

## A WEEK IN ISLAMABAD



*By Abid Khan*

## **Introduction**

With the Grace of Allah, on 15 April 2019, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba) moved to Islamabad after 16 blessed years living in the premises of Masjid Fazl in London.

Since his move, a number of people have asked me to write a '*diary*' about this extremely historic and significant event. However, the truth is that I am in no position to write such a diary, as I was not involved in the move to Islamabad.

Out of respect for Khilafat-e-Ahmadiyya, I never dared to ask Huzoor about the Islamabad project, even when it became clear that Huzoor was about to move.

Occasionally, especially in the past few months, Huzoor himself told me about the progress of the new Markaz under construction. Nonetheless, there are many other people, who were closely involved in the process who will know much more than me about the background of the move and may be able to shed light upon Huzoor's close involvement at every stage of the process.

Furthermore, already *Al-Hakam* has published a very moving account entitled '*A New Markaz*', in which Huzoor himself is quoted. So there is nothing I can add that is of value regarding the move itself.

However, I was fortunate to be present every day during Huzoor's final few days at Masjid Fazl and also during his first week in Islamabad and so I will try to narrate a few things in this regard.

### **A very special place**

Like every Ahmadi Muslim, especially those who lived in or around London, I felt a mixture of emotions as the Markaz shifted. On the one hand, I was sad to see the end of the era of Masjid Fazl as the headquarters of the Jamaat, whilst on the other hand, I was overjoyed to see the progress of the Jamaat and the blessings of Allah the Almighty that the move to Islamabad heralded.

Masjid Fazl was (and remains) a very special place. Thousands upon thousands of Ahmadis have their own memories of it. My own started in childhood. It was the Mosque I used to visit with my parents as a child from time to time. I remember the long and tiring car journeys from Hartlepool and also how any fatigue was replaced by sheer excitement upon seeing the joyful smile of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (rh).

A few weeks after the death of my mother in December 1994, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (rh) invited me to spend a week with him at the Fazl Mosque during Ramadan. It was there that the grief and sense of bereavement I felt was washed away through the love of Khilafat.

Every morning, I used to have the honour of doing *sehri* (pre-dawn breakfast) with Huzoor at his residence. I would spend my day with his grandchildren and every so often Huzoor would join us for a few moments and would always ask how I was.

In early 2000, after the passing of my father, Masjid Fazl was once again the Mosque where I went to heal the raw wounds of grief. A few days after his death my entire family, went for Mulaqat. Apart from my elder brother and elder sisters, my uncles and aunts were also present.

I was sitting in the corner of the office and thought that Huzoor could not even see me. Yet, he saw me and he saw my pain and sadness. I was left shocked, humbled and amazed when Huzoor looked over the chairs directly in front of him and turned his attention towards me, a worthless seventeen year old boy.

Very affectionately and lovingly, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (rh) said:

***“I am worried about you.”***

Huzoor then looked at my siblings and elder relatives and said:

***“It is better that Abid gets married when he is young. He is the one whose future is not yet settled.”***

The knowledge that Huzoor was concerned about me and would surely pray for me instantly removed the fear and desperation I had felt.

That distress and panic returned in April 2003 and when Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (rh) passed away in 2003 at the Fazl Mosque. I feared that the personal relationship and connection I had made with Khilafat was gone. Yet, due to the sheer Grace of Allah, the most blessed days, most honoured times,

most cherished moments lay ahead spent in the company of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba).

It was the Mosque, where Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba) arranged my marriage. It was the Mosque where he reassured me in our bleakest days that Allah the Almighty would bless us with children.

Most significantly, it was the Mosque where he graciously accepted the service of a young, inexperienced boy. It was the Mosque where over the next twelve years, I learned from him, felt his love, experienced the grandeur of Khilafat-e-Ahmadiyya time and time again and learned life lessons and witnessed true spirituality and integrity of the highest possible order on a daily basis from the greatest of teachers during thousands of Mulaqats.

Masjid Fazl was my sanctuary. It was the centre of my life.

Hence, where I never asked Huzoor about his move to Islamabad out of respect and obedience, it was also out of fear. The fear of the unknown. How would life be in Islamabad? Would it be different? Could it ever be the same?

Where individuals like me are blinded by how things affect us personally, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih (aba) is constantly looking at the collective needs of the Jamaat.

This was again made apparent in Huzoor's Friday Sermon on 12 April 2019, when he announced the move to Islamabad and the reasons for it. Huzoor made it clear that this move was necessary and part of the decree of Allah the Almighty.

## **A final meeting**

On 14 April 2019, one day prior to the move, I reported to Masjid Fazl in the morning, as Huzoor had a meeting with a senior representative of the *United Nations*.

Much of Huzoor's office had been emptied. The bookcases, previously filled from side to side, were now bare. The Private Secretary's office was jam-packed with boxes, either packed or about to be. Many had already been sent to Islamabad.

The meeting with the guest went well. He spoke of his amazement at Huzoor's schedule.

Upon this, Huzoor smiled and said:

***"The person who told you my schedule, knows only 5 or 10 per cent of it!"***

At the end of the meeting, the guest requested to have a photo with Huzoor.

The Jamaat photographer, Omair Aleem, duly took it. A representative of *MTA* was also present to film those concluding moments of Huzoor's final meeting with a dignitary or guest at Masjid Fazl.

After the official photo, I was taken aback when Huzoor asked me to join them for another photo. I had been present whilst photos had been taken with hundreds of guests and dignitaries during the preceding years and Huzoor had never once told me to join the photo.

It occurred to me that perhaps Huzoor realised it was to be his final ever meeting with a guest at Masjid Fazl and so, out of grace and benevolence, he permitted me to be part of that historic moment. I felt emotional and hugely grateful.

### **A new Markaz**

Huzoor's departure from Masjid Fazl took place shortly after the Asr prayer on 15 April 2019. Along with the other two thousand or so people present, it felt incredibly emotional to wave goodbye to Huzoor, even though I knew I would be travelling daily to Islamabad to see him.

Any sadness felt that Huzoor had left Masjid Fazl instantly gave way to feelings of intense happiness when I saw the Islamabad complex for the first time. It was breathtaking. It was all that I had imagined but much, much more.

The Mosque was beautiful, gracefully designed and a fitting home for Khilafat. The new offices of *Private Secretary*, *Wakalat-e-Tabshir*, *Wakalat-e-Maal* and *Wakalat-e-Tamil-o-Tanfidh*, were not yet fully operational or set up but were clearly much better designed and more conducive to work than their predecessors.

However, I had not yet seen the one office that I desired to see the most. The only one I was interested in.

The curiosity to see Huzoor and his new office was my overriding emotion and heartfelt desire.

### **A new office, same routine**

For many years I have had the privilege to report to Huzoor on a daily basis and so when it became clear that Huzoor was moving to Islamabad, I wondered if I would still have the same blessed opportunity.

Personally, I do not have a great interest or understanding of poetry, but a few weeks prior to the move, I wished to express my own personal emotions to Huzoor and so I penned a few verses. A person who knows poetry would certainly deem them to be inadequate and extremely amateurish.

I was not expecting any reply but a few days later, I received a letter from Huzoor in which he said he had read the poem.

Even though I had not mentioned my routine of Mulaqat, Huzoor responded in a way that illustrated how he understood the personal fears I had felt.

With his own blessed hand, Huzoor wrote:

***“Whether I am in Islamabad or London, your routine will remain the same that you will report to me daily.”***

Anyway, as I sat outside Huzoor’s new office in Islamabad for the very first time, late afternoon on 16 April 2019, I felt even more nervous than normal.

At 6.15pm, Private Secretary, Munir Javed sahib told me that Huzoor was ready to see me.



I took a long deep breath and entered through his office door. Huzoor was working at his desk but, as I entered, he looked up at me and smiled. It was a very welcoming and kindly smile.

Huzoor looked radiant, immaculate and graceful. He was wearing *shalwar kameez* and an *achkan* coat and had removed his *paghri* (turban).

Huzoor's office was larger than his previous one. It was significantly longer and somewhat wider. It was not yet fully set up. Whilst some books were placed on the shelves behind Huzoor, other shelves remained still empty.

To the side there was a long cabinet in which many of the artefacts and photos that Huzoor kept at Masjid Fazl had been placed. Instead of carpet, the flooring was tiled.

One thing remained the same – the contents of Huzoor's desk. It remained filled with the same files that Huzoor would work through on a daily basis at Masjid Fazl. Throughout the process of moving, Huzoor's work continued unaffected.

I walked carefully and slowly towards Huzoor's desk because I did not want to accidentally knock anything and also because I wanted to absorb every possible second of being in Huzoor's new office.

As I sat down at Huzoor's desk, I was greeted again by Huzoor's beautiful smile and words that filled my heart with joy.

Huzoor said:

***“You are the person who is having the very first official meeting (Mulaqat) with me in this office.”***

As I heard these words, I felt extremely humbled and privileged. Overjoyed and emotional. I felt a shiver run down my spine. It was a moment I will never forget.

For as long as I live, I will feel fortunate to have been the first person to have had a meeting with Khalifatul Masih in his office at Islamabad, *Alhamdulillah*.

Perhaps sensing the fact that I was becoming emotional, Huzoor changed the subject and asked me how long it had taken me to get to Islamabad. I told him it had taken one hour, as there had been a road diversion that had delayed my journey by about fifteen minutes.

In reply, Huzoor said:

***“That is not much!”***

In my heart of hearts, I had hoped Huzoor would take pity on me! Instead, Huzoor made it clear that a one hour commute was nothing for a *Waqf-e-Zindighi*.

It was also an example of the way Huzoor does *Tarbiyyat* and keeps a person grounded.

A moment earlier he had given me the news that I was the first person to meet him in his office, whilst the next moment he made it clear that I should not expect any special privileges! From the heavens he brought me back to earth in a second!

As I continued to sit in Huzoor's office, I soon realised I would need to speak a little louder and clearer than in Masjid Fazl. The office was bigger, the ceiling was higher and the distance between Huzoor and me was slightly more than it had been at Masjid Fazl.

I immediately offered *mubarakbaad* to Huzoor on the move and said that I felt that Huzoor's new office was much more fitting to the status of Khilafat-e-Ahmadiyya. I particularly liked the fact that the office was a perfect rectangular shape, whereas the Masjid Fazl office had been extended over time and so its shape had been irregular.

Huzoor's humility and simplicity is such that all he requires is a place to work. He did not need anything large or grand.

In fact, Huzoor remained attached to the more intimate surroundings of his previous office.

Huzoor said:

***"I actually prefer my old office in Masjid Fazl. However, I have not yet finished setting this office and may place a sofa in here and then we will see how it looks."***

After those initial few moments, Huzoor instructed me to present my daily briefing and Huzoor also checked a *Press Release* I had drafted about the move to Islamabad and he personally corrected and improved a number of paragraphs with his pen.

After the official part of the meeting was complete, Huzoor graciously permitted me to remain in his office for some time.

Upon this, I asked Huzoor a question that had been in my heart ever since Huzoor had left Masjid Fazl the evening before.

I asked:

***“Huzoor, did you feel emotional as you left Masjid Fazl yesterday?”***

In reply, Huzoor said:

***“It is not my way to become overly emotional. Wherever I go I become set very quickly. This has always been my way. Thus, it took me only one hour to get set in my new routine at Islamabad and when I went to bed in the evening I was able to sleep soundly without problem.”***

Very beautifully, Huzoor added:

***“However, there is no doubt that I have a close attachment to Masjid Fazl and many memories because I lived there for fifteen or sixteen years and saw the blessings of Allah the Almighty on a daily basis. Thus, as I left,***

*certainly those feelings of attachment were there and will always remain in my heart.”*

Huzoor then asked me if I was aware of how many people had attended Fajr at the Fazl Mosque that morning. I texted someone local to the Fazl Mosque to find out and he replied that the Mosque was almost full. Huzoor was pleased to hear it, though later in the week, Huzoor was informed that the numbers of people attending Fajr had fallen slightly.

Thereafter, Huzoor told me to look out of the windows on either side of his office and observe the view.

Huzoor also told me to look at a room directly behind his office, which remained unfurnished, but, once set up, would be used for meetings with dignitaries and certain guests, in the same way the conservatory adjacent to Huzoor’s office at Masjid Fazl was used.

Soon after my Mulaqat ended and as I left Huzoor’s office, my lasting feeling was that Huzoor seemed happy and content in Islamabad.

I was also struck at how within twenty-four hours, the centre of the world now was a tiny village in the Surrey countryside.

### **The Blessings of Allah the Almighty**

The next day I returned for Mulaqat in the afternoon. After giving my report, Huzoor asked me if I had seen any of the residential homes newly built in Islamabad. I said I had only seen them from the outside.

Upon this, Huzoor said:

***“If you have good relations with Hafiz Ijaz sahib (Teacher, Jamia Ahmadiyya) you can ask him if perhaps he will show you his home.”***

Huzoor also told me how the large multi-purpose hall had been built in a way that the roof had been covered in a special green material so that the overall impression of greenery in and around Islamabad would not change.

Regrettably, Huzoor mentioned that he was aware that a handful of Ahmadi Muslims had expressed their view that the Islamabad redevelopment had been too expensive or even extravagant. It was clear that this had caused Huzoor pain and sadness.

Huzoor said:

***“Do such people not realise that no special appeal or scheme was made for this Islamabad project? It has been built entirely due to the Blessings of Allah the Almighty alone! No other projects of the Jamaat, anywhere in the world, have been delayed or restricted for the sake of this project. For example, in Mali such a beautiful Mosque was opened recently.”***

Huzoor also mentioned a social media post I had shown him of an Ahmadi from Rawalpindi, who had responded to those people who had raised objections to the Islamabad project. The Ahmadi had written that once a person has taken *Bai’at* his or her likes and dislikes should automatically match those of the Khalifa-Waqt and that this was the definition of a united Jamaat.

Huzoor said:

***“That comment was the depiction of a true Ahmadi.”***

### **A destined moved**

On Thursday, 18 April 2019, I entered Huzoor’s office and informed him that I had visited the home of Hafiz Ijaz sahib at Islamabad, whose family had the honour of being the very first residents of the redeveloped Islamabad complex.

Huzoor was pleased to hear it and mentioned some more details regarding the homes being built for the *Waqifeen* living at Islamabad.

Huzoor said:

***“Insha’Allah, when all the houses are ready it will be a full community living here. There is still a little more work to do on the Mosque and some other buildings and once they are complete we will also make a small park for children to come and play in.”***

Every detail of the complex had been built and designed with Huzoor’s guidance. The way Huzoor described Islamabad it seemed and felt like a paradise on earth.

The rest of my Mulaqat that day was a source of deep embarrassment and shame for me.

Earlier, I had submitted for approval a video report *MTA News* had prepared about Huzoor's move to Islamabad. However, during Mulaqat, Huzoor made it very clear that he did not consider the report to be adequate. Particularly, Huzoor emphasised that the messaging and tone of the report was misleading.

Huzoor said:

***“In the report, you have ignored the fact that the move to Islamabad is something that Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (rh) personally desired and it is not a new concept that I myself have developed during this era. Rather this move was destined ever since the Islamabad land was purchased. It is actually a manifestation of how the institution of Khilafat-e-Ahmadiyya continues to fulfil the mission of the Promised Messiah (as). If something is not complete in one period of Khilafat, Allah the Almighty fulfils it in a future period. As I said in my Sermon, everything has an appointed time.”***

I felt mortified and devastated. Yet, I also witnessed Huzoor's grace and benevolence. After explaining the weakness of the report, Huzoor very lovingly guided me about how to improve it and personally dictated parts of the script.

As the Mulaqat came to an end and I was leaving his office, Huzoor said:

***“In the time of Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra), the Sadr Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya was Hazrat Mirza Nasir Ahmad (rh) and, one year, after attending the first day of the Jalsa Salana, Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra) felt***



***and observed that there was not enough space to easily accommodate all of the people attending and he mentioned this in his speech on the first day of the Jalsa.”***

Narrating what happened thereafter, Huzoor said:

***“On hearing the comments of Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra), Hazrat Mirza Nasir Ahmad (rh), as Sadr Khuddam, gathered together the Khuddam and they worked all night to expand the Jalsa Gah site and to provide all the required facilities. The next morning when he saw the transformation, Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra) was pleased.”***

Huzoor continued:

***“This is the spirit that MTA workers and the Waqifeen should all work with today and always. No one who has dedicated his life for the service of Islam should think that they clock off at 8pm, rather they should not rest until the work is done properly.”***

Huzoor’s words were motivating and inspiring.

I left the Mulaqat saddened that we had not reached the standards expected by *Khalifa-Waqt* but also sure that we could make a much better report now that Huzoor had given us such profound direction and guidance.

Whilst sitting in my car, I rewrote the script of the news report and thereafter the MTA team worked till the early hours producing a report that was according to Huzoor’s guidance.

*Alhamdulillah*, the next day, Huzoor told me that he had seen the updated report and that it was much improved. Though, Huzoor, also ensured that we remained humble.

Huzoor said:

***“Your revised news report is much better than the earlier draft. However, I do not think it will be as popular as the Al-Hakam article published earlier today, in which it mentions the legacy of Masjid Fazl and the reasons for moving here.”***

Upon this, I responded:

***“Huzoor, you are right the Al-Hakam article is better because it contains your own direct words about the move of the Markaz. Nothing can come close to the direct words of Khalifa-Waqt.”***

### **Journey to and from London**

On Friday 19 April 2019, Huzoor left the Islamabad complex for the first time since moving there. Huzoor travelled to Baitul Futuh to lead the Friday prayers.

After Jumma, Huzoor returned immediately to Islamabad.

Shortly after Asr, I had a Mulaqat with Huzoor and I asked him how his journey to and from Baitul Futuh had been.

In reply, Huzoor said:

*“On the way to Baitul Futuh there was heavy outgoing traffic from London. As it is the Easter long weekend, perhaps many people were departing for their holidays. Thankfully, the traffic travelling towards London was mostly clear and therefore we made it in good time and so the Sermon started on time. On the way back to Islamabad the road was also clear and we came very quickly so that the time I had lunch was actually similar to the time I used to have lunch on Fridays in Masjid Fazl.”*

Huzoor smiled and said:

*“In fact, on the return journey, I fell asleep in the car whilst listening to some Nazms and I only woke up again as we approached Islamabad.”*

I was glad Huzoor had a few minutes extra to rest during the journey after Jumma. *Alhamdulillah.*

Thereafter, Huzoor mentioned how his new office was still not entirely set up.

Huzoor said:

*“Although, my staff did a good job of setting the bookshelves, it was not entirely according to my requirements. Thus, I have been re-setting them and now mostly they are in the right place. As for the rest of the office, I will set it step by step whenever I have a little time.”*

## **An emotional moment**

*Alhamdulillah*, I have spent this past week seeing Huzoor and have observed how his work routine has not changed at all.

Different location but the mission of the Promised Messiah (as) continues as it ever will do, *Insha'Allah*.

There was a time when Qadian was unknown to the world. There was a time when Rabwah was barren land. There was a time when Southfields was an anonymous part of London.

Now they are known amongst the people of all nations and their names will forever adorn the history of the world. The same is now true of Tilford in Surrey.

Whilst the centre of my life and of the Jamaat is now Islamabad, it is a comment that Huzoor made to me a few weeks ago in Masjid Fazl that continues to resonate and reverberate in my mind.

Late afternoon, one day in March, Huzoor had just returned to Masjid Fazl after an inspection of Islamabad.

Graciously, Huzoor showed me some photos and a video of the Islamabad site. I was amazed by the level of detail in the different buildings, their scale and beauty.

After showing the photos to me, Huzoor said something that filled my heart with emotion. It consumed me with fear as well. Above all, it engulfed my entire heart with love for Huzoor.

With great humility and simplicity, referring to Islamabad, Huzoor said:

***“Now at least the future Khulafa, who come after I am gone, will have better facilities and will consider that I left behind something for them and for the Jamaat.”***

Even now, weeks later, I cannot control my emotions as I recall that moment. I dare never to think of that time in the future. My heart will not allow it. My mind refuses to contemplate it.

Nevertheless, at that moment, I felt like telling Huzoor that I am certain the future Khulafa will remember Huzoor not only for the blessed move to Islamabad but for the fact that he has sacrificed his entire being and every fibre of his body for the sake of the Jamaat.

They will love and respect him with all their hearts, just as Huzoor himself loves and respects his predecessors and is ever obedient to their wishes and desires.

Indeed, the move to Islamabad itself is borne out of Huzoor’s obedience to Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (rh) and his desire to fulfil his wish of turning Islamabad into the Markaz.

I remained silent and just prayed in my heart that Allah the Almighty grants our beloved Imam a long, healthy and prosperous life.

A fleeting moment in time that will remain etched in my memory for the rest of my life.

With the Grace of Allah, and due to the sheer grace and kindness of Huzoor, I have also been given a workspace in the Tabshir Office in Islamabad, in addition to the main Press & Media Office in London. Thus, in the afternoon and evening I have the blessed opportunity to work in the Islamabad complex near beloved Huzoor and remain here until the evening prayers.

May Allah the Almighty enable me to forever remain in the humble service of Khilafat.

May the move to Islamabad prove blessed in every possible respect and may we all see the continued progress of our Jamaat under the blessed leadership of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba). *Ameen.*

**End**

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