

**HUZOOR'S TOUR OF EUROPE**

**SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2019**

**Part 1**

**A Personal Account**

*By Abid Khan*

### **An unforgettable 33 days**

For the best part of a decade, I have had the chance to travel with Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba) on various tours abroad.

Regardless of where he has travelled or for how long, every tour has been blessed and left me with profound and joyous lifelong memories.

Some memories are of personal interactions with Huzoor that I will be grateful for till the day I die. Every moment spent in his company has kindled emotions that I would otherwise never have known.

From a Jamaat perspective, seeing first-hand the unique bond of love between Khalifatul Masih and Ahmadi Muslims across the world has left an indelible mark upon my heart and mind.

No matter whether from the *East* or the *West*, whether *rich* or *poor*, whether *educated* or *illiterate*, whether *young* or *old*, I have seen time and time again how we, Ahmadi Muslims, are all bound together by a firm belief in the truth of the Promised Messiah (as).

Wherever he goes, Huzoor touches the hearts of Ahmadi Muslims, he showers them with his love and guides them with great patience and humility.

Furthermore, the profound effect that Khalifatul Masih has on the majority of non-Ahmadis and non-Muslims he meets is ever-apparent. I have met countless people who previously harboured feelings of intense distrust of

Islam and fear of Muslims, who attest to the fact that a few moments in Huzoor's company transformed their views and beliefs. They recognised that he was a man of truth and that Islam was a religion of peace.

So, every tour, indeed every single day, in the life of Khalifatul Masih serves a great purpose.

Nevertheless, there are certain *moments, events or tours* that stand apart and, during the relatively short period I have had the honour to travel with and serve Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba), I can say the tour I am about to write about – a period of just over one month during the latter days of autumn 2019 – is one that stands apart.

The tour of three Western European nations – *Holland, France and Germany* – was extremely special and interjected with a series of events that will go down not only in the history of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community but will be recorded in the wider history of the world.

In a grey autumn month, where the leaves fell to the ground and rain poured incessantly, the short days and long nights were illuminated by the nobility and tireless efforts of the Fifth Successor to the Promised Messiah (as) to convey Islam's true teachings in the West.

It is a natural phenomenon that age catches up with everyone. As people enter their later years, they begin to slow down. I am (thankfully) still a few years short of leaving *Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya* but already the ticking clock of time has started to weigh down on my mind and body. I observe the same with many of the people with whom I grew up.

Just like the rest of us, Huzoor is a human being and in less than a year will reach the eighth decade of his blessed life, *Insha'Allah*.

Yet, I can say with complete truth that his workload has continued to increase with each year that has passed. He is the embodiment of a person pushing himself to the limit because this is the task that has been laid upon his shoulders by Allah the Almighty. The European tour from 25 September 2019 till 27 October 2019 was a clear manifestation of this.

As he travelled almost 3,000 miles, Huzoor graced event after event, he held meeting after meeting and imparted his wisdom and knowledge of Islam to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Yet still, amidst such a gruelling and punishing schedule, he still found time to care for those who travelled with him.

I cannot ever thank Allah the Almighty enough for enabling such an insignificant and worthless person to view first-hand the various events that took place and to spend time in the company of Khalifatul Masih.

### **Somewhat unsure**

It was mid-September 2019 and there were a few days left before Huzoor's departure and I had convinced myself that this time I would not be travelling with Huzoor.

In my mind I had started to make contingency plans of how the *Press & Media Office* and *MTA News*, the departments in which I serve, would cover the tour in my absence.

After the UK Jalsa Salana, I had travelled to the United States for a couple of weeks during the school summer holidays during which I was able to spend time with my family.

It was the first proper '*family holiday*' abroad we had taken and it had led me to realise some of the practical benefits of travelling with Huzoor's Qafila compared to travelling with one's family!

When travelling with Huzoor, the travel arrangements and accommodations are all arranged. Similarly you do not have to worry about food or knowing enough about a city so that you avoid the areas that best ought to be avoided.

I soon realised the value of such comforts, whilst figuring out *where* and *how* to entertain my family during our travel abroad. Nonetheless, it was an enjoyable trip and we were all extremely grateful that Huzoor had graciously permitted me the period of holiday.

Upon return to the UK, there were just over three weeks until Huzoor's travel abroad and it proved to be an extremely busy period.

Having only just concluded the activities and meetings associated with the Jalsa Salana UK, Huzoor graced the *Ijtema* of *Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya UK* on the weekend of 6-8 September, whilst the following weekend Huzoor graced the *Ijtemas* of *Lajna Imaillah UK* and *Majlis Ansarullah UK*.

As soon as the *Ijtemas* concluded, Huzoor started to prepare for the forthcoming Europe tour.

Throughout this period, I had the honour to spend many hours in the company of Huzoor, taking dictation first for his *Ijtema* addresses and then the five speeches that were to be delivered in English during his travels.

In the past, when I have had such opportunities, Huzoor has often told me himself to get ready to travel with him. However, during those days not once did Huzoor indicate to me that I will be travelling with him or that I should get ready.

So, with just a few days left to go, I started to think perhaps I should ask Huzoor or Private Secretary, Munir Javed sahib if I was to travel so that I could make contingency preparations for the coverage of the tours by *Press & Media* and *MTA News* if I was not. However, thankfully, I refrained from doing so, as it did not feel appropriate to ask myself.

*Alhamdulillah*, four or five days before the departure date, Munir Javed sahib gave me the glad tidings that I should get ready and that Huzoor had included me in his *Qafila* for the forthcoming tour.

I felt overjoyed and also, having partially convinced myself that I was not going to travel, I felt surprise as well!

I even mentioned to Munir sahib that I was thinking that Huzoor may not require me to travel on this occasion.

Upon this, Munir sahib said that Huzoor had been so busy with meeting the guests of Jalsa Salana UK and the *Ijtemas* that he had not been able to discuss the tour with Huzoor until that very day.

## **Departure from Islamabad**

On the morning of 25 September 2019, I left home at 7.45am and reached Islamabad by 8.45am.

Over the next hour, a few hundred Ahmadis gathered near Huzoor's residence to see him off and at 9.50am, after a silent prayer led by Huzoor, the Qafila departed.

Apart from Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba) and Khala Saboohi (Huzoor's respected wife), there were several members of *security staff, office staff and drivers*.

The car in which Huzoor was seated was driven by Mahmood Khan and in the front passenger seat was Muhammad Ahmad Nasir (Ahmad bhai), who was the *Head of Amla-Hifazat (Security)* during the tour.

The office staff travelling with Huzoor were Munir Ahmad Javed (*Private Secretary*), Abdul Majid Tahir (*Additional Wakil-ul-Tabshir*), Hamad Mobeen (*PS Office*) and me travelling on behalf of the *Press & Media Office*.

Also travelling were additional members of the *Amla-Hifazat*, Nasir Saeed, Sakhawat Bajwa, Abdul Qadous Khawaja, Mirza Laeeq Ahmad and Ibrahim Malhi.

In addition, Nadeem Amini, Rana Maqsood Ahmed, Mohammad Ahmad and Abdul Rehman had each volunteered to drive their personal cars during the tour and Huzoor had graciously accepted their request.

### **A sudden inspection!**

I was seated, as in many previous tours, in the car of Nadeem Amini along with Abdul Qadous Khawaja and in the first few hours of the trip, we had an experience that was as pleasant as it was unexpected!

The Qafila arrived at Folkestone at 11.40am and stopped for a short break before taking the *Eurotunnel*.

After a few minutes at the *service station* we returned to our cars and, just as I was putting my seatbelt on, the door on the other passenger side opened and to my shock the person opening it was Huzoor!

Nadeem had recently purchased a new car and Huzoor had graciously come to inspect it.

I was unsure if I should step outside or remain seated. In the moment, I remained seated and Huzoor noticed that the passenger seat next to me was filled with luggage.

Smiling, Huzoor said:

***“This time your travel companion in the back is not a person but a lot of luggage!”***

For a moment, I wished the luggage had not been present, as perhaps then Huzoor would have entered the car and taken a seat for a few moments next to where I was sitting! Or perhaps that was just my wishful thinking!

After a few moments, Huzoor returned to his car and we hardly contain our happiness at the sudden and entirely unexpected visit! Nadeem, especially, was overjoyed that so early in the tour, Huzoor had blessed his new car.

### **A never ending lunch!**

The Qafila departed from Folkestone at 12.30pm and crossed the *Channel* via the Eurotunnel.

Forty minutes later we reached France, where Huzoor was greeted by the *Ameer Jamaat France*, Ashfaq Rabbani and the *Ameer Jamaat Holland*, Hibatunnoer Verhagen at the nearby *Inter-Hotel* in Calais, where we stopped for Namaz and lunch.

Huzoor and Khala Saboohi (*Huzoor's respected wife*) ate their lunch in a private room, whilst the rest of us ate in the main dining area.

Initially, we were served a *side salad* and a large piece of *quiche*. I ate the salad but did not try the quiche. I had not eaten quiche for many years but I recalled how, many years ago, in school we were regularly served it and I was not a fan!

I hoped that perhaps something else would be served but the salad was quite filling and so I was already fairly full when suddenly we were handed a large plate of *grilled prawns*.

After eating the prawns, I was completely full but just as I was about to leave the table, the waiter brought another dish. This time it was a large piece of

*fish* with some accompaniments. It turned out that the salad, quiche and prawns were all just starters!

I ate as much fish as I could and by the end I was feeling overly-full having eaten a meal two or three times the size of my normal lunch!

Wanting to pace for a few minutes before the car journey resumed, I left my seat and went for a walk outside. Later, someone told me that the fish was not even the final course and that *steak* was served a few minutes later!

I think something must have gone wrong with the order or perhaps the restaurant was being extra generous given the large number of people in our party. Anyway, eating a steak on top of the fish would have pushed me well over the limit!

### **A Prince of Humility**

As we waited for the journey to resume, I spent a few moments in the company of Ashfaq Rabbani sahib, the Ameer Jamaat France.

He told me how in 2018, on route to Spain, Huzoor spent an evening at a hotel in France.

Having seen Huzoor in the hotel, a couple of foreign tourists approached Ameer Sahib France.

The tourists, who were from the Far East, seemed enraptured by Huzoor and assumed he was a senior member of a royal family.

Thus, they had asked:

***“Who is that Prince wearing the turban? Which country is he from?”***

In reply, Ameer Sahib had said:

***“He is our Jamaat’s Khalifa and he is much greater than any Prince.”***

Later, Ameer Sahib narrated this conversation to Huzoor.

Upon hearing it, Huzoor smiled and remarked:

***“Aap ko kehna chahiya tha ke ‘aik ghareeb mulk ka ghareeb insaan’.”***

Meaning:

***“You should have responded by saying that he is humble person of a humble nation.”***

As he recounted this, tears streamed down from the eyes of Ameer Sahib France as he reflected upon the utter humility and modesty of Huzoor’s words.

No doubt, Huzoor’s words illustrated how, despite the unique and great status bestowed upon him as Khalifatul Masih, he continued to view himself as a humble and simple person.

## **Arrival in Nunspeet**

The journey re-commenced at 3.45pm and we travelled straight to Nunspeet in Holland, where the Qafila arrived at 8.05pm.

Upon arrival, Huzoor was greeted by the Deputy Mayor of Nunspeet, as well as hundreds of Ahmadis, who had travelled from across Holland to welcome him.

It was palpable how excited the local Ahmadis were to welcome Huzoor after a period of four years.

On a personal level, I was delighted to be back in Holland, and especially in Nunspeet, as Huzoor's most recent visit, in October 2015, had been one of the most special trips I had been on with Huzoor.

Shortly thereafter, Huzoor led *Maghreb* and *Isha* before returning to his residence for the night. The rest of the Qafila members proceeded to the dining area and were told where they would be staying.

## **A fortunate place to stay**

The person responsible for arranging the accommodation came up to me and mentioned that in 2015, Huzoor had graciously permitted Ahmad bhai and me to stay in the lower level of his residence at Nunspeet.

He had assumed I would be staying there again and so had not arranged anywhere else for me to stay.

I told him I could not assume that I would be staying in Huzoor's residence and so would be grateful if he could arrange somewhere for me to stay. He seemed a bit unsure of where to accommodate me, as there were a lot of guests who needed accommodating.

A few minutes after our conversation, Ahmad bhai came up to me and said that Huzoor had most graciously instructed that he and I should again stay in the lower level of his residence. I felt elated and humbled. Even though I had stayed in the same place in 2015, I thought it was unlikely that I would be staying there again on this trip.

As I took my suitcase to my room, I could not help but think back to the 2015 trip and some of the moments I had spent in the blessed company of Huzoor.

I placed my coat on the same bed which I had stayed on and more memories came flooding back.

I looked over to Ahmad bhai's bed and recalled how it was when we were roommates back in 2015 that I came to realise that he was quite seriously unwell and that despite the treatment he had received in the previous couple of years, he was again becoming sick.

I thought of how it was nothing short of a miracle of the prayers of Khalifatul Masih that he was now, not just healthy and well, but as active as ever in his duties.

I also recalled how in 2015, I had been rather hasty in changing into my *night-clothes* and had been left feeling very embarrassed when Huzoor came

downstairs to where we were staying. So this time, whilst I unpacked, I decided I was going to play it safe and not change my clothes until much later!

### **A few blessed moments**

A few minutes had passed when suddenly I heard the door connecting where Huzoor was staying with the lower level where I was staying open. I felt a sudden surge of butterflies in my heart.

Over the years, I have spent a lot of time with Huzoor in an office environment and also, to some extent, in a personal setting. Yet the moments before seeing Huzoor never change.

Every time I feel a combination of nerves, excitement, fear and gratitude for the opportunity that lies ahead. And so as I heard the door open and the blessed footsteps walk slowly down the steps, all of these emotions and feelings penetrated my heart.

I hurried out of my room to the lounge and looked up as Huzoor, so elegant and graceful, walked down the stairs towards me. Huzoor was wearing a white *shalwar kameez* and a white cloth *topi* (hat). He looked radiant and so pure and noble.

Huzoor kindly enquired how I was before inspecting the different rooms on the lower level. I was surprised to see how carefully Huzoor was checking each cupboard and drawer in the kitchen.

After a few minutes, Huzoor explained why he was doing such a thorough inspection.

Huzoor said:

***“From the Markaz (centre) we provided the Holland Jamaat with new crockery for here and I am just checking to see that it remains in good condition.”***

I was taken aback. Huzoor has so many issues to deal with at a Jamaat level, whilst countless Ahmadis from across the world share their burdens with him on a daily basis.

Yet somehow, he still remembers things that an average person, who had nowhere near the same level of responsibilities or duties, would struggle to recall.

Simply, to ensure that the resources of the Jamaat were not being wasted, Huzoor carried out that initial inspection.

Huzoor then walked towards the room which I was to share with Ahmad bhai. Despite it being part of Huzoor’s house and despite the fact that Huzoor will have known that we could never have any objection, Huzoor first took permission before entering the bedroom.

I felt extremely embarrassed that Huzoor felt the need to ask. Yet, still giving an outstanding example of morality and a respect for the privacy of others, Huzoor only entered after asking if it was ok to do so.

After a few moments, Huzoor returned to the lounge and took a seat in a cream coloured single person arm-chair. He asked me to call two members of the German Jamaat, *Abdullah Saprah* and *Athar Zubair* who he met for a few minutes in the lounge.

After they had left the residence, I was able to spend some further moments in Huzoor's blessed company and he asked me about the latest political developments in the UK.

During the past few weeks, months and years, I had given Huzoor regular updates about *Brexit*. On some occasions, what I presented was new information to Huzoor but on others, he already knew the latest news or had additional information that I was not aware of.

As he stood by the dining table, Huzoor asked me if there had been any updates or developments that day.

In reply, I mentioned that the UK's Prime Minister, Boris Johnson had caused a great deal of controversy in Parliament by claiming that a failure to deliver Brexit by the extended deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> October would be a means of dishonouring the memory of the late female MP, Jo Cox who was murdered a few days before the Brexit referendum in 2016.

Hearing this, Huzoor said:

***"The MP who got killed (Jo Cox) was herself against Brexit and yet the Prime Minister is using her name to justify his pro-Brexit policy! He has become extremely stubborn regarding the Brexit issue."***

Huzoor was right. The MP Jo Cox had been murdered by a far-right fanatic nationalist who was angered by her pro-EU stance. Thus, for the Prime Minister to say that the way to honour her memory was to deliver Brexit was patently wrong and quite shameless.

As he got up to leave, Huzoor noticed some blueberries had been placed on the dining table, along with some other fruit. He picked up the blueberries and put them in the fridge.

As he did so, Huzoor said:

***“It is better to keep them in the fridge, then you will be able to enjoy them for a few more days.”***

I remember thinking that beloved Huzoor’s every moment and second is precious and here his time was being used putting fruit in the fridge so that Ahmad bhai and I could enjoy it for longer.

I was embarrassed but, at the same time, felt a surge of love in my heart as I witnessed the utter humility and simplicity of Huzoor.

Huzoor took another look at the dining table on which there was placed a madeira cake and some bread.

I think Huzoor realised that I would use that table to work over the next few days and he also knew well my propensity to ‘snack’ whilst I worked.

Thus after observing it, Huzoor said:

***“They did not leave any dry fruit or biscuits for you to eat when you work!”***

In reply, I mentioned I had brought some snacks with me from England and had picked up some *macarons* in Calais. Huzoor smiled and did not say anything further.

As Huzoor walked up the stairs back towards his residence, I said it seemed that this tour was set to be filled by the *public addresses* of Huzoor.

In reply, Huzoor said:

***“Yes, in particular the first two weeks here in Holland and then in France are non-stop. Only when we get to Germany, might there be a moment to take a breath!”***

With that, Huzoor returned to his residence and I soon went to bed looking very much forward to the days ahead.

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

The next day, Thursday 26 September, dozens of Ahmadis, most who had never met Huzoor ever before, were able to meet him in Mulaqat.

After the conclusion of the day's events, at around 9.30pm, I was blessed with the opportunity to spend some time in Huzoor's company in the lounge

of the apartment where I was staying. Huzoor was wearing an olive green *shalwar kameez* in which he looked extremely graceful.

I mentioned how a young Missionary, Qamar Zafar, who was serving in MTA had told me that he had visited the grave of a Dutch soldier called Sir Philip Sidney earlier that day. Mr Phillips had been mentioned by the Promised Messiah (as).

In an address on 31 January 1898, the Promised Messiah (as) said:

***“When Sir Philip Sidney was wounded in the siege of the fort at Zutphen in the Netherlands during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, in his throes of death, at a time of immense thirst, a small vessel of water was brought for him... Another wounded soldier lay nearby and he too was terribly thirsty. The soldier began to look at Sir Philip Sidney with intense longing and desire... Sidney did not drink the water himself, but rather gave it to the soldier as an act of selflessness, saying: ‘Thy necessity is yet greater than mine’.”*** (Page 220, Malfuzat, Volume 1, English translation).

After I had mentioned the incident, Huzoor said:

***“It is astonishing how the Promised Messiah (as) learned of world events and the latest news of the time in a very prompt fashion.”***

Upon this, I asked whether it meant that the Promised Messiah (as) was regular in reading the newspapers of the time.

In reply, Huzoor said:

***“Yes, most of the world news that reached him was probably from newspapers but the fact he was able to find the time to read them is itself astonishing. Constantly he was engaged in the establishment of the Jamaat, writing books, responding to allegations and even having to bear the burden of unjust litigation filed against him. He was fulfilling the duties given to him by Allah the Almighty as a Prophet and yet still he was able to stay well informed of the latest worldly events.”***

Smiling, Huzoor said:

***“And we think that we are busy people, yet our lives are free and easy in comparison to him.”***

Upon this, I said:

***“Huzoor, no doubt all of our lives are easy, except yours. For you are constantly engaged in the responsibilities and the burdens of the Jamaat.”***

Thereupon, Huzoor enquired about the latest political updates from the United States, where the opposition *Democratic Party* was considering launching impeachment proceedings against President Trump.

Huzoor was already very well-informed about the matter and I remember thinking how Huzoor followed the example of the Promised Messiah (as) in all matters.

We had just been speaking a moment before of how the Promised Messiah (as) kept abreast of world events and I have seen over the course of many years how Huzoor keeps up-to-date with worldly news.

Huzoor said:

***“Even some of the Opposition party members in USA, who were previously against impeachment, are now stating that they are in favour of bringing impeachment proceedings.”***

Huzoor asked me what the response of President Trump had been.

I replied that he had published a tweet earlier in the day in which he claimed to be the most victimised President in the history of the United States!

Huzoor smiled before changing the conversation and asking me if I was eating well and comfortable.

In reply, I said:

***“Huzoor, I fear that I am eating a little too well and will gain weight because I really like the langhar (kitchen) food here in Holland! Especially, I am enjoying the fresh warm phulkay (flat bread) which are served at meal times!”***

Huzoor smiled again before returning to his residence.

## Inauguration of Jalsa Salana Holland

The next day, on 27 September 2019, the 39<sup>th</sup> Jalsa Salana Holland was inaugurated by Huzoor at 2pm. Huzoor raised the Liwa-e-Ahmadiyyat flag before leading the Friday Sermon in Nunspeet.



Arrangements for Lajna were in a marquee at the Nunspeet Mosque complex, whereas the men's Jalsa Gah was a rented hall about half a kilometre from the Mosque.

Our constant companion during our stay in Holland was rain. Having grown up in England, I am used to the rain but even so rarely have I seen such persistent rainfall over the course of a week.

As a result of the weather, it was widely assumed that Huzoor would travel the short journey to the Jalsa Gah in his car. However, as soon as he came out of his residence, Huzoor indicated that he would walk.

It was a very enjoyable experience to be able to walk with Huzoor from his residence to the Jalsa site for Jumma and also for Salat during the next couple of days.

On that short walk, we crossed the local rail track and on a couple of occasions the barrier would be shut, as a train approached. It was a memorable and captivating scene to see Huzoor standing in the Dutch countryside, waiting for the train to pass before proceeding further.

Also, I could not remember any other occasion, where I had *walked* with Huzoor from his residence to a Jalsa Salana. Most likely, when the *UK Jalsa Salana* used to take place in *Islamabad*, Huzoor may have walked to the Jalsa Gah from his residence but in the time that I had been serving as Press Secretary, I could not recall any such instance.

During the *Friday Sermon*, Huzoor spoke about the objectives of the Jalsa Salana and mentioned that the Dutch Jamaat had increased in size in recent years. The driving force behind such growth was the fact that many Ahmadis had arrived from Pakistan in recent years in search of religious freedom.

Given this, Huzoor said it was imperative that they never forgot *why* they had come to the West and on *what* basis they were permitted to live here. It was not enough for our Jamaat to build Mosques or for members to attend Jalsa

Salanas if they were not accompanied by a commitment to morally and spiritually reform and improve.



Huzoor said:

***“Every Ahmadi Muslim now living a life free from the restrictions they were afflicted with in Pakistan, should be ever-thankful to Allah, and should fully endeavour to fulfil the responsibilities of being a member of the Community of the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him). You should strive to better yourselves spiritually, morally and in terms of increasing your religious knowledge. One should not simply be content with the fact that they are free from religious persecution.”***

It is a point that Huzoor has made on several occasions and one that all Ahmadis, with roots in Pakistan or other countries where Ahmadis face difficulties, should remember.

### **Address to Lajna Imaillah**

The next day, Huzoor delivered two addresses at the Jalsa Salana Holland. First, Huzoor addressed the members of *Lajna Imaillah* before later addressing non-Ahmadi and non-Muslim guests.

During his address to Lajna, Huzoor spoke of how there has been a long tradition of the Khalifa of the Promised Messiah (as) addressing directly the members of Lajna Imaillah.

Despite the fact that his other speeches were relayed live to Lajna, Huzoor said it remained important for the Khalifa-Waqt to address members of Lajna Imaillah directly because when people were addressed directly by Khalifa-Waqt it had a greater impact upon their faith.

Thereafter, Huzoor presented certain aspects of the teachings of the Promised Messiah (as) with regard attaining the nearness of Allah the Almighty.

Huzoor spoke of the foremost importance of offering Namaz and following the teachings of the Holy Quran, as well as the importance of Purdah and seeking to excel in spirituality and morality, rather than competing over material things.

## Address to Dutch Guests

After the Zuhr and Asr prayers there was break for lunch before Huzoor returned to the men's Jalsa Gah to address an audience of over 125 dignitaries and guests.

Huzoor's address was something truly special. It was the first of five addresses he delivered in the English language during the tour and each proved to be an outstanding defence of Islam and analysed problems faced by the modern day world.

I am certain that in terms of literature the tour will go down in history for the way in which Huzoor addressed so many issues with such fearlessness, grace, wisdom and dignity.

*Insha'Allah*, I will write later in this series of *how* Huzoor came to prepare these addresses and how I was able to witness first-hand the way Allah the Almighty guides the Khalifa of the time.

In his address at Jalsa Holland, Huzoor spoke extensively about one of the burning issues of our time – *mental health*.

Huzoor made it clear that wealth and material prosperity were not guarantors of mental wellness.

In fact, Huzoor could not have put it anymore starkly than when he said that ***“the one thing money cannot buy is peace”***.

Huzoor said:

***“Undoubtedly, at a personal level, peace is something we all desire... However, what is peace and why do we need it? In my view, there are two types of peace. There is outward peace and inner peace. Often, at a superficial level, people can appear to be happy and content. Yet, though they have outward peace, they remain bereft of inner peace.”***



Huzoor continued:

***“For example, powerful and influential people often speak about developing peace and they personally possess all the trappings and comforts of the world. Nevertheless, many admit that they remain in search of peace of mind and are consumed by tension and vexation. From a purely external and material point of view, they have all that they need, yet their minds remain plagued by anxiety and their hearts remain unfulfilled. Thus, the reality is that until a person attains inner peace, their material comforts are worthless. Simply put, the one thing money cannot buy is inner peace.”***

Huzoor gave the stark example of an affluent woman who had all the world's riches at her fingertips. Yet, despite her wealth, if something happened to her child or it became lost, she would remain frantic and anxious, just the same as a mother who had none of the worldly influence or means. Huzoor continued by speaking of rising suicide rates and depression across the world, irrespective of wealth or means.

In every address and when confronting any issue, Khalifa-Waqt, guided by Allah the Almighty, is able to show why and how such problems can be overcome through religion and faith, rather than through the abandonment of religious belief.

Huzoor said:

***“In today’s world, critics are quick to blame religion and particularly Islam, for the problems of the world. Yet, many people who are suffering from inner-torment and unrest are those who live a purely secular existence and so their problems cannot be blamed on Islam or any other religion. As a religious leader, I firmly believe that instead of being the cause of today’s problems, religion is the answer and from an Islamic perspective, the solution is quite simple.”***

With great eloquence and complete trust in the teachings of Islam, Huzoor made it clear that the complex issues of our time, whether personal or collective, could be overcome by a belief in God Almighty.

It was a theme Huzoor would return to in his coming addresses during the tour as well.

Later, Huzoor also exposed the hypocritical policies of many governments and leaders across the world that were leading to injustice and conflict.

Huzoor said:

***“It has been a constant theme of modern history that dominant powers have sent their armies to distant lands, on the pretext of establishing peace, but time has proven that their real objective has been to protect and enhance their vested interests.”***

Huzoor continued:

***“During such conflicts, if just one of their soldiers dies there is an outpouring of grief and they pledge to take revenge. Yet, when their bombs or munitions cause the death of hundreds or even thousands of innocent civilians - including defenceless women and children - they remain silent and do not express any hint of regret or remorse.”***

Huzoor made it clear that injustice, at whatever level, was always bound to have negative consequences. When innocent people saw their mothers, fathers, their husbands, their wives, even their children being brutally targeted, was it any wonder that they reacted or were vulnerable to the lures of extremist groups?

Huzoor said:

***“Every government and every political leader - be they from the United States, China, Russia, European countries, the Muslim world or elsewhere***

***- routinely condemn warfare and bloodshed. However, the reality is that their opposition to such matters tends to remain limited to their interests and their people.”***

Huzoor continued:

***“Their cries in favour of the rule of law, justice and human rights are all too often rendered hollow when their interests are at stake. If they are attacked or their rights are usurped, they express blind fury and indignation at the injustice, yet they are themselves guilty of targeting weaker nations and exploiting civil wars or conflicts within other countries for their own benefit.”***

Thereafter, using the Holy Quran and examples of the life of the Holy Prophet of Islam (sa), Huzoor proved that Islam was the antithesis of what was commonly presented or claimed by the opponents of Islam.

Speaking about the response of the Holy Prophet (sa) to the persecution he faced, Huzoor said:

***“At all times, the Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) remained patient, even in the face of the most cruel and barbaric oppression. He turned only to God Almighty to share his pain and so it is mentioned in the Holy Quran that during prayer, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) spoke of his grief that he called his people towards peace and prosperity and yet they responded with brutal and incessant cruelty.”***

As I read back these words of Huzoor today, it is clear that if there is any person in the world who follows the noble example of the Prophet of Islam (sa) it is Hazrat Khalifatul Masih (aba) and if there is any Jamaat that follows his blessed example, it is the Jamaat of the Promised Messiah (as).

In this era, the Jamaat has faced huge trials and grief. In a few months, it will be ten years since the fateful and barbaric attacks of 28 May 2010 in Lahore. Yet, at that time of desperation and grief, our Jamaat, under the instruction of Khalifatul Masih never once sought vengeance. Never once did we take to the streets.

Rather, we witnessed as our spiritual guide and leader followed the noble example of the Prophet of Islam (sa) by turning only towards Allah the Almighty and seeking solace in his supplications.

As he concluded his address, Huzoor said:

***“The fierce critics of Islam should recognise that instead of targeting their bile and venom towards Islam and its noble Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), they should eradicate the traces of bias, prejudice and self-interest. Otherwise, disorder and hatred in the world will continue to escalate. Frustrations and anger amongst those Muslims, who are uneducated or ignorant of the true teachings of their religion, will rise to the surface.”***

It was a beautiful and passionate defence of Islam and of religion and as Huzoor concluded I felt pride that it is the Jamaat of the Promised Messiah

(as) that is guiding people towards the true Islam and utterly privileged to have been present to hear the words of Huzoor directly.

At the same time, I felt a tinge of regret that there were only around 125 guests in attendance, whereas such an address deserved a far greater audience.

Later in the day, I came to learn Huzoor's own perspective on this.

### **Impact of Huzoor's words**

After Huzoor left the Jalsa Gah, I was able to meet with several of the guests and attendees. Each had found Huzoor's address to be extremely inspiring and each took away different points that had been personally interesting to them.

One person I met was a Dutch guest called *Eric*, who said:

***"It was an incredible speech, His Holiness is clearly extremely open minded. He is a man of peace, he is friendly, he respects us... Your Khalifa has proven that whatever Geert Wilders (anti-Islam Dutch politician) says or alleges about Islam is completely wrong and has nothing to do with what Islam represents."***

Another guest, *Mr Thissen*, a lawyer, said:

***"His Holiness mentioned that some people in Holland have spoken against Islam, perhaps he meant Mr Wilders and certainly Mr Wilders***

*does have a lot of influence here. He has a strong base and the sad thing is that his followers are the people who should have been here to listen, but they would not come to such an event due to their prejudice. So my message to you is that you need to amplify the message of the Khalifa. If people cannot be convinced by him, such a man of peace, they will not be convinced by anyone."*

Another guest was *Mr Klappe*, he said:

*"Above all, your leader is kind and he is wise. I was taken aback by how many times he said the word 'love' in his speech. Most people are afraid of Muslims and Islam and so I wish that at least my friends who fear Islam could have heard the Khalifa today."*

Another guest, *Herman Mester* said:

*"If you have ever listened to the Pope, you notice that he uses very careful and diplomatic language, but the Caliph did not use any diplomatic language. In fact, he spoke clearly and boldly. He highlighted the mistakes of certain countries of the world, how they have vested interests and he called for justice and he did not say that all Muslims are innocent and others are not innocent, but he said that everybody is contributing to the problems of the world."*

Another guest in attendance, was *Harry van Bommel*, a former Parliamentarian, who had hosted Huzoor when he visited the Dutch Parliament in 2015.

After listening to Huzoor's address, Mr van Bommel said:

***"The thing that I will take away today was how much focus the Caliph has put on seeking inner peace and how he compared it with what he called outward peace. It was extremely inspiring. The thing I like about the Khalifa is that he is direct. He does not hold back. He says what he sees and what he feels. He does not try to please people, he says what he thinks is for the benefit of humanity."***

Perhaps the most affected guest I met was a lady called *Patricia*, who had established a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in order to cultivate peace in the world. She was beaming with joy at having seen Huzoor and having listened to his message.

We sat together during the dinner that followed the event and several times she said she felt privileged and overcome that Huzoor had come especially to Holland to highlight the means for peace in the world. She also expressed her personal feelings regarding the lack of a senior representative of the Dutch *State* during the proceedings.

Ms Patricia said:

***"It was a beautiful event but I feel very sad that the Prime Minister of Holland is not here to receive Huzoor. He should be here welcoming the Caliph who is such an honourable person, such a man of peace, a man of God. Personally, whenever I see him and I have seen him on a couple of occasions before in London, I feel spirituality and I feel his pious energy and a love for humanity that I have never ever felt in anyone else's***

***presence. I really, really hope that I get to personally meet him again this evening."***

As she said this. I also hoped that she would get the chance to meet Huzoor and just a few minutes later, some guests approached Huzoor's table and Huzoor graciously stood up to meet them one by one.

Upon this, I called Patricia and said she should also join the line. After a few minutes, she was able to meet Huzoor and presented a gift to him. Immediately Huzoor remembered her and the fact they had met in London.

Huzoor said he was pleased to meet her again and Patricia was extremely happy and surprised that Huzoor had remembered her. It was but one example of how Huzoor has the special capacity to touch the hearts of people of all nations and races.

### **A few special moments**

Later that evening, following *Maghreb* and *Isha*, Huzoor came downstairs to the lower level of his residence, where Ahmad bhai and I were staying.

I could not help but mention my sadness at the fact that there were not more guests present to listen to Huzoor's address earlier in the day.

I actually thought that, given Huzoor's schedule, where every second is precious, it was perhaps not necessary to add this extra address to the Jalsa Salana.

At the German Jalsa Salana, they host a similar event but they have around 1,000 guests who benefit directly from Huzoor's words. Yet here the number of guests was a fraction of that.

Huzoor's answer illustrated his vision and directed me towards my own ignorance. It also showed how he regarded and appreciated the efforts of the members of the Jamaat at all times.

Huzoor said:

***"I knew beforehand that there would not be too many guests. Actually, given that Holland's Jamaat is quite small, the fact that 125 guests came is actually quite a reasonable number. Anyway, I could have given a short address of just a few minutes but the reason I prepared a longer speech, which went into several issues was so that the Jamaat's literature here in Holland will increase."***

Huzoor continued:

***"Now they can publish the address and use this in future for their Tabligh efforts and public relations work. So, even if there were only 100 or 125 guests present today, in the long term there can be many thousands of people who can learn about Islam through this speech."***

I was taken aback by Huzoor's answer.

At all times, Huzoor is looking at both the short-term and the long-term prosperity of the Jamaat.

Undoubtedly, if the Jamaat in Holland makes every effort to publicise the words of Huzoor and to share its text far and wide it will have a great impact in reversing the false narrative that has built up about Islam in recent times.

As he remained seated, Huzoor glanced in the direction of the dining table and asked me what I had eaten for breakfast that day.

In reply, I said:

***“Huzoor, I ate a brioche which I brought with me from London and also some coffee which I had brought with me as well.”***

Upon hearing my answer, Huzoor seemed somewhat surprised.

Smiling, Huzoor said:

***“If you are bringing your own breakfast all the way from the UK it seems that you do not have much trust in the hospitality of the local Jamaat!”***

As he said this Huzoor laughed and I laughed as well. However, I did clarify that it was not meant as a slight on the Dutch Jamaat or due to any low expectations.

In fact, I enjoyed the food prepared by the *Langhar Khana* (Kitchen) in Holland more so than in many other countries that I had visited. Rather, just for my own peace of mind and convenience, I tended to take a few breakfast essentials with me if I had room in my luggage!

From a moment of light-heartedness, Huzoor's tone and demeanour changed ever so slightly and it was clear that Huzoor wished to give me some instructions.

In a kind but serious tone, Huzoor told me that he desired for me to increase my religious knowledge.

Huzoor said:

***“You should read Hadith regularly and you should also read the first part of the 5 volume commentary of the Holy Quran repeatedly. You should know the references inside out because sometimes I give you dictation for my speeches or some other research work and it is important that you can easily understand the references and the full concepts.”***

Huzoor continued:

***“You should also read ‘Essence of Islam’ so you become much more familiar with the writings and teachings of the Promised Messiah (as). However, do not try to read it cover to cover, as you will soon become overwhelmed. Rather you should read some excerpts every day, learn them and try to understand their meanings. Especially focus on those parts which are related to contemporary issues that are very much relevant in today's world.”***

As he said these words, I thought of how prescient and astute Huzoor is in knowing our weaknesses and our shortcomings. I had heard Huzoor say on many occasions that Ahmadi Muslims should regularly increase their

religious knowledge and often thought that I must make time for regular study and reading myself. Yet, through laziness and neglect, I had not read anywhere near as much as I should have in recent years.

I was also struck at how Huzoor instructed me with kindness and affection.

This is something I have seen many times before, both with me and with others, that Huzoor never purposely makes a person feel embarrassed by their weaknesses.

Rather, he instructs with love and encouragement. He is like the best possible teacher a person can have – a teacher who motivates, inspires and leads by example.

He is the person who, without recourse to anger or coercion, makes you desperate to improve yourself in every aspect of your life.

Huzoor then gave me his *own* example which left me speechless.

Huzoor said:

***“Some time after becoming Khalifa, I spent two full days in my old office in the Fazl Mosque making a detailed index of the writings of the Promised Messiah (as) in Urdu and then I matched them with equivalent passages that had been translated into English and had been published in Essence of Islam. So in Ruhani Khazain (Urdu writings of the Promised Messiah) I now have notes of where the translation is in English.”***

Huzoor continued:

***“It took me two full days of great effort but it was very much worth it and time well spent.”***

It was incredible to hear how Huzoor paid such close attention to ensuring he had immediate access to the writings of the Promised Messiah (as).

Even though he has an office with staff who can provide him with references, Huzoor’s love and complete respect for the Promised Messiah (as) meant he desired to have the references ready to hand at all times.

### **Imran Khan’s United Nations speech**

That week, Pakistan’s Prime Minister, Imran Khan had delivered a speech at the *United Nations General Assembly* which had been much talked about.

Though I had not heard the entire speech, I had listened to certain parts including a passage where he had questioned why many Westerners criticised Hijab and he described their attitudes as a prime example of Islamophobia.

He also spoke of how the Holy Prophet of Islam (sa) was a defender of rights and that his noble character had been wholly misrepresented in the West.

Another point raised by the Prime Minister of Pakistan related to *Kashmir* and the grave risks of a war between Pakistan and India. He said that if India persecuted the Muslims in Kashmir, it would lead to their radicalisation.

Based on the parts I had heard, I thought it was a good speech but, at the same time, my first thought was that actions speak louder than words.

The speech had been much discussed amongst the Qafila and some other people at the Mosque. Several members of our group were extremely impressed by it and felt a great deal of optimism after listening to it.

That evening, I mentioned those portions of the speech I had heard to Huzoor.

In reply, Huzoor said:

***“Anyone can speak well or make good points, it is whether they practice what they preach what counts. The real thing is actions rather than words.”***

Thereafter, Huzoor mentioned that following Imran Khan’s speech, extremists in Pakistan, who spared no opportunity to implicate the Jamaat with the most outlandish of claims, had made another new claim based entirely in fiction.

A Pakistani media outlet had aired a report that Huzoor had held secretive meetings with India’s Prime Minister in order to undermine Pakistan’s Prime Minister and Government.

The claims, as always, were farcical and based in pure fiction, yet there are always some who fall prey to fake news and propaganda.

## **Catching up!**

After a few hours' sleep, I woke for Fajr and saw from the window that it was raining extremely heavily. It was the type of rain where you would get soaked if you stood for a few moments outside and the type where umbrellas were rendered fairly ineffective.

I went outside and I noticed that the cars were ready for Huzoor to take him to the Jalsa Gah for Fajr. With the rain pouring, I sat in Nadeem Amini's car and was soon joined by Munir Javed sahib (Private Secretary) and Majid Tahir sahib (Additional Wakil-ul-Tabshir).

We waited for Huzoor, expecting that any moment he would come down and enter his car. However, after a few moments, we saw members of the security team, Khuddam and various office bearers all start running towards the main road.

It was then that we realised Huzoor had come out of the front entrance, rather than the rear entrance where his car was parked. Despite the availability of the car, Huzoor again chose to walk.

Munir sahib, Majid sahib and I jumped out of the car and sought to catch up with Huzoor so we were not late for Namaz.

Despite it being extremely muddy, Huzoor did not mind and preferred to walk a few hundred metres in the rain, rather than get in and out of his car for a journey that would last just a few moments.

## Concluding Session of Jalsa Salana Holland

The concluding session of the 29<sup>th</sup> Jalsa Salana Holland took place in the afternoon of 29 September 2019.

With the *Grace of Allah*, Huzoor announced that the attendance was more than 5,800 and that 17 countries had been represented at the Jalsa.

The figure was, by a distance, a record attendance for the Holland Jalsa and far exceeded the predictions of the local Jamaat. In fact, on the day of arrival in Holland, a senior Jamaat *office bearer* had told me they were expecting a maximum attendance of 3,000 people.

During his concluding address, Huzoor stated that the Promised Messiah (as) spent his entire life defending the peaceful message of Islam but rather than supporting his efforts, Muslim clerics vehemently opposed him.

Nevertheless, with the Help of God Almighty, their attempts to obstruct the success of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community had always been frustrated and always would be.

Huzoor said:

***“In this era, it is only through the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) that the beautiful teachings of Islam will become manifest to the world, and this is what is taking place. The efforts of the so-called religious scholars can never succeed in hindering the task which Allah the Almighty wishes to accomplish.”***

Huzoor narrated several incidents of how in countries across Africa and in many Arab countries, people had accepted the Promised Messiah (as) after listening to the radio stations of the Jamaat or by watching MTA International. Many more had been guided towards the truth of Ahmadiyyat through true dreams.



After narrating various incidents, Huzoor concluded with a very faith inspiring message regarding the future success of the Jamaat.

Huzoor said:

***“We have certainty and full knowledge that our Jamaat has been founded by God Almighty and Allah the Almighty has taken it upon Himself to spread its light and He is certainly causing it to spread. No matter how much effort the opponents exert, now there is no one that can stop the progress of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. Rather our Jamaat is destined to flourish, prosper and spread, as this is the will of God. This is the unchangeable decree of God Almighty which will come to pass, Insha’Allah.”***

## **Group Mulaqat**

After the conclusion of the Jalsa Salana, Huzoor returned to his residence briefly before conducting a full session of Mulaqats with Ahmadi families and a group Mulaqat.

The group Mulaqat took place in the Mosque where dozens of Ahmadi men lined up to meet Huzoor one by one.

A few weeks before the tour had started, it became noticeable that Huzoor had started to wear a supportive brace on his hand at certain times. Ever since, many Ahmadis have asked out of concern the reason why Huzoor was wearing it.

I do not know the exact answer to it but I can only guess that years of shaking the hands of thousands of people and writing, by hand, countless sermons or signing millions of letters, have weakened the muscles or tendons in the hands of beloved Huzoor, which has led to pain and discomfort.

Thus, before the first Ahmadi man came forward during the group Mulaqat, Huzoor very gently mentioned that he would not be shaking hands with the Ahmadis due to the discomfort in his hand.

Nevertheless, despite not formally shaking their hands, Huzoor tenderly held the hand of every single man who came forward to meet him for several seconds whilst they had the opportunity of a photo with him.

As there were dozens of people waiting in line, the Mulaqats were brief. Perhaps, each person had around 30 or 40 seconds in Huzoor's company, yet even during that very brief period they were able to introduce themselves, their family background, inform Huzoor of their current circumstances and request his prayers according to their hopes and needs. In those few moments, Huzoor would pray for them or answer any specific questions that they asked.

As I saw the efficiency of the process, it occurred to me how this was an example of how Allah the Almighty blesses the time of Khalifatul Masih. Despite the brevity of the meeting, each Ahmadi who came forward to meet Huzoor, departed full of happiness in the knowledge they had been blessed by meeting Huzoor and had attained his prayers.

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

Later in the evening, following *Maghreb* and *Isha*, I was able to meet Huzoor for a few minutes in the basement area of his residence. Rather than take a seat, Huzoor stood on the stairs leading up to his residence, whilst I stood in the dining area.

As I looked up towards Huzoor, I informed that I had started to re-read the book the '*Introduction to the Study of the Holy Quran*' as he had instructed me the night before.

I mentioned that in my late teens and early twenties, I had read a lot of Jamaat literature but having read many books once, I had not read them again.

Upon this, Huzoor said:

***“It is extremely important to re-read the books of the Jamaat as you get older. In particular, you should read the commentary of the Holy Quran, the books of the Promised Messiah (as) and of his Khulafa again and again. As you get older, you gain more life experience and your thought process matures and this enables you to grasp new points that you were not able to understand when younger. You are able to comprehend the deeper meanings, the intellectual points and the wisdom underpinning the words of the Promised Messiah (as) better as you get older.”***

I thanked Huzoor for his guidance and direction before mentioning I had enjoyed an incident Huzoor had narrated in his concluding address earlier in the day about an Ahmadi lady in Belize.

As I narrated the incident back to Huzoor, it turned out that I had misunderstood part of the incident.

After clarifying exactly what had happened, Huzoor said:

***“You still need to improve your Urdu. I have seen that you can translate things quite well from Urdu to English but, despite this, you still misunderstand some things I say in my sermons.”***

I wholeheartedly agreed and felt a sense of disappointment in myself. A day before, Huzoor had highlighted the need for me to better my religious knowledge and now it was clear that my level of Urdu was not as good as it ought to be.

Perhaps the sense of regret I felt showed on my face because, immediately, and very graciously, Huzoor told me that I was not alone in failing to understand some of the points made in his sermons.

Huzoor said:

***“There is an Ahmadi lady in the United States who has an excellent standard of Urdu, yet she wrote to me once that she always listens to my addresses or sermons at least two or three times because there are many things she misses on the first listen.”***

Giving his own example, Huzoor continued:

***“I think that when I used to listen to the sermons of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (rh), I probably only grasped 25% of his message on the first listen and so I would also re-listen or re-read his addresses and sermons and so do not worry too much.”***

As Huzoor returned up to his residence, I felt determined to try to improve my standards and to make him proud.

### **A day of meetings**

On Monday, 30 September 2019, the majority of Huzoor’s day was spent in meetings with the *National Amilas of the Holland Jamaat, Majlis Ansarullah Holland, Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya Holland and Lajna Imaillah Holland.*

Later in the evening, Huzoor held separate *Waqf-e-Nau* classes with boys and girls from Holland.

During each of the Amila meetings, the various departmental Secretaries presented their reports and had the opportunity to seek Huzoor's guidance and instructions on a range of matters.

In each meeting, it became clear that a fundamental message Huzoor wished to convey to the Amila members was that they should *'lead by example'*.

Rather than acting like 'executives' who issued orders or busied themselves in board rooms, Huzoor wanted the Amila members to be active and to take a lead in the implementation of the different activities and plans of the Jamaat. Above all, Huzoor desired that the Amila members considered themselves to be the first recipients and addressees of the instructions of all the teachings and instructions of the Promised Messiah (as).

### **Holland Jamaat National Amila meeting**

An example of this was during the National Jamaat Amila meeting when Huzoor was presented a report about *'Waqf-e-Arzi'*, where individuals dedicate a limited period of time to travel for the service of the Jamaat.

Upon receiving the report, Huzoor said:

***"Are the Amila members themselves sacrificing their time for Waqf-e-Arzi? The example should be set by Amila members in this regard, regardless of whether it is the Jamaat Amila or the auxiliaries."***

Urging the Amila members forward, Huzoor said:

***“At the moment your Amila is not as active as it ought to be and if you are able to remedy this I believe you can bring about a significant positive change in Holland. If you are sincere and devoted in your efforts the opinion of the Dutch people about Islam will change for the better.”***

During the meeting, the *National Tabligh Secretary* expressed his view that the annual budget the Tabligh department was not sufficient.

In reply, Huzoor advised him to make his case better before the National Amila and Majlis-e-Shura in Holland.

Then, addressing the entire Amila, Huzoor said:

***“The propagation of Islam should always be considered a very high priority within our Jamaat and so it is important that the Tabligh Department is given a suitable budget. The budget for Tabligh in the UK has increased around eight-fold in the last few years after I highlighted its importance to the UK Jamaat. As a general rule, at least 10% of the national budget should be allocated to the Tabligh department.”***

Subsequently, Huzoor examined the national budget of the Dutch Jamaat and gave specific guidance of where some cuts could be made, which would free up funds that could be allocated to Tabligh.

Observing such occasions shows how Huzoor is not just our spiritual leader but Allah the Almighty has given him the ability to lead the Jamaat's administrative work in the most precise and efficient manner.

After stating the importance of giving the Tabligh Department a fair budget, Huzoor turned his attention to the Tabligh Secretary.

Huzoor said:

***“Now your resources will be more but, with that, I want improvement. Now the responsibility will be on your department to deliver results which justify the increased expenditure.”***

#### **Majlis Ansarullah Holland National Amila meeting**

During his meeting with the *Ansar National Amila*, the *Qaid Tarbiyyat* informed Huzoor that many members of Ansar are unwilling to give a personal report about Salat. They argued that their personal worship was between them and Allah and so they were not bound to give a report to Majlis Ansarullah.

In response, Huzoor said:

***“When a person has done Bai’at and pledged to abide by its conditions it means that even some of their personal matters become of interest to the Jamaat and so they should not object. At the same time, you should ask people with sensitivity, without becoming too intrusive and make it clear that your questions are not for the purpose of embarrassing anyone.***

***Rather the objective is to acquire data through which you can then better cater for the moral training of the members.”***

In answer to a question about Ahmadis who were not paying their Chanda at the prescribed rate, Huzoor spoke about the need to be *'persistent'* in reminding them about the value and blessings associated with financial sacrifice.

Furthermore, Huzoor said that sometimes people did not pay Chanda due to grievances or due to other problems.

Describing the importance of sensitivity and understanding, Huzoor said:

***“If a person has any grievance you should try your best to address it. If they have a personal problem or are facing any difficulties you should be there to listen to them with patience and sincerity. It should not be that you only visit the members when it is time for Chanda collection, rather you should be their friends and have a regular contact throughout the year.”***

Huzoor continued:

***“In terms of financial sacrifice, you must try to win their hearts and minds with love, ensuring they realise that it is not a ‘tax’ but is offered according to the command of Allah. Always remember the principle that it is very easy to push someone away from the Jamaat and far harder to bring them towards it.”***

## **Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya Holland National Amila meeting**

During his meeting with the Khuddam National Amila, Huzoor was asked how the Khuddam could better their Tabligh efforts.

In response, Huzoor said:

***“For Tabligh (preaching) to be successful it must be accompanied by prayer. Furthermore, you must never become tired or frustrated. Our mission is to convey the truth and never weaken in our resolve and then one day, at His appointed time, Allah the Almighty will enable a breakthrough to occur and many people will flock towards the true message of Islam in this part of the world. Our job is to be ready for that day and to be ceaseless in our efforts to convey the teachings of Ahmadiyyat far and wide.”***

During the meeting with Khuddam, Huzoor spoke with one Khadim who kept responding to Huzoor’s questions by saying ‘*Ji Sadr Sahib*’, instead of ‘*Ji Huzoor*’.

It was clear that he was so used to reporting to the Sadr Khuddam that his brain was on autopilot when it came to addressing Huzoor!

At no time did Huzoor correct the Khadim or express any displeasure though I did see a hint of a smile on Huzoor’s face after the second time the Khadim addressed him as ‘Sadr Sahib’.

During the meeting, the same Khadim asked Huzoor about offering Salat in congregation. He mentioned that he lived at quite a distance from the nearest Salat centre and so it was not easy to travel daily for prayers.

Upon this, Huzoor spent the next few minutes discussing in detail the specific case of the Khadim.

Huzoor enquired the exact distance from his home to the nearest Salat centre and enquired the cost of petrol and the type of car he had and its rate of fuel consumption.

I do not think anyone, certainly not the Khadim in question, had been expecting such detailed follow-up questions from Huzoor.

Based on the Khadim's answers, Huzoor said:

***“I think for you to attend Namaz daily and also to go for Jumma it will cost you around 225 euros per month in petrol. If you make this sacrifice for the sake of pleasing Allah the Almighty you will attain His blessings. Anyway, where a person has no alternative he can offer his prayers at home but wherever possible he should go to the Mosque.”***

Huzoor continued:

***“In this regard, it is not for me to say that if you live within a certain distance you must go to Mosque and if you live outside that distance you can pray at home. Every person has different circumstances and so it is***

***up to each Ahmadi to take a Fatwa of their heart and conscience with honesty about whether it is possible for them or not.”***

Smiling, Huzoor added:

***“Perhaps you can save money by eating at home more regularly instead of eating out regularly in restaurants!”***

Later, the Khadim expressed his excitement and joy at having the chance to speak to Huzoor and to see how Huzoor took such interest in his personal case. One thing had left him bewildered though.

Speaking to me later, he said:

***“When Huzoor mentioned that I should eat out less and save money I was completely astonished! Because that is my weakness! I regularly go out for meals with my family but I have no idea how Huzoor knew this!”***

Another member of the Khuddam Amila mentioned that his daughter attended a school that celebrated the *birthday* of each child and he sought Huzoor’s guidance over this matter.

In reply, Huzoor said:

***“If the school wants to mark the birthday of every child, including your children, then let them do it. However, you can let the school know that within your home you do not celebrate birthdays and consider them to be a waste of expense that could be put to better use.”***

Advising how the Khadim should do the Tarbiyyat of his child, Huzoor said:

***“You should also explain to your daughter the true Islamic way of commencing a new year in their life. Instead of expecting others to spend lavishly, our Ahmadi children should be taught that they should give one or two euros in charity and offer Nafl (voluntary) prayers. If other parents want to give your child a gift you do not have to reject it but let them know that we prefer for our children to give to charities on birthdays, rather than receiving gifts themselves.”***

Thereafter, illustrating the moderate teachings of Islam, Huzoor said:

***“You should not be harsh or overly strict with your child. Marking a birthday is not a matter of Sharia and it is not haram. There is even no harm if you bring a small cake for your children to have within the home on their birthday. What is wrong is for them to expect gifts or to have a party.”***

### **Lajna Imaillah Holland National Amila Meeting**

During his meeting with the *National Amila* of Lajna Imaillah Holland, one issue raised was a new law which had recently come into force that had been branded a ‘burqa ban’ by the media.

The law prohibited people from covering their faces in public buildings, such as schools and hospitals and also on public transport.

Regarding this, Huzoor instructed that the Lajna should take a lead in writing articles and letters refuting those who alleged that Purdah was a form of oppression.

Huzoor said:

***“Members of Lajna Imaillah should write as much as possible to defend the teachings of Islam, especially in relation to issues like Purdah. You should not only post them on your own website but send them to the media and post on social media.”***

Later, another Lajna office bearer informed Huzoor that, increasingly, Ahmadi women stated it was impossible for them to live fruitful lives unless both they and their husbands had *careers* and worked.

As a result, they were unable to spare much time to attend Jamaat events as they were consumed by their own careers.

In reply, Huzoor said:

***“It is a question of priorities. If a family does not have personal contentment and is focused on materialism then, of course, it will be difficult for them to live in this world without incomes coming from both the husband and the wife. However, if they are able to develop personal contentment and live their lives according to their pledge of giving precedence to their faith over all worldly matters then such issues would never arise.”***

Huzoor continued:

***“The task of the Tarbiyyat department is to make the Lajna members realise that the primary and most important task of an Ahmadi woman is to be a mother. The first duty is to their home and to bring up their children in a moral way, according to the teachings of Islam.”***

Huzoor further said:

***“Of course, if they have no choice but to work, as their husband does not earn enough, and the alternative is genuine hardship or deprivation then they can work but still they should ensure they do not neglect their children. In the United States, we have many Lajna members who work but at the same time they look after their children and also give adequate time for service to the Jamaat. Neither men nor women should be materialistic but should develop inner peace and contentment – this is the key.”***

As the day’s Amila meetings drew to a close, a Lajna office bearer informed Huzoor that some members of Lajna considered themselves as Ahmadis and had good personal relations with the office bearer. However, they refused to engage with Lajna Imaillah and asked not to be contacted about any Lajna event or scheme.

Upon hearing this, Huzoor said:

***“You should say to them that if the National Sadr Lajna has established Lajna then you are well within your rights to have no link or contact with***

***Lajna. If it has been established by a National Ameer or a local office bearer then you are also within their rights to reject any association with it. However, if Lajna Imaillah was established by Khalifatul Masih and the Sadr Lajna reports directly to him then, in order to fulfil their pledge of Bai'at, they must have association with Lajna Imaillah. Otherwise, their oath of allegiance is hollow and their conduct speaks to their hypocrisy."***

Following the Lajna Amila meeting, Huzoor held separate Waqf-e-Nau classes with girls and boys and thereafter led the Maghreb and Isha prayers before returning to his residence upon the conclusion of the day's events.

#### **A few moments in Huzoor's company**

After dinner, I returned to my room and waited in case Huzoor came down and, with the *Grace of Allah*, after a few minutes, I was blessed with the opportunity of a Mulaqat.

Rather than sit down, Huzoor paced up and down the dining area for the next ten to fifteen minutes. I stood to one side to ensure that I did not interrupt his path.

I was aware, having taken dictation for his forthcoming address that Huzoor planned to present the example of *Professor Dr Abdus Salam sahib* at an event being held at UNESCO in Paris during the next leg of Huzoor's European tour.

Thus, I mentioned I had spoken earlier that day to Professor Salam's son, Ahmad Salam sahib and he had informed me that Professor Salam was once

on the verge of being appointed as the Director-General of UNESCO during the mid-1980s.

At the time, the United States and the UK had withdrawn their membership from UNESCO due to differences with the Director-General and so UNESCO was facing a crisis of funding.

Many amongst the scientific community urged Professor Salam to stand as Director-General to reassert its value and credibility in the world.

Ahmad Salam sahib told me Professor Salam met with the leaders of the UK and USA, who were greatly impressed by him and said they would re-join the organisation if he was elected as the next Director-General. However, despite widespread support from the wider world, Professor Salam could not be appointed because Pakistan's Government refused to nominate him simply because he was an Ahmadi.

Thereafter, I mentioned that Donald Trump had quoted on Twitter the statement of a Christian Pastor who claimed that the impeachment of President Trump would trigger a '*civil war*' to erupt in the United States.

It was interesting to note how the possibility of a '*civil war*' had crept into the lexicon of certain figures in the United States during the past three years. Seeing that the President had himself endorsed the statement was a reflection of how divided the United States has become in recent years and reminded me of Huzoor's comments during an interview in Canada in 2016 when he warned of the risk of '*civil war*' if Trump followed through on his most extreme campaign policies.

At the time, Huzoor's comment seemed to draw a gasp of surprise from the interviewer, Peter Mansbridge, and perhaps from others as well. At the time the prospects of a civil war seemed remote in the extreme and a concept that had been left well behind in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Yet, during the past three years, America has become increasingly polarised and politically divided.

After hearing about the social media post, Huzoor said:

***"I do not know why the words 'civil war' came out of my mouth when I was interviewed by Peter Mansbridge in Canada. Certainly, it was not something I had thought of before but, at that moment, somehow, Allah placed those words in my mind for me to say in front of the world. Allah knows better why he put this term in my mind but now three years later, even the President of the United States is raising the possibility of civil war."***

It was incredible to hear Huzoor's own reflection on what he had said in 2016 and what had transpired. Rather than being something he had considered for some time, Huzoor made it clear that he had spoken of a 'civil war' without prior thought or deliberation.

As Huzoor ended his period of pacing back and forth, he turned towards his residence.

As he walked up the steps, Huzoor paused for a moment and said:

***"Now the Jalsa Holland is complete but I have to now prepare my speeches for the Jalsa in France starting on Friday."***

In reply, I said:

***“Huzoor, if you just come and stand for a few minutes and do not say anything, the Ahmadis will still be happy just to have seen you!”***

Perhaps my comment was inappropriate but it was, at least, based on the genuine feelings of my heart. Anyway, my response made Huzoor smile and laugh.

Huzoor said:

***“You might be happy and satisfied if I just come there and say salaam but there will be some people who will not!”***

With that Huzoor returned to his residence.

### **Blessings of prayer**

The next morning, Huzoor held a session of family Mulaqats with Ahmadis from across Holland.

One person to meet Huzoor was *Naeem ur Rashid Mir (48)*.

Along with his wife and young family, he had also met Huzoor in 2015. His young son and daughter were both born with genetic diseases which had meant they were not growing properly and that there was a high chance they would eventually become paralysed.

Naeem sahib told me how in 2015, he had sought Huzoor's prayers and Huzoor had touched them affectionately and prayed for them.

Naeem sahib said:

***"After praying for them, Huzoor said that the doctors would place a 'rod' into my son and after that he would be ok. I was stunned because, despite many medical consultations, not a single doctor had mentioned inserting a metal rod. Yet, the very next month, doctors suddenly told us that the best option for our son was to place two metal rods, which would help him grow and develop. The rods were duly inserted and ever since my son's health has improved a great deal."***

Naeem sahib continued:

***"The recovery of not just my son but also my daughter has been incredible to see since the day they met Huzoor in 2015. We, as a family, are witnesses and proof of the miraculous results of the prayers of Khalifatul Masih. Our children are living relatively normal lives, which seemed completely impossible just a few years ago. This is due solely to the prayers of Huzoor."***

Moments after meeting Naeem sahib, I also met with another Ahmadi, *Irfan Ijaz (37)* who shared a similar story testifying to the healing powers of prayer.

He told me that he and his family had moved to Holland in 2011 from Pakistan.

Two years before, in 2009, they had been blessed with a son, however he had been born with only two chambers in his heart, rather than the four chambers that are normal.

This affected the blood flow across his body and was considered a life threatening illness.

Irfan sahib said:

***“When our son Imran was born with this life-threatening defect we wrote constantly to Huzoor for prayers. Our agony and pain was beyond words, yet we were reassured by Huzoor’s love and prayers and so we never gave up hope. Finally, a team of Ahmadi doctors from the USA examined our son at the Tahir Heart Hospital in Rabwah and they came up with a treatment plan based on the latest medical advances in the USA. Based on their advice, our son had two surgeries in Rabwah and with the grace of Allah they were successful.”***

Irfan sahib continued:

***“Now, years later, my son had surgery here in Holland last month when a pacemaker was inserted. Though the surgery was initially rendered successful, at a follow-up the doctors said that the stitching had not healed well and there was a big risk of infection. A sinister looking mark was also apparent on my son’s stomach around the stitching. At that point I felt desperation that my son will now have to have more treatment.”***

Irfan sahib further said:

***“Last Thursday, we had a Mulaqat with Huzoor here in Holland and we explained the situation to Huzoor and sought his prayers. Huzoor gave our son a lot of attention and love. He talked to him and said he should keep a good diet. Specifically, Huzoor told him not to drink those juices that were not fresh or pure. Then, Huzoor called him towards him and very lovingly gave him a gift.”***

Mentioning what had transpired when they returned home, Irfan sahib said:

***“Later, when went home, my son started to laugh. I asked why and he said that the disturbing looking mark had disappeared and the stitching appeared fine. It was later confirmed by the doctors that no further treatment was now required! We are sure this was only due to the blessings of Khilafat and now, Insha’Allah, our son will lead a healthy life.”***

At this point, Irfan sahib called his son Imran who showed me the scars of his various surgeries.

Without any sense of self-pity, the young boy told me how well he was doing and said that he firmly believed that his good health was due to the blessings of Huzoor’s prayers.

He also told me how his father had bought him a ‘Shezan’ mango juice earlier in the day and he had reminded his father that he could not drink it as Huzoor had instructed him to drink only fresh and pure juice!

### **Speaking in haste!**

During the morning, I spent some time with two members of Khuddam who had attended the Khuddam Amila meeting with Huzoor the day before.

They were reflecting on their good fortune of having been in Huzoor's blessed company and receiving his direct guidance.

They also mentioned how they had sympathy for the Khadim who responded to Huzoor by saying '*Ji Sadr Sahib*' by mistake, as they had personal experience of saying the wrong thing in front of Khalifatul Masih.

One told me how his close friend once had Mulaqat with Huzoor and he had told Huzoor that when he was in Pakistan he had worked for *WAPDA*, which is Pakistan's '*Water and Power Development Authority*'.

Upon this, Huzoor had joked with the Khadim and said:

***"If you worked in WAPDA then you will have taken bribes?"***

Without thinking the Khadim had responded with great enthusiasm:

***"Ji Huzoor!"***

He told how the Mulaqat had continued for a few more minutes when suddenly it came to his mind what Huzoor had asked and he was mortified.

Even though the conversation had moved on, the Khadim suddenly said:

***“Huzoor, I want to clarify I did not take any bribes!”***

Another Khadim who was with us told of how he was part of a Khuddam delegation that went to London to meet Huzoor a couple of years before.

The delegation was granted a group Mulaqat with Huzoor and during the meeting Huzoor asked if any of the Khuddam had more than one wife.

The Khadim said that without thinking and probably due to his sheer excitement at being in the presence of Huzoor he immediately raised his hand without even registering what Huzoor had asked.

He said the other Khuddam in his group were looking at him very confused, as he only had one wife that they knew about! After the meeting they all came to him and asked why he had raised his hand. When they explained to him what Huzoor had asked he was shocked!

We laughed, as it was clear that these mistakes were made innocently and only out of the common sense of nerves and excitement that every Ahmadi feels when meeting Huzoor.

### **Inauguration of Baitul Afiyat Mosque in Almere**

At 4.35pm, on 1 October 2019, the Qafila departed from Nunspeet for the final public event of the Holland tour.

Huzoor travelled to the Dutch city of Almere, which is the newest city in Holland, to inaugurate the beautiful Baitul Afiyat Mosque.

Upon arrival at 5.25pm, Huzoor unveiled a plaque and offered a silent prayer to officially inaugurate the Mosque and then led the Zuhr and Asr prayers.



### **Press Conference in Almere**

Subsequently, Huzoor answered questions in a *Press Conference* at the Mosque attended by a range of Dutch media outlets.

Many of the journalists asked about the persecution faced by Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan and one asked whether it would be possible for Huzoor to travel to Pakistan.

In reply, Huzoor said:

***“I could travel to Pakistan but it would require me to remain silent whilst there. It would require that I do not claim myself to be a Muslim in public and it would require that I refrain from propagating Islam’s teachings. As the leader of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, I would not be able to conduct my duties in such conditions.”***

During the latter part of the Press Conference, the questions turned towards the new Mosque and the future prospects of the Jamaat in Holland.

Thereafter, a journalist asked his views on *climate change*.

In reply, Huzoor said:

***“It is quite obvious that climate change is occurring. The world’s population continues to grow, deforestation is rapidly occurring, whilst the plantation of new trees is not occurring at the same rate. Industry is also playing a big role through carbon emissions. Furthermore, I believe that warfare and conflict is polluting the environment and contributing to climate change and recently others have written about this phenomenon as well.”***

Huzoor continued:

***“I think it is extremely important that trees are planted across the world as fast as possible and for all countries to try to reduce their carbon emissions. Furthermore, if we are serious about tackling climate change***

***it is necessary that Governments reduce warfare and the use of destructive weapons.”***

A journalist asked Huzoor why there were no *women* in the room where the Press Conference was taking place.

In response, Huzoor said:

***“I myself do not know why. When I travel to countries like the United States and other places or at home in UK, I am often interviewed by women and so I cannot say why the media organisations did not send women here today.”***

The journalist followed up by asking if women could visit the Mosque and pray with men.

In reply, Huzoor said:

***“Yes women can visit this Mosque and worship in it, according to Islamic teachings. There is always a hall, similar to the men’s prayer hall, for the ladies to worship in our Mosques. Islam teaches that it is better for men and women to pray with a degree of separation as this enables them to concentrate better and focus on the worship of God Almighty.”***

### **A disorganised start**

After the Press Conference, Huzoor proceeded to a marquee erected on the site of the Mosque complex for the formal inauguration reception.

As is traditional at such events, the function started with Tilawat and was followed by guest speeches before Huzoor delivered the keynote address.

Unfortunately, it was one occasion where everything did not initially run smoothly. The main dignitary on behalf of the city of Almere, the Deputy Mayor, was due to give a speech but he was not present when the event started. I assumed he was late but it turned out that the time given to him by the Jamaat had actually been later.

To 'fill' time, a Sikh guest, who was not previously part of the programme, was invited to the stage to speak for a few minutes.

In addition, when the Deputy Mayor did arrive and took his seat next to Huzoor on the head table, it was clear from his initial manner that he did not really have any introduction to who Huzoor was or the status of Khalifatul Masih.

Another shortcoming was the fact that, perhaps in the stress and confusion of the delay, the National Secretary compering the event forgot to invite Ameer Sahib Holland to give a welcome address. It was left to Huzoor to remind him to call Ameer Sahib to speak.

All in all, the first part of the function was disorganised and the mismanagement was compounded by the fact that the event was being broadcast live on MTA. During that initial period, I received messages from several people, from different countries, asking what was happening and expressing their own view that the event did not seem well managed.

## **Huzoor's address at Almere Mosque Reception**

After a difficult opening, the event finally settled down. The Deputy Mayor arrived and spoke briefly, as did some other dignitaries, before Huzoor started his address at 6.45pm.

The audience listened intently to Huzoor's speech, in which he outlined the true objectives of a Mosque and expressed his view that the new Mosque would prove to be a '*symbol of peace and goodwill for all mankind*'.

Clarifying at the outset that *religious freedom* was a cornerstone of Islamic teaching, Huzoor said:

***"I assure you that our faith teaches us that religion is a matter of the heart and it is for each individual to determine his or her own path, free from any form of coercion. In this regard, the Holy Quran explicitly states that there should be no compulsion in matters of religion."***

Thereafter, Huzoor outlined the fundamental objectives of a Mosque.

Huzoor said:

***"A primary objective of a mosque is the worship of the One God and so mosques are a place where Muslims join together to bow down and prostrate before God Almighty. A second crucial purpose of a mosque is to be a place for Muslims to strengthen their mutual relations and to develop unity amongst the community members. The third pivotal objective for any mosque is to be a means of introducing non-Muslims to***

*the teachings of Islam and to fulfil the rights of the wider society. It is to provide a platform and venue from which Muslims can join together to fulfil the rights of their neighbours and the wider society, regardless of creed, caste or colour.”*

Huzoor continued:

*“Let it be clear that any mosque, which does not serve as a beacon of peace and sympathy for mankind and from where, neither the rights of God Almighty nor His creation are fulfilled, is nothing but a hollow and empty shell.”*



Later in his address, Huzoor mentioned the various humanitarian projects established by the Jamaat in Africa and other countries and said that such projects were motivated by the teachings of Islam and not out of a desire to garner praise or recognition.

Huzoor quoted *chapter 107, verses 3-7* in which Allah the Almighty condemns those people who worship Him but fail to fulfil the rights of other people.

Huzoor said:

***“If a Muslim, God forbid, causes pain or distress to other people and fails to show compassion, then, even if they are regular in the worship of God, their prayers and supplications are futile and utterly worthless... Their worship and entry into a mosque is nothing but a sham and an empty gesture. The Holy Quran is very clear that their prayers are meaningless and their hypocritical ways will lead only to their humiliation and despair.”***

In his address, Huzoor spoke extensively about the rights of *neighbours* in Islam and how the wide definition of ‘neighbours’ meant that all citizens of Almere were the neighbours of the new Mosque.

Huzoor said:

***“In short, now this mosque has been built, our obligation to worship God Almighty has not only increased but, in parallel, our responsibility to serve the local community and to contribute positively to the local society has increased manifold.”***

Concluding his address, Huzoor said:

***“At this time, more than ever before, it is incumbent upon all of us – whether Muslim or non-Muslim - to work together for the cause of peace***

***and to set aside our religious differences and unite in the name of humanity and work towards the betterment of our nation and strive to bring peace in the world.”***

### **Impact of Huzoor’s address**

Afterwards, I spoke with several guests and they were all extremely appreciative and touched by Huzoor’s words.

*Alhamdulillah*, it proved that even where there are human shortcomings, any event graced by Khalifatul Masih is blessed and is a means of softening the hearts of people towards Islam and its teachings.

One guest who I recognised was a lady called *Patricia*, who I had met a few days earlier at the Jalsa Salana Holland.

After listening to Huzoor’s address, she said:

***“I felt extremely overjoyed to see your Caliph once again. His words were based in humanity! It was so moving to see how he linked the worship of God with serving humanity. It was also very interesting to learn how wide the definition of a ‘neighbour’ is in Islam – it is much bigger than in Dutch or English!”***

I also met a guest called *Paul*, who was a member of the Dutch police. He said:

***“The Caliph is extremely wise and I felt that as soon as I saw him and even before he spoke. He proved that Ahmadi Muslims desire to integrate and***

***be part of our society. You have no desire to live separately or to isolate yourself.”***

Another member of the local police, a guest called *Lachen* said:

***“It was a brilliant speech in which the Caliph made it clear that a Mosque is nothing to be feared. It was very kind of him to say that the Ahmadis in this city will always be there for the rest of society if we ever need anything. Your community are perfect citizens and the Caliph is the best possible ambassador for Islam that there could ever be.”***

Another guest, *Hans Jansen*, said:

***“The Caliph came with an objective – to reassure the local people – and he fulfilled it! In fact, his words did not just reassure us but enlightened us to the true value of Islam. I think his speech will have a big impact on our society and if it is disseminated people will realise that anti-Islam politicians like Geert Wilders do not speak the truth.”***

Another guest was *Harry Knot*, who was a Board Member of the National Jewish Council in Holland.

After listening to Huzoor’s speech, Mr Knot said:

***“I was extremely comforted by the words of His Holiness. Any trepidation of the unknown was removed in a few minutes. His message was extremely clear and so there is no room left for those who spread hatred about Islam. His words were unequivocal and impossible to twist!”***

Mentioning another thing he was struck by, Mr Knot continued:

***“I also wish to congratulate you on the fact that your Mosque is entirely self-funded by Ahmadi Muslims. This is unique! I have been to many Turkish or Moroccan Mosques and they are funded by their Governments but the Muslims who go there do not appear anywhere near as connected to Islam as the members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.”***

After dinner, the event concluded and Huzoor offered the Maghreb and Isha prayers in the Mosque before returning to Nunspeet.

### **Last night in Nunspeet**

As we returned to the Mosque, I watched from the car window as the rain, which had been almost ever-present in Holland, continued to pour down from the skies.

I felt sadness that the visit to Holland was coming to an end. It had been an extremely blessed trip from a Jamaat perspective and, personally, I had been able to spend a lot of time in the presence and company of beloved Huzoor.

Just like the 2015 tour of Holland, memories of this tour were sure to stay fresh in my mind for years to come.

After arriving back in Nunspeet, I returned to my room and, as I packed my luggage ready for departure the next morning, I continued to reflect upon the past few days.

As I was doing so, I heard the door from Huzoor's residence open up and those familiar blessed steps walking down to the basement area where I was staying.

Given we were leaving early the next morning, I thought that perhaps Huzoor would not have the time to come down that evening and so was even more grateful to have the chance to spend a few moments with him.

During that period, I shared some of the comments of the guests I had met in Almere with Huzoor. Though he was pleased by the response of the guests, Huzoor expressed his displeasure at the initial mismanagement of the event.

After a few minutes in Huzoor's company, I wished to take the chance to thank Huzoor for the time I had spent in his company during the past few days.

Thus, as Huzoor returned to his residence, I said:

***“Huzoor, Jazak’Allah for bringing me to Holland. There are two things that will be my abiding memories of this trip. Firstly, that I have enjoyed it even more than some other tours I have travelled with you and secondly, I will always remember the rain!”***

Huzoor smiled and said:

***“Yes there has been a lot of rain, especially today during the event in Almere it was torrential!”***

With that, Huzoor walked up to his residence and I returned to my room and continued packing my suitcase.

Though I would be sad to leave Holland, I was eagerly awaiting the next part of the tour.

I had never travelled with Huzoor to France before and so I looked forward to the next days of the tour with great anticipation.

### **End of Part 1**

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