



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah the Gracious, the Merciful

LAJNA IMAILLAH UK

Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association

PRESS RELEASE

Annual Peace Symposium: The Role of Women in Shaping Society

24 June 2024

A diverse group of over 400 women came together at the Annual Peace Symposium held by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association UK on Saturday 22nd June to discuss the role of women in shaping society.

The ladies only Symposium was held at Britain's largest mosque, Baitul Futuh in South London. Academics, charity sector workers, healthcare professionals, civic leaders and representatives from faith communities were in attendance.



Attendees were welcomed through the arches of the mosque on a warm sunny afternoon to an exhibition hall showcasing some of the activities of Ahmadi Muslim women. Exhibitors included representatives of the Voice of Islam radio station, Humanity First charity and Ahmadiyya Muslims Women's Students' Association. The Outreach team showcased the Holy Qur'an in various languages and braille and in-depth material explaining the Islamic concept of modesty. Attendees were given a tour of the mosque complex.

Farzana Yousuf the Association's National Secretary for Outreach and Community Relations welcomed attendees and gave an introduction to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, its principles and ethos and the work of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association.

The first guest speaker was Roxanne St Clair, Chair of the Commonwealth Girls Education Fund who emphasised the importance of supporting girls through secondary school. Roxanne St Clair highlighted the ripple effect of educating women, noting that women are naturally inclined to help others, share knowledge and create positive change within their communities. Women should recognise that there is always something we can offer to lift

up someone around us. By understanding others from all backgrounds, women can achieve far more, recognising their roles as leaders and peacemakers.



Professor Amelia Hadfield, Dean International of the University of Surrey discussed the power of professional mentorship and female role models. She highlighted the role of mentors in navigating career challenges, spotting opportunities, encouraging participation, and ambition and maintaining a good work-life balance. Professor Hadfield commended the Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's association for building a supportive community and sustaining this with confidence and intelligence.

Fatima Whitbread MBE, two-time Olympic medallist shared her personal story of resilience, having been abandoned as a baby and spending 14 years in the care system. She credits a positive female role model with changing her life course. Fatima Whitbread spoke of the importance of calling out injustice and supporting others, which provides freedom from one's own emotional struggles and falling into a state of victimhood. She spoke about sports as a vital outlet for children, offering stability and activity. Fatima Whitbread emphasised the importance of investing in children as an investment in the future of society. Fatima's UK campaign aims to rejuvenate the care system across four nations. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association was delighted to donate to Fatima's UK Campaign as well as donations to the Rainbow Trust and WISH, a women led charity support women's mental health.

Dr Qurratul-Ain Rehman, President of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association UK delivered the Keynote address and spoke on the Islamic perspective of a just society and women's contribution to societal peace. Dr Rehman spoke of justice and equity as foundational principles of society, quoting the Holy Qur'an "O ye who believe, be strict in observing justice and be witness for Allah, even though it be against your own selves or against your parents and kindred. Whether he against whom witness is borne, be rich or poor..." (4:136)

Islam lays great emphasis on the important role of women in the broader fabric of society as well as within the family. From the very inception of Islam, women have been regarded as equal partners in faith and spiritual reward, endowed with rights and responsibilities that reflect their pivotal role in the progress of society.

Dr Rehman spoke of some of the work being done by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association, including educational, charitable, and social initiatives. Lajna Imaillah is established in 131 Countries around the world. With over 14,000 members in the UK. Weekly educational classes are held throughout branches across the country. As an example of charitable activity, £420,221.00 was raised last year towards building a maternity hospital in Sierra Leone.

With the UK elections approaching, Dr Rehman noted that for Muslims it is an Islamic commandment to vote wisely. In the Qur'an, Allah commands that authority is given to those worthy of discharging the responsibility (4:59).

Dr Rehman encouraged all attendees to use any natural advantage to lift others up to enable all women to fulfil their huge potential. The evening concluded with silent prayer and dinner.



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NOTES FOR EDITORS:

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association UK is a national Muslim Women's group established in 1922 with more than 14,000 members across Britain. It is an auxiliary organisation of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community UK which was established in Britain in 1913.

The Community has approximately 33,000 members across more than 100 chapters. The Community built the Fazl Mosque in Southfields London in 1924 which was the first Mosque in London and also the Baitul Futuh Mosque in South London, the largest Mosque in the UK.

The Community was founded in 1889 by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (peace be upon him) who claimed to be the Promised Messiah and Mahdi awaited by all major religions, including the Jews, Christians and Muslims. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is now established in more than 200 countries with tens of millions of members worldwide. Its motto is "Love for All, Hatred for None". The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is the largest organised Muslim Community in the world and is led by a system of spiritual successorship known as Khilafat. Its current Khalifa is the fifth successor to the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him); his name is His Holiness, Mirza Masroor Ahmad. His title is Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V.