

**UK JALSA SALANA 2016**

**PART 3**

**A Personal Account**

**By Abid Khan**

### **Introduction to Part 3**

During part 2 of the personal account I wrote about the Jalsa Salana UK 2016, I narrated incidents from the days of Jalsa, including Huzoor's meetings with different delegations.

In part 3, I shall narrate some more incidents from Huzoor's meetings and activities in the immediate days after the conclusion of the Jalsa.

### **Huzoor's meeting with USA Delegation**

On 15 August 2016, Huzoor met with a large delegation of Ahmadis from the United States. Many of those attending the meeting, held in the Mahmood Hall, were African-American Ahmadis.

The Ahmadis expressed their emotions at meeting Huzoor and spoke about their Jalsa experiences in a very beautiful fashion.

Very eloquently, an elderly African American lady said:

***“Huzoor, I first attended the Jalsa Salana when I was a child and back then it was like a small flower that has now grown into vast and extremely beautiful tree that has flourished in every direction. Also, I wish to say that your concluding address was extremely moving and your words have entered my heart.”***

The elderly lady continued by saying:

***“I also wish to praise the Jalsa UK volunteers. Each and every volunteer was so kind and special and I have to admit that I think they are even better than our Jalsa USA volunteers!”***

Having listened to her comments, Huzoor smiled and said:

***“Alhamdolillah”***



Also, part of the American delegation was a Christian Priest called Mark Thompson.

Speaking about the impact the Jalsa had had on him personally, the Priest said:

***“What I will take back to America from this experience at the Jalsa is love and inclusiveness. The way the Ahmadis have cared for me and***

***welcomed me has made me feel as though I am a part of your Community. I will never forget this experience and I truly believe that what I have seen here at the UK Jalsa is true Islam."***

The Priest continued by saying:

***"I have seen with my own eyes that Ahmadis do not just repeat the words 'Love for All, Hatred for None' as a mantra, rather they live it and practice it. I hate to say it but Ahmadis follow this teaching more than we Christians."***

In response to this comment, Huzoor said:

***"We should do this more than Christians. This is our teaching to love all others and to care for them."***

Huzoor then asked the Priest if he had brought his wife with him to the Jalsa.

In reply, the Priest said:

***"Your Holiness, I have not brought my wife but my Ahmadi friend who brought me from America has pulled me in every possible direction just like my wife does and so it feels like she is here!"***

Hearing this, Huzoor laughed, as did all of us present.

In a very informal moment, a young African-American girl, aged for 4 or 5, then took the microphone and very clearly and very lovingly said:

***“Assalamo Alaikum Huzoor – You are the best man!”***

Huzoor smiled as he listened to her expression of affection and in response, he replied very softly and affectionately:

***“Jazak’Allah”***

The next person to take the microphone was an American Ahmadi Muslim, who had accepted Ahmadiyyat 14 years previously. He said:

***“With the passage of time a person becomes too ‘comfortable’ and this is when weaknesses creep in our spiritual and religious observances. That is why the Jalsa is so important – the way it re-inspires a person and brings them back to their faith. I have felt this myself time and time again.”***

In reply, Huzoor said:

***“Alhamdolillah”.***

An African-American Ahmadi took the microphone and said:

***“Huzoor we have met on a couple of occasions in the past but you meet so many people that I am sure you will not remember me.”***

Hearing this comment, Huzoor instantly said:

***“I do remember you well!”***

The Ahmadi seemed extremely happy and surprised. He then told Huzoor he was a ‘new’ Ahmadi as he had accepted Ahmadiyyat in 2008.

In reply, Huzoor said:

***“You became Ahmadi eight years ago, and so you are no longer new!”***

The elderly mother of Azhar Hanif sahib, *Missionary in-charge USA*, also narrated her emotions. She said:

***“Huzoor, I came to the UK Jalsa in 2008 and this year I once again had the same feelings of intense spirituality and emotion. I just wish I could stay here forever so that these feelings would never go away.”***

### **Huzoor’s desire for African-Americans**

Thereafter, another African-American Ahmadi presented Huzoor with an old photo taken many decades ago of some of the pioneer African-American Ahmadi Muslims.

Upon receiving the gift, Huzoor said:

***“The real gift that you can give me is to ensure that the progeny of these pioneers displayed in the photo and all other early African American***

***Ahmadis are brought back to Ahmadiyyat and live their lives as true Muslims. So next time bring me that far greater gift."***

Huzoor's words were beautiful, profound and reminiscent of what he had said during his 2012 visit to Chicago. At that time, Huzoor was shown photos of some of the early African-American Ahmadis at the *Sadiq Mosque* and Huzoor instructed the Jamaat to search for the progenies of those early Ahmadis and to try and bring them back to Islam.

Surely, Huzoor feels great pain that the descendants of some early Ahmadi families have moved away from Ahmadiyyat and hence away from true Islam.

### **Return to faith**

Later, I spoke to an African Ahmadi lady, Sister Kareema Raza, who told me Huzoor's comment about bringing the progenies of the early African-American Ahmadis back to Ahmadiyyat had particularly resonated with her.

She told me how in the past couple of years she herself had become distant from the Jamaat and in her own words her ***"spiritual journey had been almost non-existent"***.

During that period, the people around her were either non-Muslims or Muslims who did not practice their faith and so she felt devoid of guidance.

Sometimes, she would think of contacting members of Lajna but was worried about what they would think of her. However, earlier this year she was contacted by a couple members of Lajna herself who encouraged her to attend the UK Jalsa.

Initially sister Kareema resisted because she was worried that she might be judged in some way or asked questions at the Jalsa to which she did not know the answer.

She told me that she kept making excuses in her mind about why it was better not to attend the Jalsa but that at the same time the Lajna members were very persistent and kept urging her to travel to London.

Reiterating her reluctance to come to the Jalsa, sister Kareema said:

***“Even when I got to the airport for certain reasons I almost decided not to board the plane. It was as though Satan was riding on my coat. I did dua (prayer) and finally got on the plane to come to London for the Jalsa but throughout the journey and upon landing in the UK I still felt a sense of anxiety.”***

Sister Kareema continued:

***“As we landed in the UK I did another dua and as I exited the plane suddenly I felt a spirit of complete calm come over me. It was a feeling I had never felt before and so amazing!”***



Speaking about meeting Huzoor as part of the United States delegation, sister Kareema said:

***“When Huzoor spoke about the ‘gift’ he wanted of the progenies of African Ahmadis returning to the Jamaat I felt a sense of relief and at that very moment I knew my prayers had been answered.***

***Prior to Huzoor’s words I had felt ashamed that I had lost so much time without practicing Ahmadiyyat, despite being the granddaughter of pioneer African-American Ahmadis, but hearing the words of our beloved leader filled my heart with hope. I felt reinstated as an Ahmadi woman.***

***I was too shy to ask questions but through the questions of other people present, I received the guidance from Huzoor that I was looking for.”***

Summing up her Jalsa experience, sister Kareema said:

***“I came here to the Jalsa for spiritual guidance and that is exactly what I received. I went from being a guest to rolling up my own sleeves and helping my fellow Muslim sisters in serving and helping others. All my fear went away and I felt right at home. A sense of love and peace surrounded me.”***

### **Huzoor’s comment on the Philadelphia Mosque**

Huzoor’s meeting with the American delegation continued as an Ahmadi from Philadelphia introduced himself to Huzoor.

Upon hearing where he was from, Huzoor said:

***“In Philadelphia, your Jamaat has been building a Mosque for many years. Will that project ever reach a conclusion? Will it ever actually be built? Do you want me to come and inaugurate it or not?”***

The Ahmadi responded by saying he was not in the local Jamaat administration but in a personal capacity he desired greatly that Huzoor would come to inaugurate the Mosque.

I later learned that the foundation stone for the Philadelphia Mosque had been laid in the summer of 2013 but for various reasons the project had been extremely delayed.

From Huzoor’s comment, it was clear that Huzoor was not satisfied at the delay and desired for the USA Jamaat to finally complete the project as soon as possible.

### **A faith inspiring incident**

An African-American Ahmadi lady from Baltimore then said:

***“In our Jamaat we just witnessed a miracle due to the prayers of Huzoor. One of our Ahmadi ladies became paralysed and the doctors said there was no hope that she would recover. However, whilst the doctors gave up hope, we never did and so we wrote to you for prayers. Allah surely listens to your prayers and so only a few weeks later we received word that the Ahmadi lady was recovering and just before***

***coming to the UK we learned that she is now walking again! The doctors all said that it is a miracle that cannot be explained! Alhamdolillah.”***

### **Blessings of UK Jalsa**

During the Mulaqat, Huzoor also spoke with Aliya Latif sahiba. Sister Aliya is a born African-American Ahmadi who is a member of the *Review of Religions* team.

During the meeting, Huzoor very graciously enquired how she and her family was.

Later, Aliya sahiba told me about her experiences of Jalsa, the group *Mulaqat* and some of the difficulties that African-American Ahmadi face on a day to day basis. She said:

***“This meeting with Huzoor at UK Jalsa means so much for American converts and their descendants - often they leave their biological family to join Ahmadiyyat - so the relationships with Jamaat become like real family bonds.***

***Day-to-day life raising families or spending Eid alone, negotiating holidays with non-Muslim families and standing in between their Islamic faith and their culture can feel very isolating. But in UK it feels very much like a homecoming and time with the Khalifa gives you the strength and resolve to face obstacles you encounter when you return to your country.”***

Aliya sahiba said:

*“Travelling to London isn't a simple feat especially for single heads of household, particularly widows and those divorced. Tickets are expensive and the trip requires a lot of planning, preparation and prayers.*

*But from the moment you arrive until the blessed opportunity to sit in front of the Khalifa it is clear that it is a sacrifice worth making again and again.*

*To be able to sit with Huzoor, share your impressions and speak candidly with him is an experience people treasure for a lifetime.”*

Speaking about the sacrifices some of the African-American Ahmadis make in order to attend the Jalsa, Aliya sahiba said:

*“I often think of one delegate who returns each year - she no longer accepts Eid gifts or other gifts from her husband and instead asks that he use the money towards her flight for the following year's UK Jalsa.*

*She begins saving almost immediately after returning from the previous Jalsa and though her means may be humble and the ticket is costly she is yet to miss a single Jalsa UK since she started attending.”*

### A miraculous recovery

Thereafter, Huzoor also turned to a young Missionary, Azam Akram, a graduate of *Jamia Ahmadiyya Canada*, who was now posted by the *Jamaat* in Chicago.

Huzoor asked him how his wife was and in reply, Azam sahib said:

***“With Huzoor’s prayers, she is much better.”***

Azam later told me the background to Huzoor’s question and it was extremely emotional to hear just how Allah had answered the prayers of Khalifatul Masih. Azam said:

***“The reason Huzoor asked me about my wife was because recently my wife became suddenly unwell and was rushed to hospital. I had just come back home from Jalsa USA and was about to fly out to London the next day to attend the UK Jalsa.***

***During the night, suddenly my wife suffered an illness that caused her to bleed extensively to the point where she had suffered so much blood loss that the doctors in the emergency room had pretty much given up and said she could not be saved.”***

Speaking about that moment of personal crisis, Azam said:

***“At that moment, I sent a message to London and sought the prayers of Huzoor. After a little while, I received a message back that Huzoor had***

***prayed for her health and had also prescribed some homeopathic medicine to be given. The doctors agreed to try a final attempt at surgery to curb the bleeding and this took place as I waited anxiously.”***

Azam said that when the surgery was completed his wife remained in a coma and was admitted into the Intensive Care Unit (ICU).

At that time Azam received a message from Huzoor instructing him to stay in America and look after his wife but to come to the UK in time for the *Jalsa* which was due to take place 10 days later.

Azam said that as soon as he received this message he knew she would recover because Huzoor had said that once she was better he should come to the UK. And so Azam continued to give her the homeopathy and suddenly her health started to improve.

Azam said:

***“Even the doctors were baffled by her sudden recovery and said that it was nothing short of a miracle. Indeed a few days later they even said she was well enough to travel to Pakistan so she could stay with her family whilst I was in London.”***

Speaking about Huzoor’s love and concern for them, Azam said:

***“Throughout this entire ordeal, we have seen how Allah answers the prayers of Huzoor. Whilst in London, Huzoor inquired about her health***

*during the meeting with the American delegation and to my surprise he remembered the entire details of the incident.*

*Then during a meeting with American Missionaries later in the week, Huzoor asked again and then during my personal Mulaqat Huzoor graciously spent a great deal of time speaking about my wife and her illness. I felt that Huzoor knew more about her situation than I did.*

*Through this incident our love and appreciation of the blessings of Allah known as Khilafat has increased manifold.”*

### **Meeting with Ghana’s Chief Imam**

Huzoor then met with a delegation from Ghana, including the *Chief Imam of Ghana*, who had addressed the Jalsa Salana.

The Chief Imam thanked Huzoor for the invitation to Jalsa and said:

*“I agreed with everything you said during your speeches and I feel sincere attachment to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. If it were possible I would very much like to come every year to your Jalsa.”*

In response, Huzoor said:

*“Every true Muslim, who follows the teachings of the Holy Quran and the Sunnah, will like the message of our Jamaat because all of our beliefs are based upon them.”*

Huzoor continued:

***“I liked and appreciated the message you gave at our Jalsa and so I would like to thank you for it. It is our duty to show the world that Muslims are the people who can live peacefully together with people of all faiths and beliefs and we are the people who can bring others closer to their Creator.”***

Expressing his attachment to Ghana and its people, Huzoor said:

***“I have special sentiments of love for the Ghanaian people as I lived with them in Ghana for a number of years. It is my heartfelt desire that Ghana prospers and becomes one of the leading countries in the world.”***

### **Bangladesh Mulaqat**

The subsequent meeting was with a delegation from Bangladesh led by Feroz Alam sahib, in-charge of the central Bangla Desk. There were three or four other Ahmadis present, including Amir Sahib Bangladesh.

However, when the meeting started, I realised that Majid sahib (*Additional Wakil-ul-Tabshir*) had left Huzoor’s office, which was strange as he also attended the various delegations.

It was only after a few minutes that I realised it was actually a “*Daftari Mulaqat*” (Office Mulaqat), which Amir Sahib Bangladesh had requested to seek Huzoor’s guidance on various issues.



Upon realising this, I wondered if I should excuse myself, but I did not wish to disturb the meeting anymore and so remained seated quietly.

During the meeting, Amir Sahib Bangladesh requested Huzoor's prayers for his country because during the preceding year there had been a spate of violence in Bangladesh, in which dozens of secular minded people had been targeted and brutally killed.

Referring to such violence, Huzoor said:

***"All Ahmadis in Bangladesh will need to work determinedly to show the true teachings of Islam. They must be ready for every possible sacrifice for the sake of the nation."***

Huzoor continued:

***"The Government of Bangladesh needs to take a very firm hand to stop extremism and when terrorists or extremists are captured the authorities should keep them in separate institutions so they cannot radicalise or brainwash other people."***

Huzoor then pointed in my direction and said:

***"If ever there are any burning issues regarding Bangladesh where you urgently need my guidance about how to respond you can contact Abid as he sees me daily. The key thing is that there must be justice at all levels of society for peace to develop. Remember, what we are preaching is nothing new but are the teachings of the Holy Quran."***

Huzoor then gave some general guidance to Amir Sahib about *Tabligh* and *Tarbiyyat* in Bangladesh.

Huzoor said:

***“You do not bring members of Lajna Imaillah to the UK Jalsa and this is wrong. You should include them in your delegations and encourage them to attend as the Jalsa is a means of Tarbiyyat for all Ahmadis.”***

Huzoor continued:

***“In terms of Tabligh, you should identify those villages in Bangladesh where extremist Maulvis (clerics) do not live and you should preach in those places. You will need to tread with wisdom at all times.”***

One of the members of the group, also sought Huzoor’s advice and guidance for the members of *Majlis Ansarullah* in Bangladesh.

In response, Huzoor said:

***“The Ansar should realise that being older does not mean they should become inactive and lazy! Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (ra) once said that many Ahmadis were extremely active as Khuddam but the day they turned forty they would become lazy.***

***Indeed, this is the reason that Hazrat Khalifatul Masih III (rh) started Saf-e-Dom, to try and motivate and activate the members of Ansar.”***

Although, I had attended this meeting in error, in the end I was grateful to be present as I was able to learn first-hand about some of the issues faced by the Jamaat in Bangladesh and to hear Huzoor's inspirational advice.

### **Emotions of Ahmadis**

On the evening of 15 August, I met some of the hundreds of people who had met Huzoor in *Mulaqat* that day.

I talked to an African man, *Abu Hurrera* (35) and his wife *Kismat*, who were originally from Benin but now lived in South Africa.

Moments after his *Mulaqat* with Huzoor, Abu Hurrera said:

***“Meeting Huzoor in person is a completely different experience to seeing him on MTA. I was left astounded by the beauty of his personality – his grace, humility and kindness. The love I feel for my Khalifa after meeting him is indescribable and I just wish that I lived here in London so I could see him all the time.”***

His wife Kismat sahiba said:

***“I firmly believe that Khalifatul Masih is Allah's representative on earth today and so it is an unbelievable privilege and honour to meet him. There are millions of Ahmadis in Africa and in other countries who wish to meet him and yet out of all of them we just had this opportunity. All I can say is Alhamdolillah. When we asked for prayers, Huzoor replied by***

***saying “Allah bless you” and I know that this prayer will shield us and protect us throughout our lives.”***

I met a young *Missionary* from Canada, Raza Shah, who had been present during Huzoor’s meeting with an Arab delegation earlier. He reminded me of an incident from the meeting, which had affected him a great deal.

Raza said:

***“I was able to attend the meeting with Arabs because my wife is here and she is Arab. One thing struck me and that was when an Arab lady offered her thanks to Huzoor for the blessings of Jalsa Salana, Huzoor immediately replied by saying: ‘Before you thank me, you should thank Allah’. These words of Khalifa-Waqt were amazing and shows how he always defers any praise or recognition to Allah the Almighty.”***

I met Ayyaz Ahmad (38) and his wife Farah Ayaz. They were both from Kerala in India but lived in Dubai.

Farah sahiba told me she had been present when Huzoor visited the *Review of Religions* exhibition on the second evening of Jalsa Salana.

Speaking about that moment, she said:

***“I could not believe it that we were there when Huzoor visited the Review exhibition! We were able to walk just a few metres behind him and honestly I have never felt such emotion and happiness! I was with a non-Ahmadi guest and after observing this scene she said to me that***

***she had never seen an example of such pure love before in her life as existed between Huzoor and members of the Jamaat."***

Suddenly, Farah sahiba became emotional and as tears flowed from her eyes, she said:

***"I am crying because I am sad and devastated that we will be leaving soon and we will once again be far from our beloved Khalifa."***

Thereafter, Ayyaz sahib told me they had watched a speech I had given to some Khuddam a few months earlier which had been posted on *YouTube*.

In the talk, I had mentioned how it had taken several years for me and my wife to be blessed with children. I mentioned how Huzoor had told me that we should give *Sadqa* daily.

As they recalled this incident both Ayyaz sahib and his wife became extremely emotional. They said that they had been married for nine years but had been unable to conceive.

I could see the sadness and pain in their eyes as they recounted this.

As they wiped away their tears, I said they should write to Huzoor repeatedly for prayers because we were all witness to the fact that Allah the Almighty listened to the prayers of *Khalifa-Waqt*.

## **A spiritual transformation**

I also met a Norwegian Ahmadi convert, *Saleha Solveig Khan* moments after she had met Huzoor. It was extremely interesting to meet her and to hear about both her *Mulaqat* and her journey to Ahmadiyyat.

Speaking of having met Huzoor a few minutes before, Saleha sahiba said:

***“Since accepting Ahmadiyyat in 2008 I have felt the great blessings of Khilafat. Huzoor is the one person in whom we can put all our trust and the person with whom we can share our worries. Having met him today, I feel as though I now know what to do in my life and I have no reason to worry. I feel as though I was one person in the waiting room outside Huzoor’s office and then I emerged from Mulaqat a new and better person.”***

Speaking about what Islam had given her, Saleha sahiba said:

***“I have no regrets whatsoever at having accepted Ahmadiyyat because Islam has truly transformed me. It has saved me! Before I became an Ahmadi, I was spiritually sick and I was also physically sick but Islam has purified and healed me.”***

Saleha sahiba continued:

***“Islam has taught me modesty and so after becoming a Muslim I started to cover my body for the first time and ever since I have felt dignity that I never felt before. Hijab is a source of peace for me and a blessing. In***

***fact, every Islamic teaching has benefitted me in ways that I cannot describe.”***

Saleha sahiba then told me about her life before becoming an Ahmadi.

She said:

***“Before Islam, I was somebody who sought thrills and whenever I fulfilled one thrill I wanted to move on to something bigger. For example, I wanted to jump out of a parachute simply to attain a new thrill.***

***Due to this compulsion for excitement, I started drinking a great deal of alcohol and even started to take drugs. It reached the stage that my entire body and soul felt black and empty.***

***It was then, when I was at my lowest point, that Allah saved me and I found Ahmadiyyat. I found peace, I found love and I found contentment. Today, I feel as though that black soul has turned white. I feel that sick person who I used to be has been healed.”***

Having heard about Saleha’s life before Ahmadiyyat, I have to admit that I was shocked because the person I met was so peaceful and content in her faith.

It truly was an example of how Islam and the teachings of the Holy Quran could transform the life of any person.

### **Stretched out shoes**

In between meeting Ahmadis from different countries, I saw Omair Aleem sahib, in-charge of *Makhzan-e-Tasaweer* (Central Photography Department), who told me of one of his Jalsa experiences.

Omair said that prior to Jalsa he had bought some new shoes that he loved because they were far more comfortable than any shoes he had ever worn before.

At Jalsa, he had taken his shoes off in the *Jalsa Gah* but when he went to retrieve them they were gone. He looked here and there but could not find them until suddenly a large and tall Ahmadi guest from abroad came and nonchalantly took Omair's shoes off *his* feet and returned them to where Omair had initially left them.

Omair said he asked the guest why he had taken his shoes and in reply he casually said:

***"I needed some slippers for the bathroom so I took them for a minute  
but now I have returned them!"***

Omair said he then put his shoes back on which were now stretched due to the larger feet of the guest!

As Omair passionately told me this story I could not hold back my laughter!



### **Time with family**

On the evening of Monday, 15 August, following the conclusion of *Maghreb* and *Isha*, I took my in-laws and family to a restaurant in Tooting.

My in-laws had been in London for a week and were returning home on Wednesday to the United States and due to the Jalsa, I had hardly spent any time with them. Hence, I thought that evening would be a good opportunity to be a good son-in-law!

When we got to Tooting, I ordered a lot of food, probably more than I normally would. It was extremely good and thankfully my in-laws seemed to have enjoyed it.

After we returned home, my wife Mala asked me why I had ordered so much food.

I responded by saying that the day before Huzoor had given such a beautiful sermon in which he had said we should care for our parents and so with this still fresh in my mind I thought I should at least feed her parents well that day!

### **Meeting with Belize Health Minister**

The following morning, Huzoor had a series of *Daftari* (office) Mulaqats with representatives of the *Jamaat* from different countries, including Amir Sahib USA and Dr. Nuri, the *Director* of the *Tahir Heart Institute* in Rabwah.

Thereafter, Huzoor's meetings with various foreign delegations resumed.

The first meeting was with the *Minister of Health* of the Government of Belize.

Sharing his thoughts about the Jalsa Salana, the Health Minister said:

***“During these three days, I saw how life is living amongst the Muslim Community and I never expected that I would be treated so kindly and I never expected to see such an amazing spirit of volunteering and service. We need such a spirit of service in the rest of the world as well.”***

In reply, Huzoor said:

***“If you are able to instil such a spirit of selfless sacrifice and service for others in Belize then your nation will excel. At our Jalsa, we have extremely educated professionals or executives who are serving humbly in our kitchens or who are on cleaning duty.”***

With a degree of regret, the Minister said:

***“I wish we could develop such a spirit, however in the rest of the world most people are preoccupied by a desire to fulfil their own rights and needs only and so are not ready to volunteer in the way that your community is.”***

The *Minister* continued by saying:

***“Your Holiness, I desire very much that you visit Belize. It will be our great honour to receive you because we need our people to see what true Muslims and true Islam represents.”***

The *Minister* said that when he first saw Huzoor delivering his *Friday Sermon* at *Jalsa*, he had thought Huzoor looked “very serious”, however later when he had the opportunity to shake Huzoor’s hand he felt his “love and warmth”.

Hearing this, Huzoor smiled and said:

***“So you thought that I do not enjoy good jokes and remain serious at all times!”***

The *Minister* said:

***“Yes, initially that was my impression but now I have seen first-hand not only your humour but your kindness and love.”***

### **Meeting with Niger’s Religious Minister**

Huzoor’s next meeting was with the *Religious Minister* of the African country Niger.

The *Minister* had done *Bai’at* and accepted Ahmadiyyat the day before.

The Minister, who spoke in Arabic, said:

***“I was sent here as a representative of my Government and personally speaking I found this event to be truly exemplary. I have attended many gatherings and events in different parts of the world but never have I seen such diversity and such beauty as I saw at this Jalsa.***

***In particular, the concluding address you delivered at the Jalsa had a profound effect upon me and shook me to my core. Its effect was so strong that I resolved there and then to become an Ahmadi and did Bai’at.”***

The Minister continued by saying:

***“I know that in our country there is corruption and a lack of justice and so our people need to hear this message of Islam that Ahmadis are propagating. I particularly liked how you said that we should focus on giving rights to other people and helping others, rather than only helping ourselves.”***

In reply, Huzoor said:

***“Recently a journalist asked me how peace could be established and I told them that Islam teaches that we must give rights to others instead of focusing on our rights. This is the key to peace.”***

The Minister then said:

***“Before I used to help your Jamaat as a friend but in future I will serve it as a loyal member!”***



Huzoor asked if the Minister had read any Jamaat literature. He responded by saying he had read the *Qaseedah* written by the Promised Messiah (as) and this had touched him deeply.

Turning to the local Jamaat Missionary, Huzoor said:

***“It is essential that he understands the basic teachings of the Jamaat and knows what the Promised Messiah (as) has taught and so you should give him the Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam to read immediately.”***

### **An example of opposition to Jamaat**

The Minister also informed Huzoor of how he had witnessed the institutional nature of the opposition to the *Jamaat* amongst certain Muslim countries.

Narrating an incident from his time in Government, he said:

***“Last year our country overspent its national budget and so I went as part of a delegation to a rich Muslim nation in order to seek their financial help for our country.***

***Their leaders said they were willing to help us, however there was one condition – we had to remove Ahmadis from our nation and stop the growth of Ahmadiyyat at all costs!***

***In response, our President said that we cannot remove Ahmadis and nor will we persecute them because they are sincere and loyal citizens of our land.”***

Upon hearing this, Huzoor said:

***“We need unity in the Muslim world and so we must end all forms of sectarianism. If the Muslims wish to compete with the West then they must set aside their differences and join together. In my opinion, Saudi Arabia should lead this effort but if they are unwilling then the Muslims in other nations should at least try to come together.”***

## **Meeting with Gabon's Peace Councillor**

The next meeting was with a *Peace Councillor* who had come to attend the Jalsa from the African country Gabon.

The Peace Councillor, a lady, said:

***"I cannot explain in words how I feel. The Jalsa Salana completely exceeded every expectation that I had. I am a Christian and I had a very negative impression of Islam but your speeches have completely changed my views. I wish to thank you for letting me see and feel this spiritual atmosphere and certainly when I return to Gabon I will inform members of the Government about all the good things I have seen here."***

In response, Huzoor said:

***"The fact that you came to attend our Jalsa, despite holding reservations and fears of Islam, proves that you are open-hearted and extremely courageous."***

Huzoor then turned to Abdul Majid Tahir sahib (*Additional Wakil-ul-Tabshir*) and said:

***"Our Jamaat does not have a mission established in Gabon yet and so we should explore the possibilities of opening one there."***

## **Emotions of Ahmadis**

Apart from the delegations, Huzoor's Mulaqats with Ahmadis continued. Each came out emotional, joyous and overwhelmed.

I met an African-American Ahmadi from the United States, *Junaid Latif (41)*, who said meeting Huzoor that evening was ***"the perfect end to a perfect weekend"***.

Junaid said:

***"Despite being so busy throughout Jalsa, when I met Huzoor today he was bright-eyed and so interested in me and my family. Only a person who is from God could treat each and every person with so much love. Meeting Huzoor personally is the greatest possible gift and all I can say is Alhamdolillah! I know that I am flawed and I am weak but I also truly believe that with Huzoor's prayers I will now be able to become closer to God Almighty."***

I also met *Israh Siddique (37)* from California. Born and raised in America, Israh accepted Ahmadiyyat in 2002.

Speaking about meeting Huzoor, Israh sahib said:

***"Meeting Huzoor is completely overwhelming because he is a sign of the truth of the Imam Mahdi foretold by the Holy Prophet (sa). Every day of his Khilafat is proof of the truth of the Promised Messiah (as)."***



Israh sahib continued:

***“A person who fabricates or lies will soon be exposed by Allah, yet the Jamaat of the Promised Messiah (as) and the Khalifatul Masih continue to go from strength to strength.***

***If the Ahmadiyya Khilafat, God forbid, was not true then Allah would expose and finish it. Before accepting Islam, I had read about other people who claimed to be the Mahdi and they were all exposed and disgraced in their own ways, yet the blessed tree of the Promised Messiah (as) continues to flourish and prosper.”***

Israh sahib continued by saying:

***“We are truly fortunate to live in this era because the blessings and energy of this era of Hazrat Masih-e-Maud (as) have not been witnessed in the world since the time of the Holy Prophet (sa). I personally feel fortunate that I, and millions of others, are proof that the message of the Promised Messiah (as) has reached the corners of the earth!”***

### **Indonesia delegation**

On Tuesday 15 August Huzoor met with large delegation who had travelled from Indonesia.

Most of those in attendance were Ahmadis, though there were also some non-Ahmadi guests, including a lady who was a high-ranking *Commissioner for Human Rights*.

Speaking about her experiences of Jalsa, the *Commissioner* said:

***“I also learned a great deal from the speeches of Your Holiness – they covered so much ground, including domestic rights and world affairs. Attending this Jalsa has greatly advanced both my spiritual and intellectual journey in the world.”***

The *Commissioner* also informed Huzoor that she was working on the creation of a law in Indonesia that better protected the religious rights of minorities. She said that if the law was passed it would benefit Ahmadis living in Indonesia as well.

Hearing this, Huzoor said:

***“The problem is that the Indonesian Government is too fearful of the Mullahs (religious clerics) and so it will need to remove this fear if your nation is to succeed in establishing true religious freedom. Nonetheless, it is my view that the current Government is better than the previous one. May Allah help you in this effort.”***

A number of Ahmadis also took the opportunity to share their emotions with Huzoor or to ask him questions.

One Indonesian Ahmadi lady, *Khadija sahiba*, became tearful as she said:

***“On behalf of all our Lajna, I request Huzoor’s prayers for our children and for all Ahmadis who are faced with difficulties. Most of all, I request you to pray that Allah keeps us and our future generations firmly***

***attached to Ahmadiyyat and enables us to be ready for every sacrifice for the sake of this blessed Jamaat.”***

The next lady to request Huzoor’s prayers was an Ahmadi lawyer. Before she spoke, Amir Sahib Indonesia informed Huzoor that she was the highest *Chanda* payer in the entire Indonesian Jamaat and in this way Ahmadi women were truly leading the way in terms of sacrifice.

An Ahmadi man then took the microphone and informed Huzoor that he had attended the Jalsa after 20 years.

Hearing this, Huzoor said:

***“20 years ago the Mahmood Hall was exactly the same as it is today and so there is no change in this. Was there anything else that is different or has changed that you noticed?”***

In response, the Ahmadi said:

***“Now I am married and so the biggest change is that I have come this time with my wife!”***

A female Ahmadi student asked Huzoor if it would be appropriate for her, as an Ahmadi woman, to become a lawyer.

In reply, Huzoor very beautifully said:

***“If you have studied law and have interest in it then yes you can become a lawyer and you should then strive for women’s rights and for the human rights of all.”***

An Indonesian lady took the microphone and became extremely emotional. She began to weep like a small child as she told Huzoor about some of her personal problems and difficulties.

In reply, very affectionately, Huzoor said:

***“May Allah bless you and remove all of your difficulties and if you follow what I said in my speeches at Jalsa then Insha’Allah your problems will be solved.”***

### **Japan delegation**

Huzoor then met with a delegation of guests from Japan, where Huzoor had inaugurated the *Baitul Ahad Mosque* the previous November.

One of the guests, an Anglican Priest, described his emotions at having attending the Jalsa. The Priest said:

***“In Japan, following the earthquake a few years ago, I saw how the local Ahmadi Muslims served our community with selflessness. Having attended the Jalsa, I now understand why they served us and cared for us so much. In Japan, people traditionally follow the acts and guidance***

***of their parents, but Ahmadiis follow the acts and guidance of their Khalifa and consider him to be their spiritual father.”***

The Priest added:

***“I truly believe your speeches and your words should be spread across the world so that people can learn that Islam is not what ISIS or the Taliban say, rather it is a teaching of peace. Your message can be the bridge to peace that binds humanity together.”***

In response, Huzoor said:

***“You have now seen with your own eyes what true Islam is and so you should explain to your own followers and contacts what Islam represents.”***

### **Central Asian delegations**

Huzoor then met with small delegations from the central Asian countries of Turkmenistan and Tajikistan.

A new convert to Ahmadiyyat from Tajikistan, a lawyer, said:

***“Attending this Jalsa has changed me in so many ways for the better. You concluding address, in which you spoke about the true teachings of Islam and loving one’s parents, has shaken me to my core.”***

Huzoor then asked an Ahmadi from Tajikistan if the Jamaat's centrally appointed Missionary was performing his duties in a good way.

In response, the Ahmadi said:

***"Yes certainly, our Missionary has four children and so he is working extremely hard all the time!"***

Hearing this, Huzoor started to laugh and said:

***"Is this how he is doing Tabligh? – by having lots of children!"***

### **Reflections of a young Khadim**

That day, I also spent a little time with *Mirza Nurudeen Ahmad (20)*, son of *Sahibzada Mirza Ghulam Qadir Shaheed*, who had been martyred in Pakistan in 1999, when Huzoor was *Nazir-e-Ala* in Rabwah.

Nurudeen had come to London for a month to attend the Jalsa. During the visit, he had the opportunity to meet Huzoor on several occasions. Most of the *Mulaqats* took place in Huzoor's home in the evenings when Huzoor would meet with his family members and relatives. He also met Huzoor in his office and so he told me about these experiences.

Nurudeen said:

***"When you are in Huzoor's presence it makes you forget about every problem or issue you face and a sense of peace and calm comes over you***

***just by seeing him. After meeting him in person it truly becomes impossible to imagine a life without Khilafat.”***

Speaking about meeting Huzoor in his office, Nurudeen said:

***“Meeting Huzoor in his office was a surreal experience. It was the first time I had ever met Huzoor in his office on my own and so I was very nervous. However, when I entered, seeing Huzoor instantly calmed me down. He looked so beautiful and glowing that I found it difficult to look directly at him.”***

### **Turkey delegation**

Later, Huzoor met with a delegation from Turkey.

During the meeting, Huzoor noticed that most men were wearing red caps bearing the Turkish flag.

One of the members explained that by wearing the same caps it was easy for them to spot one another amongst the crowds at the Jalsa Salana.

Hearing this, Huzoor said:

***“It is good to maintain your national identity and so this is a good means of recognition for you.”***

### Guatemala and Panama delegation

The next group to meet Huzoor was a delegation from Guatemala and Panama, including national politicians, a new Ahmadi convert and some other members of the Jamaat.

One politician present was the *Governor of Guatemala*, who told Huzoor about his experiences at Jalsa. She said:

***“For over 40 years I have tried to serve humanity and been involved in various humanitarian projects. However, during the three days of Jalsa I learned many new things. I particularly liked two points made by Your Holiness in his addresses. First of all, when you said that we should each individually set our own positive examples for others to learn from and follow and secondly when you said it is the duty of a child to serve and look after their parents when they reach old age.”***

She continued by saying:

***“Your Holiness, I thank God for the feelings of humanity he has instilled in your heart because all of mankind is benefitting from your love and prayers.”***

One of the politicians then thanked Huzoor for the fact that *Humanity First* was now well on the way to building a new hospital in Guatemala.



Hearing this, Huzoor prayed:

***“May Allah enable our team to complete the hospital as soon as possible so that it can start fulfilling its true purpose – which is to serve humanity and to provide healthcare to those in need.”***

Addressing Huzoor, a guest from Panama said:

***“The generosity of spirit amongst the Ahmadis here at the Jalsa has been completely unique. From the oldest adult to the youngest child all I have seen is a desire to serve others.”***

One of the politicians said that they would ask their Government to raise the issue of voting rights with the relevant authorities in Pakistan given that for many years Ahmadi Muslims have been disenfranchised from the democratic system in Pakistan.

The situation remains that if an Ahmadi Muslim wishes to vote in Pakistani elections they must either declare themselves non-Muslim or disassociate themselves from the Promised Messiah (as).

Hearing this, Huzoor said:

***“It is our view that every citizen should have the right to vote and that religion should be kept separate from politics and voting.”***

### **Bosnia delegation**

Huzoor then met with guests from Bosnia, one of whom said:

***“It was a wonderful experience to attend the Jalsa and it felt like people from all over the world were each part of the same family. The thing that shocked me the most was the patience I saw in all people present.”***

The conversation then turned to radicalisation and extremism.

Huzoor was informed that increasingly some Muslims in Eastern Europe were being radicalised.

In response, Huzoor said:

***“The way to serve Islam is to follow its peaceful teachings and be an example for others to follow. It is to spread Islam’s true teachings to the far corners of the earth by winning people’s hearts through love and reason. This is how to serve Islam!”***

Very beautifully, Huzoor continued by saying:

***“It is the task of Muslim youths to change the world but the way to do this is through love and by following Islam’s true teachings. It is not by committing acts of terrorism or violence in clubs, stations or anywhere else.”***

### **Sierra Leone delegation**

The next meeting was with senior members of the Government of Sierra Leone and several Parliamentarians.

One guest took the opportunity to express his gratitude that Ahmadis ***“showed great love to people from the Christian community”***.

Upon hearing this, Huzoor responded by saying:

***“We do not only show love to Christians but to all peaceful people, from all walks of life and all backgrounds!”***

Addressing Huzoor, a female guest from Sierra Leone said:

***“Your Holiness – you have a way of penetrating our hearts and minds spiritually and emotionally. After each of your addresses I was left in tears.”***

In his own uniquely humble way, Huzoor responded by saying:

***“May Allah help you always and enable you to attend the Jalsa every year.”***

A number of *Paramount Chiefs* were also present and upon noting this, Huzoor turned to Amir Sahib Sierra Leone and said:

***“This time you have brought many Chiefs and leaders but next time you should all bring some of the common people of Sierra Leone to attend the Jalsa so they too can learn about Islam.”***

Speaking of the services of the Jamaat, a senior politician from Sierra Leone said:

***“The great work of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community worldwide is no secret – you are the people who are giving a good name to Muslims.”***

A senior and well respected Judge from the *High Court* of Sierra Leone then stood up and presented Huzoor with a gift of an ‘*agricultural map of Sierra Leone*’ – wherein each territory on the map was made up of the crops that were grown in that particular region.

The Judge formally addressed Huzoor to thank him for the Jamaat’s continued services to Sierra Leone and also conveyed the greetings of His Excellency, Ernest Bai Koroma, the President of Sierra Leone.

In response, Huzoor said:

***“Please convey my greetings and salam to the President of Sierra Leone.”***

### **An interesting call**

Hearing this, I was reminded of the previous year when Huzoor also met with a delegation from Sierra Leone, including a close adviser to the

President. During the meeting the adviser suddenly dialled a number on his mobile phone and once connected he said:

***“Greetings Mr. President, I am with His Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad in London.”***

The adviser mentioned to Huzoor that the President of Sierra Leone had requested to speak to him and so thereafter Huzoor and the President spoke with one another for a few minutes.

### **Media interviews with international journalists**

Apart from the presence of UK based journalists, several journalists from abroad also attended this year’s Jalsa.

For an hour before the *Zuhr* and *Asr* prayers some of them had the opportunity to interview Huzoor in his office.

The journalists represented well respected media outlets in *Jamaica, Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay* and *Guatemala* and their interviews were followed with a great deal of coverage in the respective countries.

In this way, the Jalsa Salana UK also provided a platform for the spread of the message of true Islam to Central America, the Caribbean and South America – parts of the world where there are currently very few Ahmadis.

A journalist from Jamaica’s national television asked Huzoor about his views on the forthcoming Presidential elections in the United States.

In response, Huzoor said:

***“As Ahmadis, we desire peace in society and so we cast our votes for the person who we believe will be the most fair and just. I could never vote for a person who does not want to treat people equally and fairly.”***



A journalist from Ecuador asked Huzoor about his hopes for the spread of Ahmadiyyat in Latin America.

In reply, Huzoor said:

***“Currently we do not have large communities in Latin America but with the passage of time it is our hope that the true peaceful message of Islam spreads there. All over the world people are in search of good and so I believe that when the message of Ahmadiyyat reaches the people in that part of the world they will also appreciate and value it.”***

Answering a question from the same journalist about whether he felt personally in danger from terrorism, Huzoor said:

***“In today’s world no one can claim to be entirely safe because the world has become so uncertain. For example, recently there was a horrific terrorist attack in Nice in which innocent people were killed on the streets. Whilst, it is true that Ahmadis are also targeted and threatened, nothing can stop us from pursuing our mission to spread the true teachings of Islam.”***

The Bolivian journalist, who had also come to the Jalsa the previous year, asked Huzoor how the Jamaat could compete with the Catholic Church in South America, given that the latter has huge influence and funding.

In response, Huzoor said:

***“Religion is a matter of the heart and so we never say that we are going to conquer countries through money, rather we say that we are going to win the hearts of people through love.”***

### **A breach of etiquette**

Sadly, one incident at the end of the interview made me very uncomfortable and upset.

Most graciously, Huzoor agreed to have his photo taken with the journalists individually but one of the journalists took this permission too far.

When it came to his turn, apart from standing for a normal photo, he very quickly took out a camera from his pocket and before anyone could stop him he took a 'selfie' photo with Huzoor.

It was not at all in keeping with the respect due to *Khalifatul Masih* and the surreptitious way in which he took the photo made me think that he knew what he was doing was wrong.

Huzoor himself enquired if the journalist had taken a selfie and when he said that he had, Huzoor responded by saying:

***"I do not like having selfies taken and prefer normal photos to be taken."***

I sent a message to the journalist later through the local *Jamaat Missionary* that we would request that he deletes the selfie and thankfully I was told that he agreed to this.

### **Meeting Canadian team**

That afternoon during the lunch break, and with Huzoor's permission, I held a meeting with Amir Sahib Canada, certain members of Canada's *National Amila* and Safwan Chaudhry, the head of Canada's media team.

During the meeting, we discussed media plans for Huzoor's forthcoming visit to Canada and the types of public events the *Jamaat* proposed to hold during the tour.



Later in the day, Safwan, who had recently gotten married, had a personal *Mulaqat* with his new wife.

Afterwards, he met me and said:

***“Abid bhai – you were already able to inform Huzoor about what we had discussed in our meeting this afternoon!”***

I was surprised by his comment and genuinely could not recall mentioning anything to Huzoor until Safwan repeated numerous details that Huzoor had told him we had discussed.

It was only then that I remembered that I had in fact mentioned a few points to Huzoor in passing during my office *Mulaqat* a couple of hours earlier.

I felt embarrassed thinking how I had already forgotten what I had told Huzoor just two hours earlier, yet when meeting Safwan, amidst a session of almost 100 family *Mulaqats*, Huzoor remembered perfectly every detail I had told him and repeated it to him!

### **High standards of security**

In my own *Mulaqat* with Huzoor that day, I mentioned a conversation I had had with *Sadr Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya USA* during Jalsa. He had told me an incident relating to Dr. Mirza Maghfoor Ahmad Sahib, who had recently been elected as Amir Jamaat USA.

Sadr Sahib told me that Amir Sahib had high standards of security at Jamaat events and hence he had not been pleased when a *Khadim* on duty had let him pass by a checkpoint without checking his I.D. badge during the USA Jalsa Salana inspection a couple of weeks earlier.

The *Khadim* had recognised Amir Sahib and felt it disrespectful to ask to see his badge, yet Amir Sahib desired for everyone, including himself, to be checked.

Hearing this, Huzoor seemed pleased and reminded me of the fact that in Denmark earlier in the year the *Lajna* security team had checked Major Mahmood Sahib, even though he was Huzoor's *Head of Security* and Huzoor had himself cited this as an example to *Sadr Lajna UK* in advance of the Jalsa.

### **An emotional comment**

During the Mulaqat, Huzoor mentioned an Ahmadi convert of European origin who had come to meet him a day before.

When she met Huzoor she was extremely upset and said she was very worried because her husband, who was a born-Ahmadi of Pakistani-origin, was becoming increasingly distant from the Jamaat.

She said her husband's bond with both the Jamaat and with Khilafat was not what it ought to be.

Huzoor said:

***“This is what it has come to today – that Ahmadi converts are worried and grieved about the Tarbiyyat of born Ahmadis.”***

Whilst, Huzoor was pleased at the strength of faith and loyalty to the Jamaat of the Ahmadi convert, it was clear that he was very pained and saddened by the fact that there were some born Ahmadis who were becoming increasingly distant from the Jamaat.

### **Huzoor’s love of African people**

I also mentioned to Huzoor that I personally thought that one of the ladies from Sierra Leone who had met Huzoor earlier in the day had spoken extremely well.

I was referring to the lady who had said that Huzoor’s Jalsa addresses had left her in tears.

In response, Huzoor said:

***“Have you noticed how well-spoken African people or African-origin people are in general? The standard of their spoken English is extremely high and their eloquence is masterful!”***

Of course, Huzoor was quite right but I was still taken aback by the beauty of Huzoor’s words. His love for the African people and his belief in them and their potential was there for all to see.

Sadly, there are still people in the world who look down upon African people but our Khalifa is the person who believes that Africans have the potential and qualities to lead the world.

### **Meeting with First Maori Ahmadi**

On the morning of 17 August 2016, Huzoor's meetings with different delegations and groups continued.

Huzoor's first meeting was with an Ahmadi convert who had travelled to the Jalsa from New Zealand. The convert held the distinction of being the first ever Maori to accept Ahmadiyyat and had been personally invited to the Jalsa by Huzoor.

In observance of the traditional Maori greeting, Huzoor met the convert with a traditional 'nose-to-nose' greeting.

It is a sign of Huzoor's impeccable humility that he did not only observe the 'nose-to-nose' greeting when meeting Maoris as a guest in New Zealand but also when meeting an Ahmadi Maori in his own home in London.

During the meeting, the new Ahmadi requested Huzoor's prayers that more people from amongst the Maori tribes came to accept Ahmadiyyat.

In response, Huzoor said:

***"Yes, I will pray. Now it is your duty to bring your fellow people towards Ahmadiyyat and so you should study the Holy Quran and read its Maori***

***and English translations, whilst also trying to learn to read the original Arabic text.”***

Huzoor continued by saying:

***“Those Maoris who accept Islam do not have to forgo all their customs or traditions. Whilst people who accept Islam from different parts of the world should join together as one united Muslim Ummah, at the same time they can continue to identify with their tribes and to follow those traditions that are not against the teachings of Islam. This is a message that you should give to your people.”***

The Maori Ahmadi said that he had tried to do *Tabligh* to other Maoris but his efforts had been met with hostility and anger.

Upon hearing this, Huzoor said:

***“If they are not willing to let you preach then you should speak not through words but through your conduct and morals. They should only see good in you and your conduct should be of the highest order. It will take a long time, not weeks or months, but years and so you must remain patient and steadfast.”***

Huzoor continued by saying:

***“It is your duty to sow the seed of Islam in your people and thereafter you must tend to that seed with love and care. Ultimately it will sprout***

***and emerge as a tender plant before growing into an upstanding tree and then one day Insha'Allah it will bear fruit."***

Having heard Huzoor's beautiful metaphor, the Maori Ahmadi said:

***"I am actually a good gardener!"***

Huzoor smiled and said:

***"Yes, I had a feeling you would be a good gardener and that is why I gave the example of the fruit tree!"***

Thereafter, Huzoor enquired from Majid sahib (*Additional Wakil-ul-Tabshir*) why the Maori Ahmadi had not been placed in first row in front of Huzoor during the *International Bai'at*.

Those in the first row are representatives of different parts of the world and have the great honour of placing their hands directly on the hand of Huzoor.

Majid Sahib responded by saying that the *Jamaat* received notification late of the arrival of the Ahmadi convert and this was the reason it had not been arranged for him to be at the front during the *Bai'at*.

Most affectionately, Huzoor addressed the Maori Ahmadi convert and said:

***"I wish you had been able to do Bai'at at my hand and also that you had done your special traditional nose greeting with many Ahmadis at Jalsa***

***so that everyone would have known that a Maori was here at the UK Jalsa!***

***Anyway, Insha'Allah next year when you come you will sit at the front during the Bai'at so that you can represent the Maoris and all of the traditional tribes of that region."***

### **Mexico delegation**

The next meeting Huzoor held was with a delegation of Ahmadis from Mexico.

With the *Grace of Allah*, over the past few years, a number of Mexican people have come to accept Ahmadiyyat, particularly in the city of Merida.

Some of the converts had travelled from Mexico to attend the Jalsa and to meet Huzoor for the first time.

One Mexican lady, who was an Ahmadi, narrated her experiences of Jalsa to Huzoor. She said:

***"The Jalsa was a source of peace for both my mind and my soul. All of my life I prayed to have such a fulfilling and blessed experience and now my lifelong prayer has been accepted."***

Another Mexican lady said she liked the fact that during *Salat* mothers prayed alongside their young children.

Hearing this, Huzoor said:

***“This is how we train our children in their religion so that from a very young age they realise that the purpose of our life is to worship our Creator and to fulfil the rights of His Creation. Furthermore, it is extremely important that parents pray for their children to be saved from harmful influences that can lead them away from Islam’s teachings.”***

An Ahmadi convert said she had learned a great deal about Islam during the Jalsa and for this reason was extremely grateful to have attended.

In response, Huzoor said:

***“Whatever you have learned here you should try to act upon and you should try to set an example for your countrymen and women to follow in Mexico and try to bring others towards Ahmadiyyat. This is the way that all of you can be helpers of the Promised Messiah (as).”***

A Mexican man, who recently converted to Ahmadiyyat spoke of his earnest desire that Islam would spread much further afield amongst the Mexican population. He asked Huzoor to send a message to the Mexican people which he and the other Ahmadis would try to spread.

In reply, Huzoor said:

***“Islam’s message and teachings are universal and for everyone. Its basic teaching is that mankind should fulfil the rights owed to God and***



***to one another. This is the key to peace and prosperity both in Mexico and in every nation of the world.”***

### **Guyana delegation**

The next meeting was with a small delegation from Guyana, including two journalists, who asked Huzoor about whether he thought the media was culpable for the lack of peace in the world.

In response, Huzoor said:

***“If the media wishes to act with justice and fairness then it should seek to understand Islam’s true teachings before it reports on it. In the past, I have said that when a few people join the terrorist group Daesh it is front-page news, yet when hundreds of thousands of people join the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community to spread peace in the world there is little coverage.”***

Huzoor continued by saying:

***“Just a day or two ago there was an attack in Germany by a non-Muslim and the media said the perpetrator was mentally unwell but if he had been a Muslim then they would have branded him a terrorist. This is not fair nor balanced journalism. Nonetheless, there are some journalists who do write fairly and who write that terrorism cannot be linked to Islam’s teachings.”***

At the end of the interview, Huzoor asked one of the journalists his age and how long he had been working in the media. He was actually very experienced and had been a journalist for many years.



Noticing that the male journalist had started to go grey, Huzoor said:

***“If it were not for your hair then you would look extremely young for your age.”***

Almost instantly and without pause for thought, the female journalist said:

***“Your Holiness, the same is true about you. If it was not for your grey hair and beard then you would also look very young!”***

Hearing this, I was a little shocked and thought it was somewhat inappropriate to comment on Huzoor’s appearance in this way, but Huzoor did not mind the comment and actually laughed a lot before saying:

***“Thank you for the compliment!”***

### **Interviews with African media**

The day before, after Huzoor had met various journalists in a group meeting, Huzoor mentioned to me that perhaps it would have been better if individual slots of a few minutes for each journalist had been arranged, rather than seating them all together.

Some of the journalists did not speak English and so their questions and answers had to be translated and it did seem that some of the questions posed by the South American journalists may have been lost in translation.

Anyway, later Wednesday morning, Huzoor was due to be interviewed by several African journalists who had travelled to the UK Jalsa.

Given Huzoor's comment about the previous day's interviews, I asked Huzoor if he would prefer for the African journalists to come in one by one, rather than as a group.

In reply, Huzoor said:

***"Let the African journalists come all together."***

Huzoor is extremely comfortable amongst African people and so whereas, with the other journalist group, Huzoor had said it would have been better to meet them individually, when the turn of the African journalists came, Huzoor was happy to meet them all together.

Huzoor gave almost an hour to very senior and high ranking journalists representing different African news agencies.



Upon being asked about how to promote peace and unity within the Muslim world, Huzoor said:

***“I have been saying for many years that we should bridge the divides and heal the conflicts that lie within the Muslim Ummah and seek to unify. However, different Muslim groups and leaders have their own vested interests which they prioritise over the greater good. Whilst they say positive things in public, in practice their conduct is to the contrary and this has led to frustrations amongst the peoples of their nations. That is why rebel and extremist groups have formed.”***

Huzoor continued by saying:

***“During our Jalsa I mentioned the fact that Saudi Arabia has spent billions of dollars in order to destroy Yemen during its war over the***

***past year. Had they spent just a fraction of that money to help the people of Yemen the results would have proved far more beneficial to Saudi."***

A journalist from Sierra Leone, who had accepted Ahmadiyyat last year, asked Huzoor what he would like from the Ahmadis in Africa.

In response, Huzoor said:

***"Not only from the Ahmadis in Africa, but from every Ahmadi in the world, I desire for them to follow the Quranic teaching of being merciful to one another."***

***Instead of thinking of one's own self, every Ahmadi should think of others. Instead of demanding their own rights, they should seek to discharge the rights of others."***

A journalist from the *Voice of Nigeria Radio* asked Huzoor how African leaders could reduce poverty and hunger in Africa.

In reply, Huzoor said:

***"Africa is an agro-based region and most people live in rural areas and so the African governments should encourage and incentivise farming and agriculture. The governments should help farmers to modernise their trade in light of today's technology. Governments should provide technical help and infrastructure and provide loans that are refunded upon harvest."***

Huzoor continued by saying:

***“Most importantly, the government, the farmers and labourers must all work with honesty, dedication and integrity and then you will see a big change for the better in the circumstances of the African people and potentially Africa can be the bread-basket of the world.”***

As the interview concluded and the journalists filed out, Huzoor called me and said that he had preferred the interview sessions that had taken place that day compared to the previous day. Huzoor said it had been easier to understand the questions of the journalists.

### **Malaysia delegation**

Huzoor’s next meeting was with a delegation of Ahmadis from Malaysia who had come to attend the Jalsa.

It proved to be a very emotional meeting. Many of the ladies could not hold back their tears as they sought Huzoor’s prayers for their families to remain forever attached to Ahmadiyyat and that their daughters found suitable *rishtay* (marriages).

Later, one Malaysian Ahmadi informed Huzoor that with the *Grace of Allah*, he had been blessed with 30 grandchildren.

Huzoor smiled and said:

***“So, is your plan to reach a century?”***

A young Khadim informed Huzoor that he had changed the date of his return ticket to take part in the group Mulaqat.

Huzoor asked him if he had to pay extra money to change the date of his flight.

In reply, the Khadim said:

***“Yes, Huzoor it cost the equivalent of an extra £200, however such cost is meaningless and does not matter at all. The opportunity to meet you and to partake in these spiritual blessings is priceless.”***

A Malaysian Ahmadi lady said she had noticed during the Jalsa that some Pakistani-origin Ahmadi ladies offered their *Salat* with their hair uncovered and she asked if this was appropriate.

In response, Huzoor said:

***“In principle, during Namaz ladies should cover their heads and so if they are not doing so it is their personal mistake. Sadly, in the West people’s priorities change and so there is a need for Tarbiyyat. Anyway, your Purdah is of a very good standard and so you should write to me and note down any weaknesses that you observed and I will forward your letter to Sadr Lajna UK.”***

Another *Lajna* member asked Huzoor if the use of nail polish negated one’s *Wudhu* (ablution).

In answer to this question, Huzoor said:

***“The nail polish seals itself to the nail and so there is no gap in between them and so when a lady washes her hands the fingers are also cleaned. Thus, in terms of Fiqah (Islamic jurisprudence) the use of nail polish does not affect one’s Wudhu.***

***There are some Maulvis (religious clerics) who make issues over such small and petty matters, whereas the main thing is that a person offers his prayers with sincerity and concentration.***

***If you personally are uncomfortable then you do not have to wear nail polish but you should not object to those women who do.”***

### **Reflections of Wakil-e-Ala**

That week, I also took the opportunity to meet with Chaudhry Hameed-ullah sahib from Rabwah, who has served the *Jamaat* as *Wakil-e-Ala* for many years. Chaudhry sahib had the honour of presiding the *Intikhab-e-Khilafat* (Election of Khilafat) in 2003 when Huzoor was elected as Khalifatul Masih.

I had met Chaudhry sahib on a few occasions in the past but did not know him at all well and I was a little nervous when I went to meet him.

He was staying in a *Jamaat* guest house opposite the Fazl Mosque and so I went to his room and knocked on his door. As he opened the door I could tell that he had been resting and so I felt embarrassed.



Anyway, I asked him if he would be able to spare a few minutes at some point so that I could learn about some of his experiences. Rather than tell me to come back on another day, Chaudhry Sahib told me to wait outside for one minute.

Perfectly punctual, a minute later, he opened the door now wearing his *achkan* coat and *topi* and took me to small lounge in the guest house where he was staying.

It was very interesting to talk to him and I learned a lot. He told me how during his life the Jamaat had continuously grown and spread further afield. He said he had seen how the revelation of the Promised Messiah (as) that *"Wherever you be, Allah will bring you together"* had been fulfilled on many occasions and that a great manifestation of this was the Jalsa Salana in which thousands of Ahmadis from all over the world came together to meet their Khalifa.

I mentioned to Chaudhry Sahib how Huzoor was meeting almost 100 families every day in *Mulaqat* and asked him whether he thought this was something that could or would continue forever.

In response, Chaudhry Sahib said:

***"With the passage of time, for practical reasons, perhaps some restrictions will need to be placed as the Jamaat continues to grow. This is one of the blessings of the Jalsa Salana, whereby thousands of Ahmadis can see their Khalifa and have visual contact with him, whilst***

***Khalifatul Masih can see them. This is very important because when Khalifa-Waqt sees someone, even if he does not personally meet him, he desires the best for them and prays for them.***

***So, if in future it is not possible for the Khalifa to personally meet all members of the Jamaat, Ahmadis will still Insha'Allah be able to see their Khalifa and vice versa."***

### **Blessings of the era**

Speaking about the current era in which we are living, Chaudhry Sahib said:

***"The blessings of this era of Khilafat-e-Khamsa are manifold and incalculable. To give just one example, during this period a very large number of Mosques have been opened all over the world.***

***Here in England you have many more Mosques than before, similarly Mosques have been inaugurated in Europe, North America, Asia and many other countries.***

***Huzoor has emphasised the importance of opening Mosques in obedience to the command of the Promised Messiah (as) that if you wish for Islam to spread in a certain place then build a Mosque there."***

Chaudhry Sahib continued:

***"Furthermore, in accordance with the prophecies of the Promised Messiah (as), for many years Huzoor has foreseen that the***

***circumstances of the world at large have been increasingly uncertain and so he has warned humanity repeatedly about the risk of a Third World War.***

***He has warned that such a war could well be fought with nuclear weapons and prove catastrophic. Hence, to bring about peace and to save humanity, Huzoor has written to world leaders and delivered many lectures in all parts of the world about the importance of peace and justice.”***

I mentioned to Chaudhry Sahib that in the past there had been some politicians who initially thought that Huzoor’s views were “*overly-pessimistic*” but later admitted that Huzoor’s warnings were accurate and filled with wisdom.

Hearing this, Chaudhry Sahib said:

***“The Promised Messiah (as) himself and all of his Khulafa are not pessimists but rather are actually optimists because if they were unduly pessimistic it would negatively impact and slow down the progress of our Jamaat.”***

### **An emotional narration**

I asked Chaudhry Sahib about the period following the 28 May attacks when 86 Ahmadis were martyred by terrorists at two of our Mosques in Lahore.

He told how that period was extremely emotional for the entire Jamaat. Chaudhry Sahib said:

***“Under Huzoor’s instruction, delegations of the Jamaat from Rabwah went to the houses of every martyr and we consoled them, listened to them and tried to help them and solve any problems or worries they had. However, most of all the consolation they received was from Khalifatul Masih himself, as Huzoor personally called every single family affected.”***

Chaudhry Sahib continued:

***“The very next Friday after the Lahore attacks, Ahmadi mothers, whose husbands had been martyred, told their children to go to the Mosque for Jumma and sit in the exact spot where their fathers would sit.”***

As Chaudhry Sahib reminded me of the spirit of those Ahmadi mothers, who having lost their husbands, displayed truly outstanding levels of faith and patience by sending their sons back to the Mosque, I became very emotional.

It reinforced to me the fact that people like me were living such easy lives here in the comfort of the *Western* world.

How would we react if faced with the same circumstances? Would we be ready to send our sons back to the Mosques the very next week?

Would we be ready to merely repeat the words “*Surely, to Allah we belong and to Him shall we return*” and move forward with patience?

### **A faith inspiring dream**

Chaudhry Sahib then narrated a very faith-inspiring dream that he had seen in 1998, in which he saw himself standing in a garden alongside a young boy who he presumed to be twelve or thirteen years old.

The garden was near another building in which he felt that the Promised Messiah (as) was present.

Narrating the next part of the dream, Chaudhry Sahib said:

***“The young boy came to me and said that the Promised Messiah (as) has said ‘Bring my coat, which is hung on the fifth tree’. Hearing this instruction, I counted the trees until I reached the fifth tree and there I saw a camel-coloured coat hung as though it had recently been pressed. I took the coat down and handed it to the boy who took it with him.”***

Chaudhry Sahib continued:

***“Five years later, I conducted the election of the Fifth Khilafat and the coat that Sahibzada Mirza Masroor Ahmad wore during the election was of a camel colour, exactly matching the one I had seen in my dream. In that coat, he was elected as the Fifth Khalifa of the Promised Messiah (as).***

***Prior to then I had sought to interpret my dream in many ways but it was only following the election that I realised that the dream had referred to the election of Huzoor as Khalifatul Masih V (aba)."***

It had been a pleasure for me to spend some time with Chaudhry Sahib. From a distance, he comes across as very stern but when I actually spoke to him, he was friendly and very considerate.

### **Russia, Kyrgyzstan and Tatarstan delegations**

On 17 August 2015, Huzoor held a meeting with a delegation from Russia, Kyrgyzstan and Tatarstan.

One guest, a Professor at a Russian University, spoke of how impressed she had been by the fact that Ahmadi Muslims promoted education so much.

However, she also expressed her regret that the Jamaat was not yet well-known in Russia.

Hearing this, Huzoor said:

***"I hope that now you have knowledge of our Jamaat, at least you will seek to introduce our Jamaat to other people within your society."***

The Professor replied by saying:

***"Yes certainly – I intend to write an academic article about the Jamaat and what I have seen here at the Jalsa."***

One of the guests presented Huzoor with a gift of a bar of Russian chocolate.

Graciously, Huzoor accepted the gift and said:

***“I like the taste of this Russian chocolate and eat it quite often.”***

Upon seeing this, one of the other guests, approached Huzoor and said:

***“Your Holiness, please forgive me as I did not bring any gift.”***

In reply to this, Huzoor said:

***“Please do not worry at all and there is no need to apologise. I do not expect or desire anything – just the fact that you have come all this way is a great gift for me.”***

### **Ghana delegation**

Following on from the Russia meeting, was a meeting with a delegation of Ahmadi from Ghana. Throughout the meeting, Huzoor smiled and his sense of familiarity and affection for the Ghanaians was very apparent.

For example, when one Ahmadi sought to introduce himself, Huzoor stopped him and said:

***“I know very well who you are! I even knew you many years ago, when you studied in medical college!”***

The Ahmadi seemed astonished and overwhelmed with happiness at Huzoor's recognition.

Huzoor's knowledge of Ghana was also very apparent during the meeting.

For example, when one Ahmadi mentioned that he was a contractor, Huzoor said:

***"If you are a contractor then you must be from the Upper West Region as most contractors are from there."***

The Ahmadi smiled and said:

***"Yes, Huzoor you are right! I am from Upper West!"***

It is quite natural for Ahmadis to become nervous in Huzoor's presence. Thus, one Ahmadi man said:

***"Huzoor please pray for my wife as she is 10months pregnant."***

In reply, Huzoor smiled and said:

***"I do not think she can be 10months pregnant!"***

The Ahmadi said in response:

***"Yes, Huzoor you are right! She is actually 7 months pregnant!"***



An African Ahmadi told Huzoor that he had worked in Ghana's *langhar-khana* (kitchen) for over 25 years.

However, he also informed Huzoor that at Ghana's Jalsa Salana, the *langhar* did not provide food for all attendees and rather regional cooks were appointed.

The Ahmadi said he felt very embarrassed having seen how in UK the *langhar* was providing food for all participants throughout.

Upon hearing this, Huzoor said:

***"You should have gone and seen the roti-plant at Hadeeqatul Mahdi as on the first day alone 150,000 rotis were prepared. Anyway, in Ghana I believe that if the Jamaat fulfils its potential and works to capacity it also has the ability to centrally feed all of the guests of Jalsa Salana."***

### **A never-ending schedule**

As the meeting ended and Huzoor returned to his office to meet more delegations, I felt tired and drained from having sat through so many meetings during the past few days. I had just been an observer and felt this way.

On the other hand, Huzoor continued to appear fresh and alert despite having answered question after question in all of the meetings.

Still there were many more events ahead in the coming days, including a meeting with Missionaries and National Presidents from all over the world, as well as a meeting with the Ashanti King of Ghana and much more.

Hence, whilst I thought my personal account of the UK Jalsa Salana 2016 would be concluded in three parts, a fourth and final part will Insha'Allah follow.

**End**

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