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PRESS RELEASE

NEW AHMADIYYA MOSQUE IN BRADFORD OPENED BY WORLD LEADER

'Our mosques promote equality' – Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad

On 7th November 2008, the Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad inaugurated the 'Al-Mahdi Mosque' in Bradford, UK, with his weekly Friday Sermon, broadcast live across the world from Bradford. Later, the same evening the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat UK hosted a special reception marking the inauguration of the mosque in which various dignitaries from the local community attended. During the reception Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, spoke of how Ahmadiyya mosques were true Houses of God, from which only slogans of peace would ever emanate.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat in Bradford was founded in 1962. Since then the Ahmadi population has steadily increased. Many members of the local Jamaat have contributed significantly to the local society and continue to play a key role within the local community. The local Ahmadiyya President, Dr Abdul Bary Malik, was this year appointed MBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours list for his services to the ethnic community in Bradford.

The foundation stone for the mosque was laid by the Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat on 2nd October 2004. Over the next four years the total cost of construction totalled more than £2million, raised entirely by members of the Jamaat internally. The mosque can accommodate

over 1200 worshippers and also includes a large conference hall. Many guests commented upon the beauty of the mosque which features an eight-metre dome.

Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad used his Friday Sermon to thank God Almighty for His continued blessings. As the mosque had been built on an elevated piece of land, His Holiness commented that it seemed as though the entire town was looking towards the mosque and this was one of the defining characteristics of the new mosque. Following the relatively recent inaugurations of the Bait-ul-Futuh mosque in London and the Nasir mosque in Hartlepool, His Holiness said that the UK Jamaat had now developed a real urge to build Houses of God far and wide. This was further illustrated by the fact that he would be opening a new mosque in Sheffield the day after.

Commenting upon Ahmadiyya mosques in contrast to others, he said:

“Our mosques are the ones that put forward the hand of reconciliation. Our introduction to the world is that we wish to remove the world from strife and discord... Today the words and acts of each Ahmadi should be of love so that they are able to join hearts together and remove all friction from the world.”

The evening reception began at 6.45pm in the conference hall of the mosque. Men and women of various different faiths and political viewpoints were in attendance. The opening speech was given by the Regional President of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, Bilal Atkinson. Mr Atkinson himself was an example of how the peaceful teachings of Ahmadiyyat had changed the lives of many in the United Kingdom and in the other 192 countries in which the Jamaat is based. Now a retired policeman, Mr Atkinson from Stockton-upon-Tees, joined Ahmadiyyat over twenty years ago. He and his wife, were won over by the teachings of love and peace taught by the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian. During his speech Mr Atkinson thanked the local council for granting full planning permission for the mosque. He

went on to state that Ahmadi Muslims respected the laws of the land in whichever country they were based and that they prided themselves on being loyal and faithful citizens.

Terry Rooney, the Member of Parliament for Bradford North, who was also attending the event spoke of how the city of Bradford had passed through troubled times during his time as an MP, when racial riots had taken place. He said:

“We have had dark days here in Bradford but at such times the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has always remained a beacon of truth and justice. We are most grateful for your friendship.”

The Deputy Lord Mayor of the City of Bradford District Council, Hawarun Hussain, congratulated the Jamaat for the ‘*beautiful mosque*’ that it had built. She said that every day when she drove past the site of the mosque it filled her with immense pride.

Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad took to the stage at 7.05pm. During his address he spoke of how Islam had been wrongly tarnished by the acts of so called Muslims who falsely used the name of Islam to justify their politically motivated heinous acts. In contrast he then spoke of Ahmadi mosques:

“Those who are well acquainted with us will certainly bear witness that the Ahmadiyya Jamaat as a Community always spreads the message of peace, love and tenderness. Wherever they build their mosques, they build them for the sake of the worship of God. And that is the real purpose of the building of this mosque.”

Those who claimed that Islam was a religion that promoted inequality ought to look at the examples of its mosques. His Holiness explained that in true mosques every person, no matter how rich or how poor, was equal and how in prayer every person stood side by side. This

equality broke the divide between different classes and united people so that mutual respect developed in all aspects of life.

Speaking about how Islam had been wrongly brandished a religion of violence, His Holiness said that a similar accusation had in the past been levelled at Christianity. He said:

“If a few people or groups act discriminatorily then the blame for this cannot be laid upon the beautiful teachings of Islam... A few centuries ago this same allegation was laid at the door of Christianity and history bears witness to this. However this does not mean that cruelty exists in the Christian teachings. The teachings of Jesus Christ are filled with meekness and kindness. So therefore to maintain peace in society it is necessary to remove all forms of hostility... It is necessary to increase one’s tolerance levels. There is a need to stand in defence of the respect and reverence of each other’s Prophets.”

His Holiness went on to explain the true concept of Jihad in Islam by reminding the audience that Islam clearly stated that there was to be ‘no compulsion in religion’. This Qur’anic teaching effectively rebutted all allegations that Islam was spread by the sword. He then spoke of how the Ahmadiyya Jamaat was involved in seeking God’s pleasure by serving humanity throughout the world. In this respect its registered charity ‘Humanity First’ provided clean drinking water in remote parts of Africa and in other countries, it provided medical care and shelter for those in need. Also the wider Community took an active role in supporting national and international charities which provide similar aid to the disadvantaged.

His Holiness ended his address by once again reassuring the assembled audience of the teachings of Islam. He said:

“This mosque will always be a light house of good deeds. We can never even consider that from our mosques flames of hatred, malice and enmity could ever burn. Instead calls of love, affection, reconciliation and reformation will be made from here... On behalf of the

Ahmadiyya Muslim Community I assure every citizen of this city that every Ahmadi will do his utmost to co-operate in the development of peace and that this mosque will be a symbol of peace and security, God Willing.”

Following the event members of the audience were given the chance to meet with His Holiness. Members from all spheres of the local society used the opportunity to congratulate the Jamaat on the opening of the mosque. A member of the local judiciary called the event a ‘*very moving occasion and a delight to attend*’. Another lady said that she was currently studying the Holy Qur’an and that she had always supported the work of the Jamaat. Speaking to His Holiness, she said, ‘*I enjoyed your speech a great deal, it was truly beautiful*’. A local business leader stated that the words of His Holiness were ‘*very refreshing, what we all believe*’.

End of Release

Further Info: Abid Khan, Press Secretary