

**HUZOOR'S TOUR OF CANADA**

**OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2016**

**PART 2**

**A Personal Account**

*By Abid Khan*

## **Introduction to Part 2**

After an extremely blessed first week, Huzoor's tour of Canada had now reached its second week. The days that followed proved to be extremely memorable, as Huzoor's engagements continued in Peace Village before an extremely historic trip to Canada's capital city of Ottawa.

### **The Peter Mansbridge interview**

Soon after we arrived in Canada, the local Jamaat media team and other senior office bearers mentioned that they hoped that Huzoor could be interviewed by a journalist called Peter Mansbridge. They told me that he was known as the '*Voice of Canada*' and had been considered the leading Canadian journalist for many years.

In his role as Chief Correspondent of Canada's national broadcaster *CBC*, he had interviewed many world leaders such as Barack Obama, Justin Trudeau, Hillary Clinton and Tony Blair.

One thing, I reminded the local Jamaat members is that the dignity and status of *Khilafat-e-Ahmadiyya* is such that we should never think that an interview with any journalist, no matter how prominent, is an honour for the Jamaat or Khalifa-Waqt. Rather, it is a blessing for the journalist and the broadcaster to have the opportunity to interview Khalifatul Masih - whether they comprehend it or not.

In terms of Huzoor's own demeanour it does not change whether he is meeting a leading world figure or a guest from a local town or village. In all

such meetings, Huzoor meets the other person with respect, kindness and sees it as an opportunity to spread Islam's true teachings.

Nonetheless, where a journalist or broadcaster has a wide audience, it is of significance in the sense that it will allow for the views and message of Khilafat to reach far and wide. It was for this reason that the idea of Huzoor being interviewed by Peter Mansbridge was significant and appealing.

A senior member of the Jamaat told me he had floated the idea of Peter Mansbridge interviewing Huzoor with members of the Canada media team before Huzoor's tour but, perhaps, more in hope than in expectation.

Generally, the media has its own agenda and we have seen for many years how Western media has preferred to highlight injustices and cruelties taking place in Muslim nations, as opposed to the constant worldwide efforts to promote peace undertaken by the Jamaat.

Nevertheless, our local media team contacted the producers of Peter Mansbridge's *CBC 'One on One'* television programme to see if an interview could be arranged, however initially they did not receive a favourable response.

Yet, despite this, when Huzoor arrived in Canada there was a great deal of media interest from the off, whereby many national and provincial media outlets covered Huzoor's arrival in Peace Village and requested the opportunity to interview Huzoor.

Perhaps having observed this, the day following Huzoor's arrival, the producers of Peter Mansbridge contacted the Jamaat and now requested the opportunity to interview Huzoor.

Safwan Chaudhry, in-charge of Canada's media team, immediately came to me to discuss the proposal. He said that Peter Mansbridge wished to conduct an interview but had sought exclusivity, whereby we would decline other one-on-one interviews with Huzoor, until their interview was broadcast.

Safwan seemed to be suffering from mixed emotions – on the one hand, he was excited and happy that the producers had requested the interview, yet on the other hand was concerned by the exclusivity part – particularly as Huzoor had already graciously approved an interview with *Global News* the following day.

Though at that time, I did not fully appreciate who Peter Mansbridge was or the scale of his audience, as I had personally never seen any of his interviews, I could tell from the demeanour of Safwan that it was potentially a huge opportunity for the message of Islam Ahmadiyyat to be spread in Canada directly by Khalifatul Masih.

However, my initial response was still that we should not cancel the interview with *Global News* but should also try to pursue the Peter Mansbridge interview in parallel. It did not feel right to cancel an agreed interview because a potentially better opportunity had arisen.

As I wrote in *part 1* of this diary, when I later informed Huzoor he instructed the same.

*Alhamdulillah*, there are always blessings in following the guidance of Khilafat and so despite the fact we did not cancel the *Global News* interview, Peter Mansbridge did still request the opportunity to interview Huzoor.

Now their only condition was that in the period between the recording of the interview and its broadcast, no other *one-on-one* interview with Huzoor would be broadcast in Canada. We sought Huzoor's guidance on this and he graciously granted permission for us to agree to this request.

### **Interview Location**

The interview was scheduled for 12 October 2016 and so the day before *CBC* sent a team in advance to Peace Village and met our local media team. Having looked at different locations at complex, the producers stated their preference to conduct the interview in the Baitul Islam Mosque itself.

Personally, I liked the idea of conducting the interview in the Mosque, as I thought it would look good on camera. However, initially Private Secretary, Munir Javed sahib was reluctant and said that the interview should be held in Huzoor's office, as he felt it would be more convenient for Huzoor.

After a few minutes, I was able to persuade him that holding it in the Mosque would be more convenient as the camera crew would require a lot of time to set up and wind-up their cameras and equipment.

I then mentioned to Huzoor that our humble suggestion was to hold the interview in the Mosque and most graciously Huzoor approved it.

## **A conversational style**

The interview was scheduled at 11am and so at around 10.30am, I went to the Mosque and was introduced to Peter Mansbridge who had just arrived. He appeared quite friendly and told me how he himself had been born in England.

Thereafter, Safwan and Asif Khan (*Secretary Umoor-e-Kharija*) told me that Peter Mansbridge's style of interview was very conversational and that I should let Huzoor know this in advance. Personally, I did not think it was a big issue, as Huzoor had dealt with all types of journalists but out of respect for their request I did mention it to him as he walked towards the Mosque prior to the interview.

In response, Huzoor smiled and said:

***"It does not matter to me what his style is. He can interview as he prefers."***

## **The Interview**

The interview commenced at 11am and lasted for about 45minutes. During it, Peter Mansbridge asked Huzoor about the rise of extremism and terrorism and about what he perceived to be an increasing divide between Muslims and non-Muslims.

He also asked about increasing tensions between the United States and Russia and the risk of a Third World War. He also asked about the values of our Jamaat and about the role of women in Islam.

Unsurprisingly, he also asked Huzoor his views on the prospect of a Donald Trump Presidency in the United States and his views on Canada.

In response to a question about why the world was becoming more and more uncertain and why some Muslims were being radicalised, Huzoor said:

***“The present situation did not flare up after 9/11, in my view it flared up after the 2008 economic crisis, when a number of people, especially the youth, were made redundant from their jobs. They had nothing to do and this was a cause in increasing their frustration. Then, a new extremist group emerged, called Daesh or ISIS, and they benefitted from these frustrations.”***

Asked about the prospect of Donald Trump banning Muslims from the United States, Huzoor said:

***“If he tries to do it then it will lead to great chaos in the country. If he takes any measure or harsh step or tries to deny the rights of the Muslims living in his country, then there will be conflict and disturbance.”***

Huzoor continued:

***“If he tries to implement what he has been saying then I fear there is going to be a civil war. If the Government takes harsh measures and tries to deny the rights of people, then there will be a reaction. In order to create disturbance even a single person is enough. Thus, (the government) has to be sensible. I hope that no elected President of the United States will ever take a measure that is senseless.”***

I vividly remember the look of surprise on the face of Peter Mansbridge when Huzoor warned of the prospect of a civil war if the US President sought to discriminate against Muslims.

Yet, as I write this weeks later, Huzoor's words of warning seem ever more far-sighted and prescient. In the past week, the newly-elected President Trump has started to place restrictions on Muslims and already there have been demonstrations of the frustration and anger of such policies have elicited.

Under the guidance of Khilafat, no Ahmadi Muslim would ever partake in violence or harmful action against the *State*, yet there are millions of other Muslims and minorities who are not the beneficiaries of such guidance.

Whereas, we Ahmadis, are instructed by Khalifa-Waqt to bow down in prayer and to show patience and restraint, there is no telling how other groups that may feel marginalised or oppressed will react.

In response to a question by Peter Mansbridge about the integration of immigrants, Huzoor said:

***“It is the saying of the Prophet of Islam (sa) that the love of your country is a part of your faith. It means that an immigrant must try his level best and use all his capabilities and faculties for the betterment of the country... To me integration means you have to be law-abiding, you have to work for the betterment of your nation and you must never even think ill of your country.”***

Peter Mansbridge then asked Huzoor about the role of women in Islam and specifically about segregation after showing Huzoor a photo of the men's hall at Jalsa Salana Canada. Mansbridge said that such segregation was "**unacceptable**" to some people.

Huzoor said that the journalist should ask Ahmadi women what they preferred and that people should be permitted to sit separately if they wished, without being judged.

Huzoor said:

***"It is a religious teaching and Governments should not interfere in religious matters. If Muslim women believe that doing Hijab is part of their faith then they should not be stopped."***

***However, as far as opportunities are concerned our Ahmadi ladies are more educated and literate than our men. They are doctors working in hospitals, they are engineers, architects, scientists, researchers and they are pursuing these careers with Hijab."***

*Alhamdulillah* the interview concluded successfully and was broadcast to millions of people nationally on Peter Mansbridge's *One on One* television programme on 29 October 2016.

### **A few moments with Huzoor**

Following the conclusion of the interview, Huzoor returned to his office and called me in for a few moments.

Before I sat down, Huzoor asked me to open the blinds in his office.

Huzoor said:

***“I like the view when the blinds are open, as I can see the park from here.”***

Thereafter, Huzoor mentioned the interview that had just taken place. It appeared that he had enjoyed it.

Huzoor said:

***“I liked the conversational style of Peter Mansbridge which you had told me about prior to the interview. It is more relaxed and informal. Also, he spoke clearly and slowly and so it was much easier to understand his accent, compared to some other journalists.”***

Huzoor continued:

***“I purposely brought up the fact that Muslims do not shake the hands of people of the other sex because it was a means to spread Islam’s true teachings. Based on what I said, he asked the follow up question about segregation and so then had the opportunity to give a detailed answer about the rights of women in Islam and the true concept of Hijab.”***

It was very interesting to hear how Huzoor had said that he had purposely brought up the handshake issue, which in turn led to a follow-up question from Peter Mansbridge about segregation.

Later, Mr. Mansbridge himself commented to one of our team members that after the first few minutes, he did not need to do any work, because Huzoor himself raised issues and then answered them as well!

### **An emotional meeting**

After a few moments, I exited the office and Huzoor's routine of family Mulaqats began.

In Canada, many families of the *28 May* Lahore martyrs have been resettled. Thus, during the tour many relatives of the martyrs were able to meet Huzoor.

One family who met Huzoor that day were the family of *Muhammad Anwar Shaheed sahib*, who was martyred on 28 May at our Mosque in Model Town.

After their Mulaqat, I met with his family members, including his wife *Zubaida Bibi sahiba* and children *Ataul Hai*, *Rabia*, *Tooba* and *Zaka-ul-Hai*.

I spoke to them about their past experiences and it was very emotional to hear the tough times they had endured but at the same time I could only be inspired by their patience and fortitude.

*Ataul Hai*, the elder son of the martyr, told me that he himself had been severely injured in the Lahore attacks.

Ataul Hai sahib said:

***“I tried to confront one of the terrorists in Lahore as I had a screwdriver but he saw it in my hand and fired at me. I was left unconscious. I remember vividly that the moment he shot me I had no fear whatsoever. When I regained consciousness, I kept repeating Durood Sharif until someone came and helped me. I was taken to hospital but my family did not tell me for some time that my father had been martyred.”***

Zubaida Bibi told me of her experiences following the martyrdom of her husband. She said:

***“When I look back at the past few years, I cannot explain just how Allah has blessed us and supported us at every step. Even when I heard that my husband had been martyred I hardly cried and felt instant peace in my heart. In fact, very soon I saw a dream in which Khalifatul Masih was stood by my side and I swear that Allah has fulfilled that dream because at every step, Huzoor has been at our side.”***

Zubaida Bibi sahiba continued:

***“Following the attack, I used to recite Durood Sharif as much as possible and I also prayed to Allah with the words ‘O Allah, today dozens of our Ahmadis have been taken away so we need Your Help, just as You Helped the Holy Prophet (sa) and Hazrat Masih-e-Maud (as).’***

As she said these words, for the first time in our conversation, Zubaida sahiba began to cry.

Recalling the moments of her husband's martyrdom, she said:

***"As soon as I knew about the attack, I had a strong premonition that my husband Anwar sahib has been martyred. He used to often say that he was ready to die for the Jamaat."***

Becoming more emotional, Zubaida sahiba said:

***"The thing that caused me the most pain was not that my husband had been martyred but thinking of the pain that Huzoor will have felt after this terrible incident. I could not tolerate thinking of the pain and grief that will have been felt by my beloved Imam."***

Anwar sahib's daughter, Rabia said:

***"When my father was martyred, our gracious Khalifa called our home and talked to each one of us individually. When I had the opportunity to speak to Huzoor he said 'Make sure you look after your mother and continue your studies and make sure you grow to be a person who serves the Jamaat'. I can never forget those beautiful words of Huzoor."***

Zaka-ul-Hai said:

***"Ever since my father was martyred we have seen and witnessed so many blessings in return for his sacrifice. Before, I never knew how much our Jamaat and our Khalifa loves us. None of us can ever be deserving of the honour that our father's martyrdom has bestowed upon us."***

An emotional few minutes concluded, as Zubaida Bibi sahiba said:

***“Six years have passed since the passing of my husband and today meeting Huzoor was the first time I have felt pure joy and happiness and was able to forget the pain and difficulties of the last few years. My husband was desperate to meet Huzoor and though he could not, I am sure he will be smiling today.”***

### **Emotions of an Ahmadi**

I also met an Ahmadi lady called *Sonia Anjum*, who had just met Huzoor with her husband. Her father, *Basharat Ahmad Mughal shaheed*, a convert to Ahmadiyyat, had been martyred in Karachi in 2008. Subsequently, she moved to Malaysia with her family, before settling in Canada in 2013.

Sonia sahiba said:

***“I consider the martyrdom of my father to be a great blessing for me and our other family members. We are reaping the fruits of his sacrifice every single day and we know that these fruits will last not just in our lives but will continue through our future generations.”***

Sonia sahiba continued:

***“Where I used to live in Pakistan there was a lot of persecution and opposition to Ahmadis and it used to feel like I was living in a jail from which I could never leave. It is only due to the blessings of being an***

***Ahmadi that we have been allowed to resettle here in Canada, otherwise my children would have grown up living every day in danger.”***

Speaking of meeting Huzoor, Sonia sahiba said:

***“Today we were able to meet our beloved Huzoor and I have been left completely speechless. As I took in the blessings of meeting Khalifa-Waqt, I kept thinking that this is Allah’s reward for the sacrifice made by my father. I just pray that my family and I can always fulfil the expectations of Khilafat and never disappoint him.”***

### **A few precious moments**

Later that evening, I had the opportunity to spend a few minutes in the blessed company of Huzoor after *Maghreb* and *Isha*.

Huzoor mentioned the Peter Mansbridge interview again and the fact that he had warned of a potential ‘civil war’ in America if the US President tried to implement a ban on Muslims or levied other discriminatory policies.

Huzoor said:

***“The reason I gave this warning is that where there is injustice by one party or by certain individuals then it will naturally lead to a reaction from those who are oppressed. If the Government misuses its powers against particular groups, then it is human nature that they will react and stand up against the injustice.”***

I then showed Huzoor a photo I had taken with my phone of the interview.

Huzoor looked at it and said:

***“You can include this photo in your diary, as people like to see some photos as well.”***



I also mentioned that the lights decorating Peace Village had been switched off for the past two nights.

In response, Huzoor said:

***“Yes, I instructed that they be switched off for a couple of days as a mark of respect, because these days Shia Muslims are observing Ashura.”***

This highlighted how Huzoor constantly seeks to respect the feelings of others and in this way *Khilafat-e-Ahmadiyya* is truly the leading light in fostering inter-faith harmony.

### **Huzoor choosing the titles for his addresses**

On the evening of 13 October 2016, before Huzoor's session of family Mulaqats began, I sought permission to meet him for a minute in his office.

The reason was that Canada Jamaat had requested titles for two of Huzoor's forthcoming addresses – those being held at the Canadian National Parliament and at York University.

I had prepared a list of a dozen or so possible titles for both addresses and took them to Huzoor and requested if he would choose a title, either from those submitted, or any other that he preferred. For his Ottawa address, Huzoor approved the title: ***“Human values – the foundation for a peaceful world”*** and for his York University address, Huzoor approved the title: ***“Justice in an unjust world”***.

I also took the opportunity to mention that the office of the Prime Minister had contacted the Jamaat and asked if Huzoor wished to discuss anything specific with the Prime Minister during their forthcoming meeting in Ottawa.

Hearing this, Huzoor smiled and said:

***“Yes, I wish to offer my congratulations to him on his election last year as Prime Minister – that is all!”***

## **Friday Sermon in Peace Village**

On 14 October 2016, Huzoor delivered his weekly *Friday Sermon* from the Baitul Islam Mosque in Peace Village. During his sermon, Huzoor recounted the blessings of Jalsa Salana Canada and spoke about the unique spirit of volunteerism amongst Ahmadis.

Huzoor said:

***“At our Jalsas, we have volunteers of all ages who are serving the Jamaat in different ways and with great humility. Sometimes, people who in worldly terms are less educated or qualified are given duties as officers and they are put in charge of highly-qualified people such as doctors, PhDs and engineers and they all show the total obedience which is only seen in the Ahmadiyya Jamaat.”***

Very emotionally, Huzoor said:

***“Our children, who do water-duty, are giving physical water to those people who come to seek spiritual water for salvation. Whilst extremists are training their children to do terrorist attacks and to brutally kill innocent people, Ahmadi Muslims are training their children to give life to others. Our children are taking part in the Jihad of giving life to others.”***

Huzoor did highlight some of the administrative weaknesses of the Jalsa, such as a shortage of food and a lack of toilets both leading to long queues.

Nonetheless, Huzoor said that such difficulties had been borne with patience by most of the guests and indeed some had used the weaknesses as a means of reformation and spirituality.

For example, an Ahmadi had written to Huzoor to say that he had been standing in a long queue waiting for food at the Jalsa and as the minutes ticked by he became frustrated and annoyed at the delay. Ultimately, he was told that the food had finished. At that point, when anger would have overcome most worldly people, a person stood next to him bore a huge smile and said he was overjoyed.

The person then explained:

***“Today, I am happy because I have the opportunity of following the blessed practice of the Holy Prophet of Islam (sa), whereby I have few dry pieces of bread to sustain me just as was the practice on occasion of the Holy Prophet (sa).”***

Huzoor said that the person who had written this incident to him had said that any frustration he felt melted away upon seeing the example of the person stood next to him and his anger instantly transformed to embarrassment and gratitude.

### **Waqf-e-Nau classes**

That evening, Huzoor presided two separate classes with members of *Waqf-e-Nau* and *Waqfat-e-Nau* in the Baitul Islam Mosque. In the latter part of both classes, those attending had the opportunity to ask Huzoor questions.

One boy asked Huzoor about the role of Khalifa-Waqt at a time when Ahmadiyyat would, Insha'Allah, have spread to much of the world and at a time when there could be Ahmadis in extremely influential positions, such as Prime Minister or President of a country.

In response, Huzoor said:

***“At such a time, Governments would administer the State but would seek spiritual and religious guidance from the Khalifa-Waqt and would be free to seek his opinion on matters of the State as well.”***

Another boy asked Huzoor about the eight years he spent in Ghana and if he had found that period difficult.

In response, Huzoor said:

***“I had done Waqf and so pledged my life for the sake of Allah and so why would I find the conditions difficult? If water was not available then I would go out in a pick-up truck and fill a basin with pondwater, which was often contaminated, and then take it home. When you have pledged your life for the sake of Allah then such things are not difficult.”***

Huzoor continued:

***“When you do Waqf then you should be ready for all conditions and all circumstances and if you complain or think it is too difficult then the true spirit of Waqf is not fulfilled.”***

I really love hearing Huzoor speak about his past experiences in Africa. Sometimes in his office in London, Huzoor will tell me about some of his experiences and it always makes me extremely emotional.

Recently, I asked Huzoor how he remained so patient at all times and rarely expressed any anger.

In response, Huzoor said:

***“Before doing Waqf sometimes I would occasionally become angry or lose my temper a little. However, when I did Waqf and was posted in Ghana, I went to meet Hazrat Khalifatul Masih III (rh) before departure and during that Mulaqat, Huzoor said that as a Waqf and as a member of the family of the Promised Messiah (as) the Ahmadis of Ghana would look at me as an example for them.***

***Thus, I resolved there and then to improve myself and after that I never became angry or annoyed and would always try to remain patient.”***

Very beautifully, Huzoor added:

***“Hazrat Khalifatul Masih III (rh) then handed me a pen as a gift, embraced me warmly and instructed me to leave for Ghana.”***

Another member of the Waqf-e-Nau schemed asked Huzoor how a *Waqf-e-Zindighi*, with a very limited financial allowance, would be able to support his parents financially.

In response, Huzoor said he should keep in mind that parents offered their children as part of the Waqf-e-Nau scheme voluntarily and with a heartfelt desire for their children to be servants of the Jamaat above all else.

However, if a Waqf-e-Nau believed that his parents could not survive without his or her financial assistance then they could seek permission to excuse themselves from their pledge and the Jamaat would then release them to go out and work and support their families.

### **The Canada Hotline!**

When we arrived in Canada, the Qafila members were each handed a folder with a list of contact numbers in case we needed something urgently or if there was an emergency.

One day, someone mentioned to Dr. Tanvir sahib, who was on duty with the Qafila, that having so many numbers was a bit confusing and it would be easier if just one number was provided. Dr. sahib really liked this suggestion and made it his personal mission to arrange it.

Initially, I told him that it was not worth pursuing as I did not think the local Jamaat would change their system. However, he was persistent beyond my expectations and so two days later he handed me, and the other Qafila members, a business card with a phone number printed in a large bold font on one side. On the other side was the word 'Hotline'.

As he handed us the cards, Dr. Sahib told us that if we ever needed anything we could call this number twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week!

Perhaps unsurprisingly, this number, which we came to call '*Dr. Sahib's Hotline*' caused a lot of amusement within the Qafila. We wondered to what extent we were allowed to use this facility. In fact, someone jokingly asked me if the number could be used to order a pizza!

Anyway, we all laughed but the idea of having one designated number, rather than a long list was a lot easier.

In the end, I did not have any need to call the hotline even once, but it was nice to know that it was there if needed!

### **Departure for Ottawa & break in Kingston**

A very blessed and historic part of Huzoor's tour of Canada was his visit to Ottawa, for which Huzoor departed by car from Peace Village at 11.10am on Saturday 15 October 2016.

The Qafila initially drove for two and a half hours before stopping for Namaz and lunch at a small hotel called *La Salle* in the Canadian city of Kingston, which is located on the eastern end of the famous Lake Ontario.

Zuhr and Asr were both offered in a large dining hall that the Jamaat had booked in the hotel. Thereafter, Huzoor returned to a room in the hotel for lunch, whilst the rest of us ate a buffet lunch in the dining hall. The food included grilled chicken, fried fish and a few other items.

After lunch, Huzoor briefly met the local members of the Kingston Jamaat before the Qafila proceeded directly onwards to Ottawa.

## **Arrival in Ottawa**

At 5.45pm we arrived at the Jamaat's Mission House in Ottawa, which is in an area of Ottawa known as Cumberland.

The Mission House consisted of a small flat, in which Huzoor and Khala Saboohi (*Huzoor's respected wife*) stayed and some other rooms which were used by Huzoor's security staff. There was also a large barn and some land which the Jamaat owned at the site.

Huzoor's office staff, including me were accommodated at a nearby hotel and so following arrival in Ottawa we went briefly to the hotel to drop off our luggage. I was sharing a room with Mubarak Zafar sahib.

## **A broken phone and a weather warning**

We returned to the Mission House and at 7.45pm, Huzoor came out of his residence for Namaz, which was to be offered at the *Baitun Naseer* Mosque which was a few minute's drive away.

Before Huzoor entered his car, I approached him and mentioned that my phone had suddenly crashed and was not working.

I asked Huzoor if I could go to the shops the next morning to try and get it repaired or replaced.

Very graciously, Huzoor permitted and said that I should leave early and get back by 12.30pm.

Noticing I was wearing an overcoat, Huzoor said:

***“It is cooler here than in Peace Village and so it is good that you brought your coat.”***

During those days, we were all being warned about the weather later in the tour.

Local Ahmadis kept saying: ***“If you think this is cold, just wait till you get to Western Canada at the end of the trip!”***

We were told that it was already snowing in Saskatoon and Calgary and that by the time Huzoor travelled there the temperature would be minus 10 or minus 15 degrees.

Having heard this warning at least a dozen times, I thought to myself that perhaps the Canada Jamaat could have structured the visit in a different way, whereby after Jalsa or after Ottawa, it could have been proposed to travel to Western Canada, when the weather was not as harsh, and then return to the East Coast later.

Anyway, I should have had more faith in Allah, as the weather later in the tour defied all predictions.

### **Arrival at Baitun Naseer**

Huzoor arrived at the Baitun Naseer Mosque at 8pm where he was welcomed by hundreds of members of the Ottawa Jamaat.

Huzoor was shown around the complex, which had previously been a school and so there were many classrooms which had now been converted into offices or halls. Alhamdulillah there was a lot of space and facilities for the local Jamaat.

### **Visit to the Mall**

The next morning, 16 October, Canada's General Secretary, Sabih Nasir sahib, kindly arranged for a local Khadim, Nasim-ud-din Ahmad to take me to the local shopping mall.

As it was a Sunday, the shops did not open until 11am and so we stopped for a coffee before arriving at the *Apple Store* well before opening.

I was hoping my *iPhone* could be repaired but was told that it was not possible. I thus had to purchase a new phone, which was a little irritating but I was grateful to be connected again, especially as I had not been able to contact my family back in London since my phone had crashed.

### **Emotions of Ahmadis**

After getting the phone, I returned to the Mosque where Huzoor was meeting Ahmadi families in Mulaqats.

Whilst Mulaqats were taking place, I met an Ahmadi called *Waseem Malik*, who had moved to Canada more than 25 years ago.

I did not know Waseem sahib but I noticed that every few minutes he came up to me and would start a conversation. It was perhaps on the third or fourth occasion that he explained why he kept coming back.

With tears in his eyes, Waseem sahib said:

***“Abid sahib, I keep coming back to see you because I wish to talk to you and to spend time with you – but not because of any quality of yours. The only reason I wish to meet you is because you are close to my beloved Khalifatul Masih – who is the person I love more than anyone else in the world today.”***

During Huzoor’s various tours, it is often the case that some Ahmadis will come up to Huzoor’s staff members and be extremely polite or seek to spend time with them. This is something that I have personally experienced and some of the more senior Qafila members experience it even more than me. Thus, the words of Waseem sahib really hit home and were poignant, whereby he reminded me that the reason such people approach us is not because of any quality or skill that we possess. The one and only reason they even look in our direction is due to their love for Khilafat.

I also met *Imran Ahmad Khan (38)* from Montreal who met Huzoor for the very first time along with his family.

Speaking about the experience, Imran sahib said:

***“We prayed for many weeks and months that we would have the opportunity to meet Huzoor for the first time. However, when I started to***

*fill out the Mulaqat form, I stopped half-way and left it because I thought that Huzoor is the greatest person in the world and so how could a sinful person like me ever even request to meet him? My wife convinced me to fill in the form and said that we should both increase in prayer and Istighfar, which we have both done ever since. In this way, even before his arrival, Huzoor helped us to reform.”*

Imran sahib continued:

*“The two minutes we just had in Huzoor’s company were the most precious moments of my life. Huzoor even gave us parenting tips when we told him that our 12 month old daughter only drinks milk and will not take solids. When he heard this, Huzoor said we should feed her some mashed potato and then my wife said we have tried this but she did not eat that either. In response, Huzoor said that we should just put the food in front of her and let her play with it and be patient. Eventually, she will put it in her mouth!”*

I also met with *Khamis Oluwakem Salam Alada (43)* from Nigeria, who was now living in Ottawa.

Moments after meeting Huzoor for the very first time, Oluwakem Salam sahib said:

*“Just from my attire Huzoor knew I was from amongst the Yoruba people in Nigeria and I was shocked by this! Anyway, meeting the Khalifa for the first time was indescribable and I became overwhelmed with emotion.*

***Our Khalifa is truly angelic in appearance and demeanour and I want the entire world to know that Khilafat is the centre of peace in the world.”***

Oluwakem Salam sahib continued:

***“My daughter has a serious eye problem, in fact before she was blind but after surgery she now has very basic vision. Upon seeing her, Huzoor instantly recognised her problem and so he touched her eyes with the blessed ring of the Promised Messiah (as). I am sure the blessings of that moment will help her eyesight to improve, Insha’Allah.”***

Another person who met Huzoor for the first time that day was *Nasim-uddin Ahmad (33)*, who had earlier taken me to the shopping mall.

Speaking about his Mulaqat, Nasim sahib said:

***“I have never had this spiritual feeling before and I have never felt so emotional. I feel like Allah has bestowed upon me all the treasures of the entire world.”***

Nasim sahib continued:

***“Recently, my wife received a threatening note which said ‘Go back to your country – Muslims do not belong here’ and so we informed Huzoor and asked for his prayers. In reply, Huzoor said that such people are ignorant and we should remind them that, apart from the indigenous community, Canada is a country of immigrants. Huzoor said that try to***

***respond to such hatred with peace but if it escalates then we should report it to the police.”***

### **Meeting with Dignitaries**

During the Mulaqat session, Huzoor also met the local MP, Francis Drouin, Councillor Stephen Blais and a representative of the police, Sargent David Zakrias, who all came to welcome him to the nation’s capital.

One of the guests said:

***“Your Holiness, I wish to tell that you the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is doing great service in Ottawa and has contributed greatly to our society.”***

Hearing this, Huzoor said:

***“We are a peaceful community who follow the laws of the land. Thus, when we hold large scale events we do not need policing as naturally there is discipline and amongst our members.”***

Sargent Zakrias said:

***“I particularly like your motto of ‘Love for Allah, Hatred for None’ and in fact our Police Chief in Ottawa even quotes this slogan publicly.”***

The meeting concluded as the Francis Drouin MP presented Huzoor with a gift of home-made maple syrup which he had made himself.

## Gaining perspective

Later, I met *Faisal Ahmad*, from Mauritius and his new wife *Ruba Altaid*, a Syrian refugee who was originally from Damascus. They had married in August 2016.

As I learned about Ruba sahiba's past, I became very emotional.

Meeting her reminded me that, whatever difficulties we face in our lives, there are always people who face far greater trials and tribulations and so we should always be grateful for the blessings Allah had bestowed upon us.

Ruba sahiba told me that her first husband, *Khalid al-Borakai* had been martyred in the Syrian war.

As she told me about her life it sounded like the storyline for a novel, yet there was no element of fiction, rather her words portrayed a reality that she had faced and lived through.

Ruba sahiba said:

***“My husband Khalid was captured by the Syrian Government during the civil war a few years ago. He was a very passionate Ahmadi and so he had been doing Tabligh and preaching the message of our Jamaat. Sometimes we would talk of the danger of doing Tabligh but he would always say I do not care about the risk, I love the Jamaat so much and I am obligated to share this teaching of the Promised Messiah (as) with my fellow Syrians, even if it means that I will die.”***

Ruba sahiba continued:

***“The Syrian Government assumed that he was an ISIS terrorist because he spoke of his love for his Khalifa. They thought he was talking about the leader of ISIS, yet he was talking of his love for the Imam of Peace, the Khalifa of the Promised Messiah (as). They tortured him and took his life.”***

Ruba sahiba said that serving the Jamaat in the aftermath of her husband’s martyrdom had helped to recover from the tragedy.

Ruba sahiba said:

***“If you look at me today, I have a smile on my face. With the Grace of Allah, I am ok now. The thing that helped me through that period was being able to assist in the revision of the Arabic translation of the Promised Messiah’s (as) book ‘Lecture Ludhiana’. Doing that work is my passion and reading and re-reading the words of the Promised Messiah (as) gave me the patience to deal with my husband’s martyrdom.”***

Ruba sahiba continued:

***“At the beginning, I used to question Allah and ask Him why He had allowed for my husband to be killed but when I read the books of the Promised Messiah (as) I realised that this world is nothing and the real life is in the Hereafter, where my husband is safe and well.”***

When I asked her if Ahmadis in Syria remained in danger, Ruba sahiba said:

***“Yes, they are in great danger because both the Government and the Opposition groups have hatred for our Jamaat and persecute us.”***

Speaking of her Mulaqat that day, Ruba sahiba told me it was the fulfilment of a dream she had seen thirteen years earlier.

Ruba sahiba said:

***“When I was nineteen I saw a dream in which I was unwell and so members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community took me to see the Fourth Khalifa (Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad<sup>rh</sup>) and he put his hand on my cheek and told me I was healed. He then said ‘You will be in Canada’.***

***When I woke up, I was very confused and shocked because at that time I could never imagine being anywhere other than Syria and certainly not in Canada.***

***Today that dream of mine came true and the only difference was that it was Khalifatul Masih V (aba) who was destined to heal me. Huzoor’s face shined like the moon and I love him so much that I cannot describe.”***

Ruba sahiba’s eight year old daughter *Sharoon* then looked up at me and, with great innocence and love, said:

***“It is not only my mother who loves Huzoor – I also love him very much!”***

Ruba sahiba then told me about her new life in Canada. She said:

***“In my life, I have faced great hardship and difficulty. I have seen first-hand the torment of war and bloodshed in Syria but I can only be grateful as I am now safe here in Canada.”***

Ruba sahiba continued:

***“Soon after coming to Canada, I saw a dream in which I was married again and just a week later I received the proposal from my new husband.”***

I then turned towards Faisal sahib, her new husband, who worked at the University of Ottawa. He said:

***“It is a great honour for me to marry the wife of a martyr. My new wife and her daughter are very passionate and righteous Ahmadis. They come running to the Mosque for prayers and in this way are having a very good effect upon me as well.”***

Faisal sahib continued:

***“Today, meeting Huzoor was one of the greatest experiences of my life. Having met him, I feel purified and enlightened. We also brought with us a photo of Khalid sahib, Ruba’s first husband, and most graciously Huzoor signed it and we will treasure that photo.”***

## **Qafila briefing**

On the evening of 16 October 2016, the Qafila members were called for a briefing by Private Secretary, Munir Javed sahib and Amir Sahib Canada at the Mission House in Ottawa.

It was a first for me, as I could not remember a formal briefing for the entire Qafila in any of my trips abroad with Huzoor. We are regularly updated of the programme or any key events but this was altogether more formal.

The briefing concerned Huzoor's visit to Parliament the next day. We were informed by Naib Amir, Aslam Daud sahib about the programme of events in detail. It sounded like it was going to be a very busy, blessed and historic day and it certainly proved to be as well.

## **Arrival at Parliament Hill**

A few minutes after 10am, on 17 October 2016, Huzoor came out of his residence and the Qafila departed from the Mission House and proceeded directly to Parliament Hill, where Canada's Houses of Parliament are based.

The Qafila drove through downtown Ottawa until it reached the main entrance of the Canadian Houses of Parliament.

Huzoor's car stopped right in front of the main doors of the Parliament and as Huzoor stepped out of his car he was welcomed by Canadian Parliamentarians Judy Sgro and Deb Schulte, who acted as official hosts

throughout Huzoor's visit in Parliament. Also present was a huge crowd of Ahmadis who had come to welcome Huzoor to their National Parliament.

### **Getting left behind**

The MPs escorted Huzoor into Parliament and showed him the Parliament's Official Library, which was extremely beautiful, before heading up on a lift to the sixth floor. The lift was quite small and so I thought I would come up on the next lift as there was not much space.



However, once the lift had gone up, the police officers on duty at the Parliament informed that no one else would be allowed up and the rest of us should remain downstairs.

Knowing Huzoor immediately had some meetings scheduled, I was quite frustrated and nervous. The thought flashed across my mind that on one of the most important days of Huzoor's tour, I am going to spend the morning

drinking coffee in a waiting area, whilst Huzoor's meetings are taking place elsewhere!

I decided to try and find some stairs but could not find any and so I went back to the lift area, along with Majid sahib, Mubarak sahib and a few others hoping that the police officer would relent.

However, if anything he became more ill-tempered and strict and intimated that he was ready to arrest anyone who defied him! It was at that point that I thought it was best to take a step back.

Sabih Nasir, the Jamaat *General Secretary*, spoke to one of our contacts within Parliament who in turn explained to the police officer that our names had been cleared in advance by Parliamentary security.

After a few long minutes, finally the police officer relented and said I could go up in the lift as long as I was escorted by a Parliament official.

Without pausing for a second in case he changed his mind again, I went into the lift and finally made it to the sixth floor and entered a private lounge area, where Huzoor's first meeting of the day, with Judy Sgro and a couple of other MPs was taking place.

As I went and sat down a couple of metres to Huzoor's right, I resolved that even if the space was tight, I would try to follow Huzoor into lifts for the rest of the day and be spared the potential wrath of the police officer!

## **Meeting with Chief Government Whip**

After a few minutes, (Ret) Lt-General Andrew Leslie MP entered the room and came to meet Huzoor. After retiring from the army, Lt.-Gen Leslie was now an elected MP and had been appointed as the Chief Whip in Justin Trudeau's Government.

Speaking about attending the Jalsa Salana, Lt-Gen Leslie said:

***“The scenes at your Annual Convention and the huge crowds present was truly astonishing. I was also very impressed by how organised it was and the fact that there were no disturbances, even though there were no police on duty.”***

In response, Huzoor said:

***“I often say that the discipline displayed by Ahmadis is superior to the discipline of most armies!”***

### **A mutual respect**

Judy Sgro, formerly Canada's *Minister for Citizenship and Immigration*, and a long-time friend of the Jamaat remained present throughout the morning meetings.

It was very apparent how much respect she had for Huzoor and, in turn, Huzoor's respect and warmth towards her. Indeed, on several occasions, Huzoor referred to Mrs. Sgro as ***“my old friend”***.

At one point, Mrs. Sgro mentioned to Huzoor that she hoped that he would return to inaugurate the Jamaat's Mosque in Brampton when it was completed.

Upon this, Amir Sahib Canada interjected and said:

***“Before the Brampton Mosque is ready, we will complete the Saskatoon Mosque Insha’Allah and we are hoping His Holiness will return to inaugurate that first.”***

Judy Sgro said that she had met some Ahmadis in the morning before Huzoor's arrival and that she they were all extremely emotional at the prospect of Huzoor visiting the Parliament.

In particular, she had seen a Syrian refugee, who had come to Canada a few months earlier, weeping with tears of joy.

In response, Huzoor said:

***“Throughout this trip, I am meeting our Ahmadis and many of them are immigrants or refugees who are meeting me for the first time. Just yesterday, I met around 90 families.”***

Huzoor was informed by Dr. Aslam Daud sahib (*Naib Amir Canada*) that Judy Sgro was a great supporter of *Humanity First*.

Hearing this, Huzoor addressed Mrs. Sgro and said:

***“Everyone who values humanity should support Humanity First. There are some people who have an even greater love for humanity than their peers and I think that you are one of those people.”***

In reply, Mrs. Sgro said:

***“Thank you so much and yes I believe that humanity is our purpose and objective. Your statement of ‘Love for All, Hatred for None’ is something that has always resonated with me and is something that I have tried to live by.***

***In politics, there are some things that I do not like but I have stayed here because I feel as though God wanted me to work here. We have much more to achieve and if I was still Immigration Minister I would have opened the door to many more Ahmadis here in Canada.”***

Speaking about her own appreciation of Khilafat-e-Ahmadiyya, Mrs. Sgro said:

***“Your Holiness, whatever you say is always based on truth and sense. I just wish that today we could have gathered all the world’s leaders here into one room so that they could hear your message of peace and justice directly. The world would be a far better place if world leaders followed your example and listened to your words.”***

Then, upon Judy Sgro suggesting that he had a very long day ahead in Parliament, Huzoor responded by saying:

***“It is only a long day in the sense that I will not be spending my day with my Ahmadis, but otherwise in terms of hours of work it is not long at all.”***

Huzoor’s comment showed his great love for the Jamaat. Although, he would be in Parliament for the vast majority of the day, in terms of hours it was not long for him, as Huzoor’s days generally are much longer.

However, what made it long for Huzoor was the fact that he was apart from most Jamaat members and was not seeing them or at the Mosque as was his normal routine.

At that point, Asif Khan (*Secretary Umoor-e-Kharija*) entered the room and apologised to Huzoor that the next meeting had been delayed by a few minutes.

In reply, Huzoor glanced towards Judy Sgro and said:

***“It is ok, if no Parliamentarian was present and I was here in their building I might feel embarrassed but as long as our host Judy is here then I am comfortable.”***

I looked towards Mrs. Sgro who seemed extremely moved by Huzoor’s kind words and affection.

## Meeting with Senators and Parliamentarians

Huzoor's next meeting was with two Canadian National Senators, Grant Mitchell and Peter Hart. The latter was the Representative of the Canadian Government in the Senate.

Much of the meeting focused on international relations and foreign policies, as these were areas of work where the Senators were involved.



Speaking about foreign policy, Huzoor said:

***“Canada should guide other nations towards peace and justice. Wherever there is a risk of war every possible measure should be taken to avoid it. The situation of the world is deteriorating very quickly before our eyes and no one knows what will happen tomorrow.”***

Huzoor continued:

***“There needs to be justice and equality at all levels of society. The policies of a government should not favour certain parties or be based upon favouritism but should be fair and equal. This is necessary both domestically and in terms of international relations.”***

Speaking about the Islamic concept of peace, Huzoor said:

***“Last year a Japanese Priest asked me what was the definition of peace and I responded by saying that it is to give rights to others, rather than seeking your own rights.”***

Huzoor continued:

***“In the time of the Holy Prophet (sa) a man from a village brought a horse to sell at a market and he and the purchaser argued over the price but not as you may think.***

***The seller did not argue that the price should be higher but he said that price should be lower, whilst the purchaser said the price should be higher! Each of them wanted to ensure that the other party were given their due rights, even if it was to their own detriment.”***

The Senators seemed genuinely touched by this magnificent example from early Islam and it was the perfect illustration of the point Huzoor sought to make about discharging the rights of others.

Huzoor continued:

***“I do not believe in Socialism or Communism but I do believe that society should help people fulfil their basic needs and help them stand upon their own feet.***

***For example, if a poor person cannot afford education or healthcare then it is the duty of the Government to provide these services to them. If the basic needs are not fulfilled then it will lead to frustration, especially amongst young people and that is very dangerous as such frustrations will erupt at some point, for example through extremism.”***

Thereafter, Huzoor had a meeting with Pamela Goldsmith-Jones MP, the *Parliamentary Secretary for Global Affairs*, as well as a representative of the Canadian Government’s *Office for Human Rights, Freedoms and Inclusion*.

The representative of the *Office for Human Rights* informed Huzoor that their goal was to promote religious freedom and to uphold other basic human rights.

In response, Huzoor said:

***“I pray that Allah gives you the strength and courage to fulfil your plans with honesty and justice. Only then will you be able to achieve good and positive results.”***

## **Checking my phone**

Following the conclusion of the meeting there was a break for a few minutes, during which myself and a few other of the Qafila members remained in the room with Huzoor.

Huzoor told me to show him my new phone, which I had purchased the day before. I was amazed that, despite being in the middle of so many meetings, Huzoor still remembered that I had bought a new phone.

Upon seeing it, Huzoor said:

***“It appears that you have not checked your emails or WhatsApp messages for a while as there are many unread emails and messages!”***

Thereafter, Huzoor continued to use my phone for a few minutes, until the next meeting.

Later in the day, on a couple of further occasions, when there were brief breaks or interludes, Huzoor again asked for my phone before returning it to me for the final time during the lunch break. When I checked it, I noticed that Huzoor had downloaded a dictionary app for me. In the past, Huzoor had done the same on my old phone and so Huzoor gave the same blessing to my new phone as well.

Those moments where Huzoor scrolled through the phone showed me that Khalifa-Waqt was not overawed by any location, no matter how vast or historic.

Despite meeting with Ministers and Senators, Huzoor remained very relaxed and even found the time to download a dictionary app for me!

In years to come, Insha'Allah, I will enjoy telling the story that a few moments before meeting Prime Minister Trudeau and being officially recognised in Canada's *House of Commons*, our beloved Khalifa was reminding me to check my *Whatsapp* messages and ensuring that I had easy access to an online dictionary!

### **Meeting MPs and Jamaat members**

As Judy Sgro returned to the room, she showed Huzoor a statement that she was going to read out in Parliament that day. Huzoor took out his glasses and read the statement, which was written in praise of the Jamaat and as a formal welcome to Huzoor.

At 12.30pm, Huzoor was escorted to a large reception hall on the ground floor of the Parliament, where he met personally with dozens of MPs, who came to greet him and to welcome him to Parliament. Most of the MPs were members of a Parliamentary Group that has been set up in Canada in support of our Jamaat.

In between, Huzoor also showed great affection to the members of the Jamaat present. For example, Huzoor turned to Asif Khan (*Secretary Umoore-Kharija*) and asked him about his understanding of Punjabi because moments earlier Huzoor had spoken in Punjabi to a Canadian MP who was originally from Amritsar and told him that he was a neighbour to Qadian.

After meeting the MPs, Huzoor led the Zuhr and Asr prayers in the same hall at the Parliament. It was a great blessing to be able to offer Salat behind Khalifatul Masih at the Canadian Parliament.



### **Complaint raised by Quebec Party MP**

The fact that Huzoor led Namaz at the Parliament was later raised by an MP from the Quebec Party who complained the *Azan* and prayers had been offered at Parliament, which she considered to be an affront to Canada's secularism and values.

She also condemned the MPs Judy Sgro and Deb Schulte for wearing headscarves in the presence of Huzoor at the Parliament, which she rather inaccurately termed as a 'veil'.

In an official response, a Government official noted that a fundamental principle of Canadian values was to respect people's faith and to permit religious freedom.

Hence, the fact that *Namaz* was offered or that the MPs wore headscarves was not opposed to Canadian values but actually a reflection of its best values.

For the record, the Jamaat never requested to offer *Salat* at the Parliament nor for the MPs to wear headscarves. The Parliamentary officials themselves offered us the opportunity to do *Namaz*, otherwise the Jamaat would have made arrangements elsewhere.

Similarly, no Jamaat member or official requested Judy Sgro or Deb Schulte to wear a headscarf, they did so themselves out of their respect for Huzoor and for the Jamaat.

### **Lunch at Parliament**

Following *Namaz*, Huzoor returned to the meeting room on the sixth floor where he had spent the morning. The Jamaat had arranged lunch for Huzoor and the Qafila members in the meeting room.

Personally, I felt that this was the one part of the day, which was not arranged properly because the lunch period is the one time during a day when Huzoor has a few minutes to rest and to relax. However, the arrangements were such that it was not possible for him to do so on that day.

Adjoining to the main room was a very small second room in which Ahmad bhai and I served Huzoor lunch. The rest of the Qafila members ate a lunch of grilled salmon in the main room.

After a few minutes, I returned to ask Huzoor if he would like some fruit but by that time Huzoor had moved to a sofa chair and said he would try to rest for a few minutes.

I returned to the main room thinking that it would be very difficult for Huzoor to rest with the rest of the group still eating their lunch in the adjoining room.

The Jamaat had booked a room at nearby hotel for Huzoor, where we were taken later in the day, and as I saw Huzoor try to get a moment's rest I wished that we could have gone to the hotel in the lunch break so that Huzoor could have had some privacy and proper rest.

As it was, after no more than 3 or 4 minutes, Huzoor got up and returned to the main room where we were sitting. Seeing this, I felt even worse, knowing that Huzoor had hoped to rest but had not been able to.

Noticing that we had slightly rearranged the furniture in the room for lunch, Huzoor said:

***“You should ensure that the tables are returned to their original positions and that the room is cleaned fully.”***

Thus, we tried to return the furniture to the original positions but our memories failed us as to where each chair and table went. Thankfully, Huzoor's memory and observation in such matters is exceptional and so he personally guided us and told us where to place each item.

On a couple of occasions, we thought we had placed the furniture correctly but Huzoor said that they misplaced and he told us to look at the carpet and see where the original indentations of the furniture were. Upon doing so we realised Huzoor was right and so moved the furniture again until it was exactly as it had been originally.

It showed Huzoor's excellent etiquettes, whereby he ensured that the Jamaat left a good impression and did not leave any mess or any item out of place.

### **Impromptu walk**

Huzoor asked what the next programme was and in reply a Canadian Jamaat member said the Jamaat had planned for Huzoor to rest during this period of half an hour.

Hearing this, Huzoor said:

***"I am getting bored just sitting in this room and it is not possible to rest here. Just sitting in our chairs like this is neither rest nor relaxation!"***

It was suggested to Huzoor that a short walk could be taken in the grounds outside of Parliament. Huzoor agreed and so we had the opportunity to

accompany him outside where Huzoor viewed the famous *Centennial Flame*, which is known more commonly as the '*Flaming Fountain*'.



Those moments outside were much far more preferable and enjoyable than sitting upstairs.

It was also a great surprise for many Ahmadis who had been waiting outside the Parliament. They were overjoyed at seeing Huzoor walking around the public square so informally. As Huzoor walked, they waved and offered their *salam* to their beloved Imam and this scene caught the attention of other local tourists as well, who suddenly looked in Huzoor's direction with great curiosity and interest.

### **Official Recognition in the House of Commons**

Following the short break outside, Huzoor was escorted directly to the VIP Gallery of House of Commons in Parliament where a session of *Question Period* was taking place.

As we entered, Huzoor took a seat in the front row, whilst I was seated just behind him.

The gallery was directly facing the Government's front bench and so I immediately noticed Prime Minister Justin Trudeau sitting directly in front of us and to the far right was the Speaker of Parliament.

Prior to Huzoor's arrival, Judy Sgro, who was seated on the left side of the chamber, had presented the official proclamation welcoming Huzoor on behalf of Canada's Parliament.

For the next 15 to 20 minutes, Huzoor listened to the proceedings of the Parliament, in which MPs had the chance to ask a series of questions to Government Ministers.

It was a very familiar scene to someone like me from the UK, as Canada's Parliamentary system echoes our own Westminster Parliament in many respects.

As the session drew to a close, the Speaker of Parliament took the opportunity to acknowledge Huzoor's presence in the Parliament.

The Speaker said:

***"I would like to draw to the attention of honourable members to the presence in the gallery of His Holiness, Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Head of the Worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community."***

As he said these words, the entire Parliament, including the Prime Minister, rose to their feet and gave Huzoor a standing ovation.

I was struck by the warmth in the room, whereby it genuinely seemed as though all the Parliamentarians were united in their appreciation at the presence of Huzoor.

It was a very emotional moment, as we witnessed the blessings of Allah the Almighty in full force, wherein one of the world's foremost Parliaments stood up to acclaim the Fifth Successor to the Promised Messiah (as).

I felt extremely humbled and honoured to be present and felt a shiver go down my spine at that moment.

With great humility, Huzoor stood for no more than a few seconds and acknowledged their welcome.

Once again, Huzoor's reaction stood apart from other world leaders.

Most leaders would bask in that moment of acclamation and recognition, but on the other hand, Huzoor stood just for the briefest of moments.

It showed his beautiful personality, whereby Huzoor stood because it was his duty as Khalifatul Masih to acknowledge the gesture of the Parliamentarians, yet from Huzoor's expression and countenance it was clearly apparent that personally he did not desire any such recognition.

### **A beautiful comment**

As the session ended, Huzoor returned to the sixth-floor meeting room, where Huzoor was to meet Canada's Federal Minister for Public Safety, Ralph Goodale.

In the moments before Mr. Goodale entered, a member of Canada's Jamaat, Mubarak Ahmad sought to brief Huzoor about the politician and about what he may wish to discuss in the meeting.

Mubarak sahib is very interested and active in Canadian politics. Over the years, I have had a number of interesting discussions with him and have been impressed by his knowledge of the intricacies of Canada's political riding system. He is a naturally a jovial character, who talks a mile a minute!

After a few seconds, Huzoor stopped Mubarak sahib and very beautifully said:

***"There is no need for a briefing because I speak from my heart at all times."***

Huzoor then glanced in my direction before continuing:

***"You can ask Abid sahib as well, he will tell you that I do not need briefings before meetings."***

It was true. In the past, on many occasions I have submitted briefings to Huzoor about guests or journalists who were coming to meet him, either in

writing or verbally. However, each time, Huzoor made it clear that he did not require them.

Similarly, in the first few media interviews that my office had the opportunity to arrange for Huzoor, I used to submit a list of proposed questions, which the journalist would likely ask. However, Huzoor would rarely, if ever, look over them.

Whereas most people prefer briefings, Khalifa-Waqt is guided by Allah and as he said so beautifully Huzoor always speaks from the heart.

### **Meeting with Public Safety Minister**

During the meeting, Minister Goodale was particularly keen to seek Huzoor's advice about radicalisation and extremism, given that Ahmadis, across the board, were peaceful and law-abiding citizens.

In response, Huzoor said:

***“The fact that Ahmadis are not prone to radicalisation is due to the Grace of God and because we teach our youth, from childhood, the importance of following the true teachings of the Quran and the Holy Prophet (sa), which require Muslims to be law-abiding and to love their nations.***

***We teach our children that, where they must fulfil the rights of their Creator, they must also fulfil the rights of mankind.”***

Huzoor continued:

***“In every country, we Ahmadis promote education amongst our members and certainly education is a very important factor in combatting extremism.***

***Further, at every stage of their youth, we try to keep in personal contact with our members and align them with other members of our community who are of a similar age. Similarly, it is the duty of parents as well to keep a close eye on their children, to guide them and to answer their questions openly.”***

Speaking of his own contact with Ahmadis, Huzoor said:

***“Every day I get thousands of letters from Ahmadis worldwide and through this correspondence they develop a personal relationship with me and I guide them and pray for them.”***

Hearing all of this, the Minister said:

***“Your Holiness, you are truly fulfilling a huge and worldwide task. It is incredible to see.”***

### **Huzoor’s humility**

As the meeting concluded, Huzoor met Judy Sgro, who had returned to the room.

With great humility, Huzoor said:

***“During the Parliamentary session, I was not previously aware that I needed to stand when they mentioned my name. Hence, I only stood for a second and I apologise if this was not enough.”***

In response, Judy Sgro said:

***“Your Holiness, the way you stood was perfect and so there is no need to apologise. I was extremely happy with how the session went and that there were so many Ahmadi men and women present to see that historic moment.”***

Huzoor smiled and said:

***“Yes, there were many Ahmadis present in the chamber. Also, after lunch I went outside for a short walk to enjoy some fresh air and there were many Ahmadis walking on the street outside and they were very happy to see me and I was very happy to see them. It was like a mini Peace Village here in Ottawa!”***

Mrs. Sgro then said that there would be a break later in the day and she hoped Huzoor would be able to get some rest before the evening reception.

She also informed that two Parliamentary events, due to take place that evening, had been cancelled because of Huzoor’s presence, as many MPs had indicated that they did not wish to miss Huzoor’s address.

## **Meeting with the Prime Minister**

At 4pm, Huzoor was escorted to the Prime Minister's office, where he held a meeting with Canada's Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau.

We had been told in advance that the Prime Minister's Office had stated that the meeting would be *one on one* and that staff members would not be present. However, later we were told that Amir Sahib Canada and myself were also permitted to attend.

As Huzoor entered the office, he was greeted by the Prime Minister and then they both sat down. Upon seeing the office, I was a little surprised, as I had imagined it would be extremely vast and grand but it was not of the scale I had presumed.

For a minute, the media and our own *MTA* cameras, were permitted entry, during which the Prime Minister welcomed Huzoor and spoke of his appreciation at the continued positive contribution of the Jamaat to Canada.

Once the cameras departed, the Prime Minister asked Huzoor about his trip and his programme for the rest of the tour. He also said that he and other Canadians were extremely proud of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and were grateful for Huzoor's leadership and promotion of peace.

Thereafter, Huzoor said:

***"I want to thank you for inviting me today and I also wish to personally congratulate you on being elected Prime Minister last year."***

Huzoor continued by saying:

***“I also enjoyed observing the Question Period in Parliament and one thing I noted was the calmness of Canada’s Prime Minister.”***

Hearing this, Prime Minister Trudeau said:

***“Thank you! I try to be as respectful as possible.”***



The Prime Minister continued:

***“The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a great example in promoting the values that we share and your Community has also done great work in helping many Syrian refugees resettle here. Your friendship and leadership is very important to Canada and we appreciate how you condemn all forms of extremism.”***

The Prime Minister also informed Huzoor that the Canada's *Office for Religious Freedom* had now been replaced by a broader *Office* upholding Human Rights.

Hearing this, Huzoor said:

***“In the world today there is too much politics and not enough justice. I pray that God blesses all those steps that you take to promote the peace of the world. It is particularly the duty of the major powers to work towards peace.”***

The Prime Minister responded by saying:

***“Peace in the world is a dream that I share with you. Thank you, Your Holiness.”***

### **Round Table with Prime Minister and Cabinet Members**

Following the conclusion of the meeting, the Prime Minister escorted Huzoor to a larger room at the other end of the corridor, where six members of Justin Trudeau's Cabinet were already seated at a large round table. Upon entering, Huzoor and the Prime Minister sat down, as well as a small delegation from our Jamaat.

Just as he sat down, the Prime Minister noticed Mubarak Ahmad sahib, the Ahmadi who was involved in Canadian politics. When he saw him, the Prime Minister called Mubarak sahib over and embraced him like an old friend.

Later, some of Mubarak sahib's Ahmadi friends jokingly teased him when he told them about this incident and said that he must have imagined it! Thus, he specially came to me and asked me to verify that it was not a figment of his imagination and that the Prime Minister really had embraced him!

Thereafter, the same protocol was followed as in the earlier meeting, whereby the media were permitted to film and take photos briefly before they were asked to leave and the doors were shut.

As they did so I could hear a cacophony of camera flashes from behind and so I turned my neck and saw a throng of photographers and cameramen vying to get the best possible shot.

This second meeting lasted for about 30 minutes and both the Prime Minister and Cabinet members used the opportunity to seek Huzoor's guidance on various matters.

In particular, the Government representatives sought Huzoor's views on matters pertaining to religious freedom and the rights of minorities.

Before running for the leadership of the Liberal Party, Justin Trudeau had come to meet Huzoor in Peace Village in 2012.

Recalling that meeting, Huzoor said:

***“When I first met you in Peace Village I prayed for you and said that one day you will be Prime Minister. Perhaps you do not remember.”***

Hearing this, the Prime Minister responded:

***“Your Holiness, I do remember it very well.”***



During the meeting, Huzoor also thanked the Canadian Government for their generous refugee policies.

Huzoor said:

***“I wish to express my thanks to the people of Canada and its Government for accepting Ahmadi refugees, not only from Syria, but also many of the families of the Ahmadis who were martyred on 28 May 2010 in Lahore. We are extremely grateful for this kindness.”***

The Prime Minister asked Huzoor about the Jamaat’s relationship with other Muslim groups in the UK.

In response, Huzoor said:

***“Some of the Muslim groups in the UK are sadly reluctant to co-operate with our Jamaat, whereas if we worked together on matters of mutual interest it would be better. From our side, we Ahmadis are open and we wish to have an open dialogue with the people of all faiths and religions.”***

The Prime Minister also asked Huzoor about contrasting freedoms in society and which freedoms should be prioritised.

In response, Huzoor said that, according to Islam, all people should be afforded basic human rights and there was no place for discrimination. For example, he said that every girl in the world has a right to education.

Huzoor also expressed his opinion that religion was something that Governments should not needlessly interfere with.

Huzoor said:

***“The Government should not unduly involve itself in interfering in the peaceful religious rights and faith of people. For example, Muslims are often criticised for holding segregated events, in which men and women sit separately, however if the women prefer to sit separately and are not forced to do so, then it should be their right.”***

During the meeting, Huzoor also spoke of rising incidents of terrorism and extremism and said that he was concerned by the fact that one-fifth of the people who had travelled to Syria or Iraq to join terrorist groups from

Canada were women. Huzoor said that if women were extremists it was even more dangerous, as they were in the prime position to indoctrinate and brainwash the next generation.

Huzoor said:

***“Even though, Canada is physically located far from the Muslim world, it does not mean that you are immune from danger and so the Government must remain vigilant to the threat of extremism here as well.”***

*Alhamdulillah*, during the course of the two meetings, Huzoor was able to guide the Canadian leaders extremely beautifully about not only the need for peace but also the means for peace in the world.

### **Break at hotel**

By now, it was late afternoon and, even though I had been a mere bystander, I was grateful that there was now a break for just over an hour to relax and refresh.

The Canada Jamaat took Huzoor to a nearby hotel, where it had booked two rooms. In one room, Huzoor went and took the time to rest for a little while and to look over his notes for his evening address.

The rest of us went to the other room, where, upon feeling the need for caffeine, I immediately took benefit of the coffee machine. The other Qafila members also had tea or coffee and I took out a *Kit Kat* chocolate that I had kept in my coat pocket all day and shared it round.

## **Historic Reception in Ottawa**

At 6.30pm, Huzoor and the Qafila members proceeded to the nearby *Sir John A. Macdonald* building, owned by Canada's Federal Government and located just in front of the main Parliament building.

It is a vast hall used by the Government and Parliamentarians for official receptions and events.

There, an historic reception was held, during which Huzoor magnificently presented the true teachings of Islam to a vast array of dignitaries and guests.

More than 225 people attended the event, including 6 Government Ministers. Further, more than 50 MPs and 11 Ambassadors of State attended, as well as religious leaders, media representatives and academics.

Following Tilawat, Huzoor presented Hon. Louise Arbour with the *Sir Zafrullah Khan Award for Public Service*, which is presented by the Canada Jamaat each year in recognition of outstanding public service.

The recipient this year was a former *High Commissioner for Human Rights at the United Nations* and a former *Canadian Supreme Court Judge*.

Upon receiving the award, Hon. Louise Arbour said:

***"I am deeply honoured to receive this very prestigious award that is named after a great jurist, lawyer, judge and a great diplomat. I am particularly honoured to be associated with Sir Zafrullah Khan, as he***

*was a Chief Judge and President of the International Court of Justice.”*

Thereafter, Hon. Kirsty Duncan, *Minister of Science*, representing the Prime Minister took to the stage, followed by Dr. James J. Zogby, *Vice-Chair of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom*. They both spoke of their appreciation of the way the Jamaat, under the guidance of Khilafat-e-Ahmadiyya, was promoting the message of peaceful Islam throughout the world.

### **Huzoor’s keynote address**

At exactly 7pm, Huzoor took to the stage to deliver the keynote address.

I have listened to many addresses of Huzoor, in different parts of the world, and each in their own way has been unique and special. Nonetheless, the address that evening at Parliament was truly magnificent.

The way Huzoor addressed the issues of the time, such as the increasing threat of a global war, religious freedom, international relations and the rise of extremism was nothing short of astonishing.

Huzoor presented Islam’s universal teachings as the solution to the world’s problems. Each and every line was perceptive and filled with great wisdom.

A few days earlier, Huzoor had chosen “***Human values – the foundation for a peaceful world***” as the title for this address and it was perfect summary of what was to follow.

Speaking about increasing worldwide conflicts, Huzoor said:

***“As a result of modern forms of communication and transport, we are all now much closer together and are no longer confined or bound by geography. Yet, it is a strange and tragic paradox that even though we are more connected than ever before, we are actually growing more distant by the day.”***



Huzoor continued:

***“It is extremely regrettable, and a source of grief, that instead of uniting and spreading love amongst mankind, the world has paid far greater heed towards spreading hatred, cruelty and injustice.”***

Stating how Islam protected the rights of all people to practice their faith or beliefs, Huzoor said:

***“The Holy Quran categorically states in chapter 2, verse 257 that ‘there should be no compulsion in religion.’ What a clear, comprehensive and***

***unequivocal statement that enshrines freedom of thought, freedom of religion and freedom of conscience. Thus, my belief and my teaching, is that every person, in every village, town, city or country has the undisputed right to choose his or her religion and to practice it.”***

As he had said earlier in the day when meeting the Prime Minister, Huzoor once again reiterated that Governments ought not to interfere with religious rights.

Huzoor said:

***“It is not wise for governments or parliaments to place restrictions on the basic religious practices or beliefs of people. For example, governments should not concern themselves with what type of clothing a woman chooses to wear. They should not issue decrees stating what a place of worship should look like.***

***If they overreach in this way, it will be a means of restlessness and heightening frustrations amongst their people. Such grievances will continue to exacerbate if they are not checked and ultimately will threaten the peace of society.”***

Very beautifully, Huzoor said:

***“It is the task of the government and parliamentarians, as guardians of their nations, to legislate in a way that gives rights to their citizens rather than takes their rights away.”***

Huzoor concluded by warning that the world was “*charging madly towards a huge catastrophe in the shape of another world war*”.

Praying that the world would be spared such tragedy, Huzoor said:

*“May Allah grant wisdom to the world’s leaders and policy makers so that the world we leave behind for our children and future generations is a world of peace and prosperity.”*

Huzoor’s words of warning and prayer ring more true by the day. Divisive, discriminatory and unjust policies show no sign of abating, in fact the past few months have escalated further.

### **Enjoying dinner**

Following the formal session, we were served dinner of soup followed by roast chicken.

I was seated between the *Dutch Ambassador to Canada* and Ahmed D. Hussen MP and both proved interesting company.

The Dutch Ambassador told me that he knew the Jamaat’s Masjid Mubarak in Holland very well, whilst Mr. Hussen told me that he was a refugee who had come to Canada from war-torn Somalia.

Mr. Hussen also said he had found Huzoor’s address to be “*touching*” and that “*each word had a deep meaning*”. He said he agreed with almost

everything Huzoor said and considered the speech to be a ***“a call for justice and religious freedom”***.

The only issue he queried was Huzoor’s criticism of Western policy in relation to the arms trade, which he said was a ***“very complex issue”***.

At the time of the event, Mr. Hussen was a backbench MP but in January 2017 he was appointed as Canada’s *Minister for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship*.

After dinner, Mr. Hussen and many other guests had the opportunity to personally meet Huzoor and to have their photos taken with him.

### **Impact of Huzoor’s words**

Later, I met many guests and as one, they all spoke with the utmost admiration for Huzoor’s address. They each attested to the beauty of Huzoor’s words and his dignity, grace and honesty.

One person I met was *Nicola Di Lorio MP*, who said:

***“I was amazed! I thought the Khalifa would just stand up and say ‘hello and thank you’ and then sit down. Instead he gave one of the greatest speeches I have ever heard. It was a revelation for me and for all the people lucky enough to hear it. His Holiness broke down all the issues facing the world such as climate change, economic problems, war and highlighted injustice as the root cause.”***

Mr. Di Lorio continued:

***“His Holiness also gave solutions to the issues of today, for example he spoke against interfering in religion or the arms trade. I am so glad I attended and could hear the words of wisdom of this man of peace. He is single handedly showing the world what Islam is.”***

I met a *Sikh* guest, who said:

***“I expected a spiritual address but I instead I found it to be one of the most courageous speeches in history. When I thought on this, I realised that only a truly spiritual person could give such a brave speech. Thus, his courage actually manifested his spirituality.”***

I also met with Imam *Mohammed Jebara*, a Sunni Muslim, who said:

***“I am a Sunni Imam and I have no hesitation in saying that this speech laid the foundation for peace in the world and was needed in the world today. It was filled with wisdom because His Holiness did not cast blame on any one group, rather he said that the unrest of the world today is due to weaknesses on all sides.”***

A Canadian Parliamentarian, Kevin Waugh MP said:

***“The speech of the Khalifa has forced me to think and indeed re-think. There are so many things that seem normal or in the best interests of society, however they can be rooted in injustice and this is what the Khalifa was warning about. It was also wonderful how he championed***

***the rights of the deprived and said that it is in the interests of the developed world for developing countries to prosper.”***

*Alhamdulillah*, the authority, majesty and awe promised by Allah to the Promised Messiah (as) in the revelation of “*nu-sirtu bir-robe*” had again been witnessed through the blessed personage of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba), just as it had at Capitol Hill, at the European Parliament, at Westminster and on countless other occasions.

In the life of our Jamaat, no day can be classed as ordinary because each day we witness the blessings of Allah the Almighty rain down upon our Jamaat and see its progression under the blessed guidance of Khalifatul Masih.

Nonetheless, certain days are destined to go down in the history of our Jamaat as particularly extraordinary and special and I have no doubt that 17 October 2016 will be one of them.

### **Interview with Metroland News Groups**

On the morning of 18 October 2016, Huzoor returned to the Baitun Naseer Mosque where he met Ahmadis in a session of family Mulaqats and he also had an interview with the journalist Bridget Dodge, representing the *Metroland Newspaper Group*.

Amongst other things, the journalist asked Huzoor about his meeting with Prime Minister Trudeau, about the refugee crisis and about the Governmental policies to curb radicalisation.

The journalist also asked Huzoor about the policies of Donald Trump.

During that period, I noticed that a number of journalists, including Peter Mansbridge did not use Donald Trump's name and would refer to him merely as a "*one of the US Presidential candidates*".

I later learned that it was an unofficial policy of many Canadian journalists at that time to not use the name of Donald Trump, as a form of silent protest over some of his past statements and policies.

The journalist Bridget Dodge, followed this unofficial policy, by asking if Huzoor considered the policies of "*one of the US Presidential candidates to be radical*". In response, Huzoor switched the conversation by asking a counter-question to the journalist.

Huzoor asked:

***"Do you think he is radicalised?"***

In response to Huzoor's question, the journalist said she considered some of his policies to be "*quite radical*".

Huzoor agreed with her and said that whoever was the *President of the United States* needed to understand that there were many different nationalities and cultures interlinked in today's globalized world and that the discrimination of any group was contrary to the values and future prosperity of the United States.

### **Huzoor's emotional narration**

Following the conclusion of Mulaqats, Huzoor called me to his office and *Alhamdulillah* Huzoor seemed pleased with how his visit to Ottawa had proceeded.

Often, I share with Huzoor some of the conversations or feedback I receive after events but on this occasion, Huzoor very graciously told me about some of the conversations he had with guests the previous evening at Parliament.

In particular, Huzoor mentioned that he had spent a lot of time introducing our Jamaat and its beliefs to Kirsty Duncan, Canada's *Science Minister* who was seated next to him during the dinner.

He told her about the persecution faced by the Jamaat in Pakistan and about some of our humanitarian projects in Africa.

Huzoor had also shared with her some of his personal experiences and anecdotes.

Huzoor said:

***"I told the Science Minister about the period when I was arrested in 1999 and the conditions in the jail in which we were imprisoned.***

***I also told her about my time serving in Ghana and the conditions in which I lived there with my family."***

Huzoor continued:

*For example, I told her how sometimes I used to have to travel quite some distance in order to get water for our home-use and even then, it was often dirty and contaminated.*

*On one occasion, Farah and Waqas (Huzoor's respected children), both of whom were very small at the time, saw me take out the container with the dirty water as I arrived home. Upon seeing it, Waqas excitedly ran inside and told his mother that 'Today Abba (father) has brought orange juice for us.' He had mistaken the dirty water for orange juice.*

*As I told Kirsty Duncan all of this, she said to me that 'You are smiling, but your words are moving me to tears'."*

I really appreciated and understood the comment made by Kirsty Duncan because often Huzoor says extremely beautiful and emotional things that leave a person stunned and very emotional and yet all the while Huzoor continues to smile and control his own emotions.

Certainly, I struggled to contain my own emotions as Huzoor told me, also with a smile, the story of how he had struggled to get water for his family and how his young son had mistaken it for juice.

### **A few blessed moments**

As I continued to sit with Huzoor, he mentioned the food served at the evening reception and also earlier in the day.

Huzoor said:

***“At lunch, I had a few bites of the salmon, whilst at the evening reception, the soup was not to my taste and I do not eat chicken much. Thus, I ended up eating just a little mashed potato. I might have tasted the dessert but we left before it was served!”***

Huzoor continued:

***“When we finally got home at 10pm, I was still hungry as I had not eaten much all day and so then I had three-quarters of a roti with mash daal (lentils)”***

I responded by saying that Huzoor’s meal at the end of the day sounded delicious but in my heart I was very sad that Huzoor had not been able to eat properly during the day and was left hungry.

The fact that we missed dessert at the reception was also something I regretted! Just as we were leaving, I saw some dessert being served and it looked extremely appetizing!

Huzoor said that Kirsty Duncan also stopped eating her food when Huzoor did and so Huzoor had said to her that she should not stop eating on his account.

Narrating the response of the Science Minister, Huzoor said:

***“When I told her to carry on eating, she said ‘I can eat such food any day of the week in Parliament but today my only desire is to listen and digest your words’.”***

Hearing this, it was clear that Huzoor’s personality had a great impact on the Science Minister and personally I was very impressed by the respect she had shown for Khilafat.

Huzoor also spoke about the brief stay at the hotel prior to the Parliament reception.

Huzoor said:

***“When we arrived at the hotel, I looked through my notes for my speech and it took me 27 minutes to read them but during the event it took me 36 or 37 minutes. One reason was that the light was not great but I also purposely chose to speak a little slower than normal. Anyway, after going through my notes at the hotel, I went to sleep for five or six minutes before doing Wudhu and then I came down for the event.”***

Huzoor also mentioned to me that during the reception he had noticed that many of the front tables were occupied by Ahmadis and that many guests had been seated further back. He said that guests should always be given priority and be seated at the front and that I should convey this message to the Canada Jamaat so that they ensure that the seating was better arranged in the upcoming events.

Thereafter, Huzoor spoke about his meeting with Prime Minister Trudeau.

Huzoor said:

***“I was not aware that the second meeting, the round table discussion, was going to take place until we arrived in the room! However, it turned out to be a good meeting in which I could present our Jamaat’s beliefs about religious freedom to the Prime Minister.”***

Huzoor then told me that prior to the visit he had read an article that suggested that Prime Minister Trudeau was a humble leader and an example given was the fact that he had got down on one knee to welcome the young Prince George during the Royal visit to Canada in September.

Smiling Huzoor said:

***“During the meeting yesterday, at one point I praised the Prime Minister to some extent and he immediately changed the subject and mentioned his colleagues and so it seems that he is actually quite humble in such matters.”***

Thereafter, Huzoor asked about the people I had met at the Ottawa reception.

I mentioned that one guest had said he thought Huzoor should ***“retire from the Caliphate and become a politician!”*** because he thought that Huzoor was the person to reform other politicians and solve the world’s problems!

Hearing this, Huzoor laughed a lot and said that I should go and tell Asif Khan (*Secretary Umoor-e-Kharija*) and Farhan Kokhar (*Naib Amir*) this comment so they too can enjoy!

As Huzoor stood up, I mentioned that many Canadian Ahmadis had contacted me to say they were really looking forward to viewing Huzoor's interview with Peter Mansbridge.

In reply, Huzoor said:

***“That interview may well be more high profile than the others but my message is the same to all journalists, whether they have a huge following or whether they are from the smallest outlets because everything I say is based on the teachings of the Quran.”***

*Alhamdulillah*, those moments in Huzoor's company, in which Huzoor shared some of his own anecdotes and thoughts on the previous day, were truly precious and ones that I will continue to cherish.

### **Farewell at Baitun Naseer**

Following Zuhr and Asr, Huzoor inspected the premises of the Baitul Naseer Mosque and visited the *langhar khana* (kitchen).

Thereafter, the local Ahmadis gathered near Huzoor's car to wave farewell to Huzoor as he would soon be departing from Ottawa. Huzoor led a silent prayer before returning to the Mission House for lunch.

### **An unfortunate accident**

Upon arriving at the Mission House, Huzoor returned to his residence and, just as the rest of us were heading for lunch, we heard the unmistakable screech of a car suddenly breaking at speed followed by an extremely loud crash.

We rushed to the main road to see what had happened and saw that a truck driver had crashed into one of our Jamaat cars. Both the truck and the Jamaat car were completely smashed and the airbags were out but miraculously, and by the sheer Grace of Allah, it seemed that no one had been seriously hurt.

The Ahmadis involved were our Missionary Ashraf Arif sahib, Rizwan Daud sahib and Tariq Mahmood sahib, who were on duty throughout the tour as part of the 'Mulaqat team' who were responsible for arranging family Mulaqats.

Though they were not injured it was clear that everyone had been shaken up.

In particular, Ashraf Arif sahib seemed a little disorientated and in shock, as well as distressed to have lost his glasses in the crash. Similarly, a little boy who was travelling with his father in the truck was crying uncontrollably and clearly very traumatised.

With the *Grace of Allah*, after a few minutes everyone settled down, whilst Dr. Tanvir checked each person to ensure they were ok.

Soon, the police also arrived and upon hearing what had happened they were clear that the total fault lay with the truck driver.

The Jamaat gave water to the truck driver and his child and even invited them for lunch, however they politely declined. It was a practical manifestation of *Love for All, Hatred for None*, whereby, even though his dangerous driving had put their lives at risk, our Ahmadis bore no grudge and sought to care and feed him and his child.

Huzoor had been informed of the accident immediately and he had prescribed the homeopathy medicines *Arnica 1000* and *Ruta 200* for them to take.

Later, Huzoor came out and met all three of the Ahmadis involved in the accident and asked them if they were ok and if they had taken the medicines yet. They were extremely grateful to receive Huzoor's love and prayers and thereafter were completely fine and returned to their duties as normal.

### **Departure from Ottawa and break in Kingston**

The Qafila departed from Ottawa at 4.05pm to return to Peace Village.

During the journey, Ahmad bhai texted me to say he felt like a nice cup of tea and in response, I texted back to say I felt like a strong cup of coffee. Clearly, Ahmad bhai had some good contacts, because when we stopped at a hotel in Kingston for dinner, a Khadim came up to me and said that he had a cup of tea ready for Ahmad bhai and a cup of coffee ready for me!

We were all served an evening meal of fried shrimps, chicken wings, spring rolls and a few other similar items. After a busy but very blessed few days everyone was in good spirits.

### **Missing out on the Museum**

As we ate together, I said to Dr. Tanvir sahib and Nasir Amini that my only regret was that they could not visit a museum in Ottawa! As I said this, we all laughed a lot.

The story was that before Huzoor's visit to Parliament, the Jamaat had been informed that there were some restrictions about how many people could accompany Huzoor in Parliament. Given this, *Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya* had made an alternative plan for the likes of Dr. Tanvir and Nasir Amini to visit a local museum!

Upon learning of this plan, both were shocked and in particular, Dr. Tanvir was incredulous!

Airing his frustration to a few of us, Dr. sahib said:

***"I have come from America to do duty for the Jamaat and to serve Khalifatul Masih and yet, on one of the most important and historic days of the tour, they want to send me to a museum!"***

Anyway, thankfully common sense prevailed and they were not sent to a museum but remained as close as possible throughout the day in Parliament.

As we reflected on it in Kingston, we all could now see the funnier side and even for the rest of the trip, from time to time, we would joke that sadly Dr. Tanvir and Nasir Amini did not make it to the museum!

### **A few informal moments**

As we would not arrive at Peace Village until very late, Huzoor approved for Namaz to be offered at the hotel.

We were all extremely grateful for this, as it meant that when we arrived at Peace Village, we could return immediately to our respective accommodations.

When Huzoor came down for Namaz, a number of people were still eating their meals. Very graciously, Huzoor told them to complete their meals and so Huzoor took a seat for a few minutes.

During that time, Huzoor spoke to some of the Ahmadis present very informally and several of them later told me that those unexpected moments in Huzoor's company were amongst their most treasured memories of the entire tour.

Amir Sahib Canada used those moments to request Huzoor to lead a *Bai'at* ceremony following the forthcoming Friday prayers.

Huzoor gave permission, but said it would have been better to hold the *Bai'at* ceremony at the Jalsa so that many more people could have taken part.

Once everyone had finished their meals, Huzoor stepped forward to lead Namaz.

Lajna also offered Namaz at the back of the same room, and in this way the example observed on occasion during the time of the Holy Prophet (sa) was repeated.

Before starting the prayers, Huzoor particularly checked that the women were all comfortable and had ample room to pray.

Following Namaz the Qafila proceeded directly back to Peace Village where we arrived around 11pm.

*Alhamdulillah*, the second week of Huzoor's tour had reached a successful conclusion. I was happy to be back in Peace Village, which by now was becoming like a second-home and I looked forward with great anticipation to the weeks ahead.

## **End of Part 2**

Any comments or feedback: [abid.khan@pressahmadiyya.com](mailto:abid.khan@pressahmadiyya.com)