and generous to give him wealth in excess of his requirements, it pains him to render what is His due. How can we expect such a person ever to do some good with the sole motive of pleasing God, or make any sacrifice for the sake of Islam and his faith?

Zakat, a Test

By enjoining upon us to pay Zakat, Allah has put every one of us to the test. Only if you willingly take out what you must for the sake of God from that wealth which exceeds your requirements, and help with it the poor and needy, you are worthy in the sight of Allah and deserve to be counted among the faithful. If you do not sacrifice even this little you are totally unfit to be valued by Allah and accepted as a truly faithful servant. You are then like a rotten limb which is better cut off to stop it decomposing the whole body. After the death of the Prophet, blessings and peace be on Him, some tribes refused to give Zakat; Abu Bakr declared war on them, as if they had disowned Islam and turned kafirs, even though they performed the Prayer and professed faith in Allah and the Messenger. For, they were like a rotten limb. Islam is an integral whole of which the Almsgiving is an essential part; without the Almsgiving, even prayer (*salat*), fasting (*sawm*) and faith (*iman*) lose their credibility.

Early Practice

Study the Qur'an and you will find that from the earliest times the Prayer and the Almsgiving were laid down upon the followers of all the prophets. Speaking about the Prophet Ibrahim, his progeny and followers, it is said:

"And We made them leaders (of mean) who would guide by Our command, and We instructed them to do good deeds, and to perform the Prayer, and to give the Alms, and Us alone did they serve. (Qur'an 21:73)

Zakah, West London Islamic Centre, pp. 1-2.



POETRY

EFFORT

By: Anonymous

He brought me his report card,
And he wasn't very proud,
He bowed his head in silence,
As I read his marks aloud.
He was excellent in reading,
Arithmetic was fair,
But several 'unsatisfactories' were there.
A little bit of credit which was given,
Gave me joy.
He was "excellent" in effort.
And I fairly hugged the boy.
Oh, it doesn't make much difference
What is written on, your card,
If I know you're really trying,
And trying very hard.
Those 'very goods' and 'excellences'
Are fine,
I must agree.
But the effort you are making,
Means a whole lot more to me,
The thing that is most important,
When this card is put aside
Is to know, in spite of failure,
That you do your best, you've tried.
Just keep excellent in 'effort',
and all the rest will come.
There isn't any problem
When you know, one day, you've won.
My son, when you grow older
You will come to understand
That by hard and patient toiling
Men have risen to command.
And some day you'll discover
When a greater goal's at stake,
Far better than your brilliance,
It's the effort that you make.

Taken from: Mahjubah No. 113-114, Oct/Nov 1993.



KITCHEN TALK

SAUDI ARABIA



Dates - Dates and coffee are the traditional offering to a caller. It was also the Prophet' Muhammad's practice to break his fast with dates during the month of Ramadan. Muslims of today do the same. Dates stuffed with almonds are a popular confection and dates baked into tiny, sugared cookies known as *ma'mul* (*clayja*) are essential to the proper celebration of Eid al-Fitr. Unless the month is Ramadan, elaborate sweets are not considered essential by the rather conservative Najdi, whose preference is more likely to be fruit.

Kabsa - made with chicken

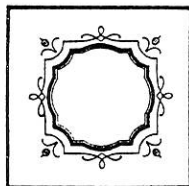
- 1 lb rice
- 1 frying chicken, cut into eight pieces
- 1/3 cup corn oil
- 2 medium onions, sliced
- 5 cloves garlic, pounded to a pulp
- 1 can tomato purée (2 1/2 ozs.)
- 2 medium tomatoes, chopped
- 2 medium carrots, grated
- grated rind of one orange
- 6 cloves
- 6 cardamon pods
- 4 sticks cinnamon
- 4 tbsps. raisins
- 4 tbsps. almonds, soaked and split



Wash the rice and cover with water to soak for at least 15 minutes before cooking. Sauté the onion in oil until it begins to brown. Add the chicken pieces, tomato purée, chopped tomatoes and garlic and stir for about five minutes over low heat. Add three cups hot water, the spices, salt and pepper to taste, the grated carrot and orange rind. Cook about 20-25 minutes, until the chicken is done.

Remove the chicken and keep warm. Add the rice to the sauce and cook slowly over low heat for about 15 minutes, or until cooked dry. Arrange the chicken on top of the rice on a platter, and decorate with the raisins and almonds. Serve hot.

ARAMCO WORLD magazine, pp. 36-39, Nov/Dec 1975.



NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS

Society for the Protection of Unborn Children - The first ever reception for Muslim Leaders in Britain was held in the House of Commons, on Saturday the 29th of January 1994. It was organised by the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children through Dr A Majid Katme, the Muslim Coordinator and the President of the Islamic Medical Association in Britain. The Muslim Women's Association was represented by our President Mrs Khanam Hassan.

This reception was held in anticipation of the Private Members Bill to prohibit the use of eggs taken from aborted fetuses in fertilisation procedure scheduled to be introduced by Dame Jill Knight, DBE, MP, on Tuesday the 22nd of February 1994.

Islam supports this Bill and we urge that Muslims in this country should play a full and effective role in lobbying their Members of Parliament in support of this vital and humane measure.

May we ask our President to give us a resume of the reception at one of our next monthly meetings?

The Naz Project - an HIV/Aids education, prevention and support service for the South Asian, Turkish, Iranian and Arab communities. Helpline: 1830 hours to 2230 hours on 081-563 0205 Mon: Turkish & Farsi, Tues: Punjabi & Hindi, Wed: Urdu & Gujarati, Thu: Bengali & Arabic; or call Tasmin, Volunteer Coordinator at 081-563 0208.

Muslim Women's Helpline - ... as you will see from our annual report, numbers are steadily rising as our service becomes more widely known and trusted within the community and local authority support services. Face-to face counselling on marriage difficulties is increasing and there is an urgent need for organising and running self-help circles for Muslim women addicted to tranquillisers, anti-depressant and sleeping tablets. Runaway Muslim teenagers still do not have a specifically Muslim-run refuge to turn to, although we do our best by liaising between daughter/parent/local authority.

For help/information contact:

Muslim Women's Helpline, 1st Floor, Unit 3 GEC Estate, East Lane, Wembley, HA9 7PX Tel.: 081-908 3205 (Admin.)

The Islamic Education Waqf - The DFE's Refusal of Voluntary Aided status to Islamia Primary School and its Implications. ... It does not matter if you are for or against the establishment of Independent (separate) denominational Muslim schools. It also does not matter whether you would choose to send your child to a grammar school, church school, grant maintained school, local authority mainstream school, single sex school or any other form of school.

The main point to consider is the principle of equal treatment under the law of the land. The 1944 Education Act has enshrined within it the right for any faith community to establish their own denominational voluntary aided schools. The Government continues to discriminate against Muslims by refusing to provide

state funds to our most prestigious and viable Islamic educational institution ...

The UK Islamic Education Waqf (UKIEW) has decided to go to the community to survey the feelings of the British public.

For information please contact: Zafar Shahid at the UKIEW offices at 2 Digswell Street, London N7 8JX.

Pakistan Female Education - Pakistan ranks 101st among 112 countries in terms of female education index, a report 'Closing the Gender Gap' released by the Population Action International of Washington has revealed. Each country was scored on a 100-point scale where Pakistan scored 27.6

Even among the Saarc countries, Pakistan ranked the lowest with Sri Lanka scoring 86.2, India 50.2, Bangladesh 42.7 and Nepal 33.3. The only other 11 countries to score lower than Pakistan were Niger, Mali, Afghanistan, Yemen, Guinea and Chad which fell in the range of 25 to 21 (Chad being the lowest).

Almost all the Islamic countries scored ahead of Pakistan, also including Saudi Arabia (56.3) and Iran 67.0) where women are far more segregated and restricted than in Pakistan. (The Muslim World, XXXI/35, 26th February 1994).

Islamic Architecture: The Triumph of Colour by Dr Bernard O'Kane, American University in Cairo. Lecture Theatre, British Museum, 1800 hours Thursday 10 March 1994. Admission Free. Nearest Tube Station: Tottenham Court Road.

Feminism and Islamic Law by Prof. Layla Ahmad, Lecture Theatre, SOAS (School of African and Oriental Studies), Thornhaugh Street, 1700 hours for 1730 hours, Monday 21 March. Nearest Tube Station: Russell Square.

Poetry on Persian Tiles by Mr Abdullah Ghouchani, Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran. Lecture Theatre, British Museum, 1500 hours, Saturday 9 April 1994. Admission Free. Nearest Tube Station: Tottenham Court Road.



MWA BUSINESS - February 1994

Nisa Ali

A Committee Meeting was held on Sunday the 6th of February, 1994, at the Islamic Cultural Centre, London, NW8 7RG. The meeting was opened at 1645 hours with the recitation of al-Fatiha by Mrs Karima Mustapha.

Apologies were received from Mrs M Badawi, Mrs N Burnett, Mrs L El-Droubie, and Mrs Gul Amin.

Correspondence: A letter was received from Mrs Nisa Ali informing the committee of her resignation as secretary as she will be soon going abroad.

Eid Dinner: see special notice. Members/Helpers are reminded to be at the Islamic Cultural Centre by 1600 hours. Water jugs and flowers for tables are required. In case of an emergency or for further information, please contact our President, Mrs Khanam Hassan on 081-946 1052.

Future Dates: July 10th: Annual Bazaar; September 11th: Milad al-Nabi; November 13th: AGM. For the programme of all other monthly meetings see the respective month's 'Muslim Woman'.

Congratulation: to Mrs Gul Amin on the recent birth of a grand-daughter. May Allah bless her.

كل عام وأنتم بخير

EID DINNER

WILL BE HELD ON SUNDAY 27TH
MARCH 1994

(Please note change of date)

AT

THE ISLAMIC CULTURAL CENTRE
146 PARK ROAD, LONDON NW8 7RG

Admission by ticket only

Tickets are available at the door: £4.50 adults, £2.50
children under 12.

Nearest Tube Station: Baker Street Buses: 2, 2A, 74, 82, 113 and 159

PROGRAMME

Qur'anic Recitation

Welcome Speech by
Mrs Khanam Hassan,
President, MWA

Main Speaker:
Mrs Nisa Ali

In the Chair:
Mrs Karima Mustapha