

**HUZOOR'S TOUR OF SCANDINAVIA**

**MAY 2016**

**PART 2**

**A Personal Account**

***By Abid Khan***

## **Arrival at Mahmood Mosque in Malmo**

On 10 May 2016, Huzoor arrived in Sweden after an extremely blessed 6-day visit to Denmark. Huzoor was escorted directly to the newly built, and extremely beautiful, Mahmood Mosque in Malmo.



I was taken aback by both the beauty and the size of the Mosque and immediately thought of how the Sweden *Jamaat*, relatively small in number, had been able to build such an attractive and large Mosque.

Upon arrival, Huzoor was greeted by hundreds of Ahmadi men, women and children.

Witnessing this scene, I recalled how sad the Ahmadis of Denmark had been just an hour earlier when Huzoor had departed from their country and contrasted it to the look of unbridled joy and delight on the faces of the Ahmadis of Sweden.

After a few moments, Huzoor was escorted to his residence, which was a small flat built within the Mosque premises.



The rest of us took the opportunity to look inside the Mosque and we were all amazed by its beauty and vastness. One unique feature was the *Mehrab*, which was larger than any *Mehrab* I had ever seen before.

### **Local Jamaat working until the last minute**

Prior to our arrival, the plan was for all the *Qafila* members to stay on site, however unfortunately the guest accommodation was not completed in time. Thus, whilst Huzoor and his security stayed at the Mosque, the rest of us stayed at a nearby hotel. There was no alternative to this of course, but I felt sad not to be staying at the same location as Huzoor.

The very fact that the Mosque was ready was a miracle in itself. Amir sahib Sweden told me how two days earlier the sewerage system at the Mosque had broken down and so there was no water supply.

For two days, the local Ahmadis worked non-stop along with a local company to try and fix the issue. Much of the ground was dug up so that the drains could be tended to.

Other local Ahmadis also told me that the site seemed like a ‘disaster zone’ just hours before and how they thought that it would never be ready in time.

Amir sahib said the Ahmadis worked all night and prayed together and gave collective *Sadqa* in the hope that a miracle could occur and Allah answered their prayers so that at 11am that day – just a few hours before – the sewerage system was fixed and the water supply restored.

Thereafter, in a matter of hours the earth that had been dug up was pushed back into the ground and covered with rolls of real grass turf.

*Masha’Allah* they did a very good job, as it was not possible to detect that there had been such chaos just hours before!

The local Ahmadis and Amir sahib himself were extremely emotional about this and considered the events of the past day or two to be a miracle and a sign of Allah’s Help at their time of need.

Later that evening, Huzoor did a full inspection of the Mosque complex. Apart from the Mosque itself, Huzoor visited the Missionary’s residence, the main hall and various other parts of the complex before leading the *Maghreb* and *Isha* prayers.

### **A series of interviews**

The next morning, on 11 May 2016, the local *Jamaat* had arranged four media interviews with Huzoor.

Thus, for almost two hours non-stop, Huzoor was interviewed in turn by *Swedish National TV*, the *Skanska Dagbladet* newspaper, the *Sydsvenskan* newspaper and *Swedish National Radio*.

Ultimately, all of these media outlets published reports or broadcast reports based on their interviews and so Huzoor's message of peace was spread across Sweden, *Alhamdolillah*.

In one interview, Huzoor was asked about the integration of foreigners to a country.

In response, Huzoor said:

***“In my view integration is to love your country and to be loyal to it. It is to be proud of your nation, to honour it, to work towards its success, to be law abiding and to respect your government. It is not to ask peaceful and law abiding people to forget those beliefs, traditions and customs that they value and which do not harm the peace and law and order of their nation.”***

Often you can anticipate some of the questions a journalist will ask, based on which media outlet they are representing and also the issues of the time.

However, the journalist then asked one question which I could never have anticipated and which frustrated me as a waste of Huzoor's precious time.

The question she asked was:

***"Your Holiness, the Eurovision Song Contest takes place in Stockholm soon and so will you be following it?"***

Huzoor also seemed surprised and asked her to repeat the question.

Upon being told about the *Eurovision* contest, Huzoor simply replied:

***"I have no interest in such things."***

I was genuinely disappointed that a respected journalist, from a serious media organisation, had not realised that a worldwide religious and spiritual leader would not have any interest in something so trivial.

In another interview that morning, Huzoor was asked his feelings upon seeing the *Mahmood Mosque* for the first time.

Huzoor responded very beautifully by saying:

***"Whenever I see a new Mosque I become emotional thinking that we have been granted another place to join together to worship and bow down before Allah the Almighty."***

As in Denmark, Huzoor was again asked about the recent debate in Sweden regarding shaking hands being a necessary component of integration.



In response, Huzoor said:

***“Just to shake hands is not a sign of loyalty to a country or integration. Some Christians do not drink alcohol – would you say they are not integrating in your society because they do not drink? Similarly, there are still some Jewish women who also do not like to shake the hands of men. You would not criticise them because then you would be accused of anti-Semitism!”***

During one of the interviews, Huzoor was also asked his views about homosexuality.

Huzoor explained that it was not only the *Quran* that taught that homosexuality was wrong but also the *Bible* did.

Huzoor said Muslims should never hold any ill-will towards homosexual people and to persecute, attack or discriminate against them was completely wrong and contrary to Islam's teachings. Regardless, he said that a person should be able to hold peacefully held religious beliefs.

Though, Huzoor's answer was extremely balanced and a reflection of his religious beliefs, it was not universally welcomed by all segments of the Swedish population and this would be manifest later in the tour.

After the conclusion of the third interview, Huzoor thought that the interviews had concluded as he had only been informed of three interviews. However, the local *Jamaat* then introduced a representative of Sweden's *National Radio* who then interviewed Huzoor for a further 20minutes.

The first question asked by the journalist was one she asked in all interviews – “*Who are you?*” and in reply Huzoor said:

***“I am a humble person of Allah the Almighty who has been elected as the Fifth Khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community to continue the mission of our Founder to spread the true and peaceful teachings of Islam.”***

### **Huzoor's patience**

The marathon session of interviews concluded after 1hour and 45minutes. It had been extremely hot in the office and so after some time I found myself sweating and feeling a little light headed.

I thought if I am feeling like this, it must be much worse for Huzoor as he is having to concentrate at all times and answer questions without pause or break and so as soon as the third interview concluded I approached Huzoor's table and poured him a glass of water and he took a few sips.

Despite the heat and the fact that the *Jamaat* had scheduled four interviews back to back, Huzoor did not express any sense of irritation or tiredness, whilst the rest of us were flagging by the end.

For example, Majid sahib told me that after an hour he became tired and lost concentration every few minutes due to the heat in the room.

It was only when the final interview concluded that Huzoor looked at Amir sahib and said:

***"After talking for so long I now have a headache."***

Afterwards, Majid sahib and I advised the local *Jamaat* that it would have been better to hold two interviews that morning and another two on a different day.

If I had known the programme a little earlier I would have advised the local *Jamaat* about this.

I later mentioned to Huzoor that we had told them that it would have been better to split the interviews into two separate sessions and Huzoor agreed.

### **A dedicated staff**

One of the things I observed on this tour, and indeed on many previous tours, is the simplicity of Huzoor's security staff.

In particular, I have seen this with the older members of Huzoor's security staff. Perhaps, that is not surprising given that they have had the honour to serve Khalifatul Masih for many years and to be trained by *Khalifa-Waqt*.

On this tour, I also saw various examples of such simplicity. For example, in Malmo for more than 24 hours there was no hot water connection to the building in which the security staff were residing.

However, they did not complain and in fact a few of them said to me that:

***“We are here for duty so it does not matter whether there is hot water or not”.***

On that first night in Malmo, I saw Nasir Saeed sahib, who is now quite elderly, having served since the time of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih III (rh) and he looked quite unwell. He was suffering with a fever and was sweating a great deal. Given his age and the fact that he has had health problems in the past I was worried for his health.

Anyway, just 15 minutes later when I went to sit in the Mosque before *Namaz* I saw Nasir sahib present and doing security duty as normal. He still looked very unwell but considered his duty of greater importance than his health.

On the other side, if Huzoor ever finds out that any of his staff members are unwell he always advises them to rest and prescribes medicines for them.

Also in Malmo, one day I saw a man with a long frame lying down in the Mosque. I went over to check that the person was ok and when I reached him I saw it was Sakhawat Bajwa sahib taking a short nap.

Once again there was no formality, but wherever he could find a place to rest for a few minutes he took it so that he could be ready for duty again.

After seeing the examples of these people, who were my elders, I hoped and prayed that I could learn from their simplicity and humility.

### **A few precious moments**

Later that day, Huzoor called me to his office for a few minutes. Very kindly, Huzoor asked me how my two children, Mahid and Moshahid, were and specifically how Mahid was progressing at nursery. It was extremely kind of Huzoor to enquire about such things even during a tour where he was so busy.

Huzoor also finds time to keep an eye on his home and what is happening in London. Hence, Huzoor mentioned how his children and grandchildren were and also that it had been raining in London that day.

Thereafter, Huzoor said that during his visit to Denmark he did not visit anywhere apart from the Mosque or the hotel where the reception took place.

I responded by saying I was not sure if there was much to see in Denmark as it was such a small country.

Huzoor corrected me by saying that there were historical and cultural places of interest in Denmark, particularly linked to the time of the Vikings.

However, Huzoor also said it did not matter that he had not been anywhere as his purpose was to meet the local Ahmadis.

I mentioned how in Denmark, I had met an Ahmadi who had said that meeting Huzoor had changed his life for the better and now he intended to write to Huzoor regularly to maintain his contact with Khalifatul Masih.

Immediately, Huzoor said:

***“Send him the postal address and fax number so that he knows where to write to me.”***

Huzoor then spoke for a few minutes about the reception in Copenhagen the evening before. Huzoor told me that he spoke a little slower than normal for the benefit of the Danish people because English was not their first language.

He said that normally his address would have taken him 26 or 27 minutes but due to his slower speed it took him around 32 minutes on this occasion.

Speaking about the way to address people, very beautifully Huzoor said:

***“We should always speak to people with love, even if you ever have to instruct someone or guide someone then you should do it with love. This is what the Quran teaches.”***

Huzoor said that this was the reason why people often said to him that his words were strong but were delivered in a very soft and loving way.

Upon hearing this, I said that I agreed with this analysis entirely because Huzoor was able to convey forthright sentiments in a way that did not cause offence or hurt.

I also mentioned Huzoor’s interviews earlier in the day and how each journalist had focused on the ‘handshake’ issue and how they seemed to class this as a ‘gender inequality’ issue of the highest order and yet were ignoring real issues of gender inequality that were prevalent – for example the fact that women were paid less for doing the same job in Sweden and in many other countries.

In response, Huzoor said:

***“Yes it is true. That is why I told them to focus on the bigger issues in the world. In fact, when I told one of the journalists that they should focus on world hunger and poverty rather than trivial things he seemed to go pale!”***

Huzoor asked me where I was staying and so I mentioned that we were staying at a nearby hotel. He asked how far it was and if we had made it to *Fajr* that morning.

I informed that it was around 10-15 minutes away and that thankfully we had made it to *Fajr* as we had left the hotel at 3.50am, which gave us enough time to reach the Mosque.

I also mentioned how Sweden's Amir sahib and Kashif Virk sahib, a young *Missionary*, had mentioned to me that there was another journalist who wished to meet Huzoor on Friday.

Immediately, Huzoor said it was ok and that the journalist could come after *Jumma* to meet and interview him.

Thereafter, Huzoor said it was time for *Namaz* and so he stood up and walked across from his office directly to the Mosque, as I followed a few steps behind.

### **Emotions of Ahmadis**

The next morning, Huzoor met various Ahmadis in *Mulaqat*. During that time, I was able to speak to some of the people after they had met Huzoor.

One person I met was *Nasi Mustafa Omer sahiba*, who was an Iraqi Kurd. She had converted to Ahmadiyyat, along with her husband *Farhad Ali* some years previously and they had both just met Huzoor for the first time.

Nasi sahiba said:

***“When I entered Huzoor’s office I felt calm but as soon as I saw Huzoor my state changed completely. Instantly, I felt emotional and overcome and felt a love and peace that I have never felt before.”***

Nasi sahiba continued:

***“My husband constantly has MTA on in our home and sometimes I would say to him that he should put a different channel on as well. However, after meeting Huzoor I want to be near him all the time and so I understand why my husband never changed the channel all these years.”***

I then spoke with her husband, *Farhad Ali*, who told me that he had done *Bai’at* 19 years previously. As we spoke, he became very emotional and recalled various dreams that he had seen both before and since accepting Ahmadiyyat.

In one dream he had seen that he was standing inside a huge football stadium and some very aggressive and hateful people started stoning him until suddenly he saw Huzoor who grasped his hand and took him to safety.

Farhad sahib said:

***“My experiences today were the result of years of weeping before my Lord begging him to give me the opportunity to meet my beloved. I am so fortunate to have found Ahmadiyyat because through Ahmadiyyat I have***

***found righteousness, honesty and love and all three of these things I saw today in Khalifatul Masih with my own eyes.”***

He told me that since he became Ahmadi he had been persecuted but such opposition had always increased his faith rather than decreased it. He said he always tried to respond to the hatred he faced with love because this was what the Promised Messiah (as) taught.

Farhad sahib said:

***“Sometimes the opponents become confused because when they persecute me I respond by giving them a hug and physically embracing them. There was only one time I became angry but even then within a minute I controlled my anger and apologised to them for raising my voice.”***

I also met an Ahmadi lady, *Samine Durree* who told me about the impact MTA had had on her life.

Samine sahiba said:

***“Since childhood I have always had a firm belief that Allah answers our prayers and I have seen this in my own life as well. In fact, the turning point in my life was when I was 12, which was when my parents installed MTA in our home. Ever since that day I saw and listened to the words of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (rh) and Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba) and I came to learn the true value of prayer through them.”***

### **An emotional narration**

I then met a young Ahmadi lady who had come out of her *Mulaqat* in tears, which she told me was due to the emotion of having met Huzoor. She then told me about some personal difficulties she had faced.

She told me how some years previously her parents had married her to a cousin from Pakistan, however after marriage she realised that her husband was an Ahmadi in '*name only*' and that in reality did not know any of the teachings of Ahmadiyyat.

Speaking about this very tough period in her life, she said:

***"I could simply not bear to live in a house where Ahmadiyyat, the true Islam, was not practiced and so me and my husband soon divorced."***

Ever since her divorce she had struggled to re-marry because whenever her family discussed marriage the other side would indicate that they did not want their sons to marry a divorced girl – even where their own sons had also been divorced.

I was quite horrified to hear this and thought how unfair and ignorant this seemed and how such families were not acting upon Islam's true teachings in this regard.

She said the other issue she faced was that some young Ahmadi men had converted non-Ahmadis or non-Muslim girls and then married them.

Commenting on this practice, with tears in her eyes, she said:

***“Who then will be left to marry us born-Ahmadi girls?”***

I felt a great deal of sympathy and was reminded how Huzoor had mentioned this very issue in a *Friday Sermon* some months ago, wherein increasingly some Ahmadi men were marrying converts.

Huzoor had said that this meant that some born-Ahmadi girls were struggling to get married and so such Ahmadi men should do *Tabligh* to other men so that there would be some male converts who could marry Ahmadi girls and redress the imbalance.

As the girl told me her story, she became increasingly emotional. She said:

***“The truth is that I can live with never getting re-married because at least I will be free to live my life as an Ahmadi lady for the rest of my life and no one will be able to restrict me from practising my faith. I am able to teach Nasirat and serve the Jamaat and ultimately that is even more important to me than having a family life and children of my own.”***

As I heard her words, I felt a great deal of sympathy, as anyone would. I felt shocked that some Ahmadi girls had to live through such difficulties and also very impressed by the strength of her faith.

I did not really know how to react and so I simply said that *Insha’Allah* with Huzoor’s prayers Allah would surely help her and grant her patience.

Afterwards, I thought about how this one incident had made me feel extremely sad and upset and then thought of how Huzoor, who loves Ahmadis more than anyone else, heard of many such cases. How much pain and regret he must feel upon seeing Ahmadi Muslims suffering in this way.

### **Majid sahib's late lunch**

That afternoon, I was not particularly hungry and so I resolved to skip lunch and returned to the office where Majid sahib, Mubarak sahib and me had been working.

Majid sahib mentioned how he was feeling particularly hungry and so as soon as *Namaz* ended he went straight for lunch. However, about fifteen minutes later Majid sahib returned and I noticed that he seemed a little irritated and agitated.

I asked him how lunch had been to which Majid sahib replied:

***"I have not been for lunch yet, as when I went out of the Mosque my shoes were gone - someone has taken them from the shoe area!"***

Upon hearing this, I felt really sorry for him because he had been extra hungry and yet someone, I am sure quite innocently, had taken his shoes from amongst the hundreds of pairs placed outside the Mosque.

I asked if we should go again and look for them but Majid sahib said there was no point as he had checked thoroughly. He said he would check again in

the evening after *Maghreb* and *Isha* as perhaps the person who had taken them would return them.

One of our Missionaries had the same shoe size as Majid sahib and so he offered him his shoes. Thus, Majid sahib was finally able to go for lunch.

Incidentally, he never did find his shoes but ordered some new ones from a nearby shop later in the day.

Thereafter, he kept a closer eye on his shoes for the rest of the tour and I too certainly paid more attention to putting my shoes in a place where hopefully they would remain safe!

### **Duty through the night**

In Malmo, *Fajr* was offered at 4.05am and so we would come to the Mosque from our hotel at around 3.55am.

In the mornings it used to be bitterly cold and yet not only were there Khuddam on duty but also a number of young Lajna members used to be standing outside doing security duty and checking of the Lajna.

I remember thinking how it is only in our *Jamaat* where young people consider sacrificing their sleep and comfort for the sake of the *Jamaat* to be such an honour and a privilege.

### **Story of a convert**

In Sweden, I got to know a Swedish Ahmadi convert called *Sarmad Ahmad Hannes Huber* (32) very well. Throughout the tour he was part of Sweden Khuddam's *Hifazat Khas* (security) team.

He was very friendly and extremely passionate about the *Jamaat* and in this way reminded me of my friend Jonathon Butterworth, an English Ahmadi convert in London.

I asked Sarmad how he had become Ahmadi and he told me that some years ago he had happened to read the *Quran* out of interest and that it had immediately struck him as the truth.

Sarmad said:

***“After reading just the first verses of Sura-al-Baqarah I knew that Islam was the religion for me and that whatever I had been searching for throughout my life I had now found. Reading the Quran, I felt as though Allah the Almighty was talking directly to me.”***

He said that after accepting Islam, he chose not to meet Muslims on purpose because he still held a prejudice against Muslims and considered them to be the extremists he had seen on the news.

However, after some months he began to crave some good company from amongst Muslims so he could learn more about Islam.

Telling me about this, Sarmad said:

***“One night I put my head to the ground and submitted before Allah and begged him to give me the company of some good Muslims. Exactly, three months later I was walking in a market in Iceland, where I was studying, and I saw an elderly married couple who both looked religious and pious to me.***

***I approached them and it turned out it was the Ahmadi Missionary-in-charge for Iceland and his wife. I knew immediately that they were good people and so I just said to them ‘Please teach me how to be a good Muslim’”.***

I was quite gripped as I listened as his story unfolded. He told me that whilst he was extremely impressed by the conduct of all Ahmadis he met, at the same time on *YouTube* he saw some videos in which other Muslims had cursed the Promised Messiah (as) and branded him (*God forbid*) to be a liar. He became confused and worried if he had taken the wrong path.

Sarmad then told me about the moment that removed all his doubts and confirmed to him the truth of Ahmadiyyat to him. He said:

***“When in 2010 I heard about the May 28 incident in Lahore and how so many Ahmadis had been killed I felt extremely sad, but then when I listened to Huzoor’s Friday Sermon afterwards I was quite astonished. Very clearly, Huzoor said that we will never respond with violence and only with prayers. When I heard this I thought that this is the ultimate***

***standard of faith in Allah that is being shown by the Khalifa and by all Ahmadis. These are the people who truly put their trust in Allah alone.”***

Six years later, Sarmad said he had no regrets about accepting Ahmadiyyat and was convinced that he had found the truth and felt peace in his heart. He also informed that he was now happily married and had a young infant child.

### **Inauguration of Mahmood Mosque**

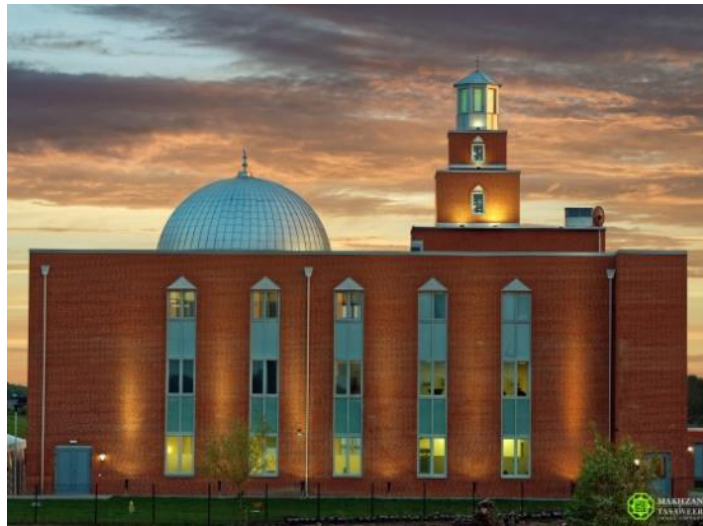
On 13 May 2016, Huzoor inaugurated the Mahmood Mosque in Malmo with his *Friday Sermon*, and so after many years, the day the local *Jamaat* had been waiting for had finally arrived.



At 2pm, Huzoor came down from his residence and unveiled a plaque to commemorate the opening of the Mosque and led a silent prayer.

Thereafter, Huzoor proceeded to the Mosque and delivered his *Friday Sermon*.

During the sermon, Huzoor spoke about the great financial sacrifices made by the members of the Sweden *Jamaat* in order to construct the Mosque. He mentioned how Ahmadi men, women and children had all taken part in this effort and he recounted some particular incidents of their sacrifices.



For example, one man sold his car in order to raise money for the Mosque, ladies sold their personal jewellery and many children donated their pocket money.

It was extremely faith inspiring to hear how so few people had joined together in sacrifice for the sake of building the Mosque.

Speaking about the efforts of the young children in particular, Huzoor said:

***“Our young Ahmadi children realise from a very young age that whosoever partakes in the building of a Mosque is a person who builds a home for themselves in Paradise.”***

Huzoor said it was not just enough to build a Mosque and that now the local Ahmadis had to endeavour to fill it with worshippers of Allah the Almighty.

Huzoor said:

***“The true beauty and splendor of a Mosque lies not in the physical building itself, rather it is exhibited through the spiritual purity of the hearts and conduct of those who enter it.”***

### **Interview with 24Malmo**

Following the conclusion of *Jumma*, Huzoor held an interview with Sweden’s 24Malmo news agency.



Upon meeting Huzoor, the journalist said that English was not his first language and so he apologised in advance in case he was not clear.

Huzoor smiled and said:

***“Do not worry, English is not my first language either.”***

The journalist asked Huzoor about whether the *Jamaat* would be able to fill such a huge Mosque. In response, Huzoor said:

***“If open hearted people like you join us then yes we will fill it!”***

Huzoor was also asked about how *Khalifatul Masih* was elected, to which he responded by saying:

***“We have an electoral college made up of central office bearers, National Presidents of our Community, Missionaries and certain others who convene together upon the demise of a Khalifa. The election is recorded in-camera (privately) and everyone has one vote. No person is permitted to propose his own name and nor is anyone permitted to canvass or campaign for this position.”***

The journalist said that Huzoor had been ‘prolific’ in his campaign against radicalisation and extremism and asked if Huzoor had focused more upon this issue than the *Khulafa* (Caliphs) who preceded him.

Huzoor responded by saying:

***“All of our previous Caliphs had the same message that I am propagating. For example, it was our Third Caliph who coined our slogan of ‘Love for All, Hatred for None’. However, due to the prevailing situation in the***

*world today I have had to focus a great deal on this issue. If, and when, peace emerges in the world then perhaps I will place greater emphasis on other issues.”*

### **Huzoor’s response to question about refugee crisis**

Upon being asked his views about the refugee crisis that had resulted from the wars in Syria and Iraq, Huzoor cited the example of Afghanistan in the 1980s. Huzoor said that due to warfare, millions of Afghan refugees crossed the border into Pakistan where they were kept in separate refugee camps.

Other nations gave Pakistan financial aid, necessary infrastructure and other means of assistance so they could cope with the sudden huge influx of refugees. Once their home country had stabilised the majority of refugees were sent back to Afghanistan.

Huzoor said this model had proved relatively successful and was something that could be replicated now, whereby nearby countries, supported by other nations, could host many of the Syrian and Iraqi refugees in this way.

This would lessen the chance of resentment and fear of immigrants developing in Europe and other Western nations and would also mean that terrorists, who might pose as refugees, would not find passage to the *West*.

By the time the interview had concluded it was 4.15pm and so by the time Huzoor had his lunch it was probably at least 4.30pm. It was another example of how Huzoor never worries about his own comfort but seeks only

opportunities to spread Islam's true teachings wherever and whenever he can.

### **Atfal class**

Later that day, Huzoor held a class with Sweden's *Atfal*. During the class, a number of children had the opportunity to ask Huzoor questions.

One boy asked if he should study French, German or Spanish at school. Huzoor responded by saying the *Jamaat* already had many French and German speakers and so he should pursue learning Spanish.

In every matter, Huzoor always looks to the benefits of the *Jamaat*. In a worldly context, people in Europe are often encouraged to learn French and German, as they are useful in business and politics, however *Khalifa-Waqt* has a completely different perspective. His view is shaped solely in terms of spreading the true teachings of Islam as far as possible.

### **Question about handshake issue**

One of the *Atfal* asked Huzoor about the 'handshake' issue in Sweden and in response, Huzoor told of an incident in Denmark a few days before.

Huzoor said that a female Danish politician had extended her hand towards him but he had not shaken her hand.

I immediately recalled the incident Huzoor had mentioned, which took place, before the reception in Copenhagen.

When the female politician extended her hand, Huzoor bowed his head slightly in a respectful manner and apologised indicating that he did not shake hands in this way.

Later, another female MP who had been present informed us that her colleague was upset that Huzoor had not shaken her hands. However, she herself explained to colleague that there were many forms of conferring respect and thus she had no cause to be offended. Hence, it was the case that one female Danish MP defended Islamic teachings to another.

Thus, Huzoor reminded the children that they should have the courage of their convictions and remember that within each Islamic commandment there was great wisdom.

Of course, we never desire for Huzoor to be put in any awkward or potentially embarrassing situation and the incident that occurred in Copenhagen could have been avoided if the local *Jamaat* had politely informed their guest in advance about this. However, on that occasion they forgot to do so.

### **Huzoor's conviction in Islam**

When the class concluded, the boys quickly left the Mosque because Huzoor was then to hold a Nasirat class.

As the boys filed out, I approached Huzoor and poured him some water and as I did so Huzoor mentioned a newspaper report published earlier that day based on one of the interviews he had conducted two days before.

The newspaper had published Huzoor's comments that both the Quran and the Bible had spoken against homosexuality and subsequently, one or two politicians had contacted the *Jamaat* to say they were '*disappointed*' by these remarks.

Referring to this, Huzoor said it did not matter and that the *Jamaat* did not require the support of any person and that we should never hide what our religion has taught us.

As ever, Huzoor was completely firm in his conviction in the truth and wisdom of Islamic teachings.

### **A chaotic scene**

On 14 May 2016, the Sweden *Jamaat* hosted a special reception to mark the opening of the Mahmood Mosque.

The plan had been for the reception to take place in a large multi-purpose hall constructed on the Mosque complex, however unfortunately the local authorities had not yet signed off the hall as ready for use. Thus the *Jamaat* had to think of an alternative.

It was not possible to hold the reception off-site because invitations had gone out long ago. I asked Amir sahib if it was possible to erect a marquee on the site and hold the reception there but he said that the wind was so strong that it was not practical. Thus, eventually the *Jamaat* proposed holding the reception in the Mosque itself.

Graciously, Huzoor gave permission for this and so on the morning of the reception the local Ahmadis sought to ready the hall for the reception. Along with much else, a stage had to be erected, tables had to be brought in and *MTA* had to set up.

The reception was due to start at 11am and so I arrived, along with the other office staff members, at 10am. When I got out of the car, I saw that many guests had already arrived but rather than being inside the Mosque were waiting outside or in the lobby area.

Over the next hour, more and more guests arrived and waited patiently outside, whilst the *Jamaat* sought to ready the hall.

Truth be told, it was not very well organised and I think we all felt a mixture of sympathy for the guests and also a sense of embarrassment.

By around 10.40am the tables had been erected but no plates or cutlery had been placed. Our *MTA* team from London had put down their cameras and started setting the tables in order to speed up the process.

Upon seeing this, I also put aside my notebook and pen and started setting the table along with them and many other local Khuddam.

I was told to fold the napkins in a certain way and it took me a couple of times to master the correct fold. However, just as I had figured out how to do this, I was told that all the napkins had to be re-folded because they had been placed in a prominent way that would not look good for photographs of the event and filming.

Many of us were frustrated by this and I remember thinking that Huzoor is due to come down in a few minutes and the guests are waiting outside and yet we are wasting so much time worrying how the napkins should be folded.

As, what can only be described as chaotic scenes, continued, Atta-ul-Awwal Abassi from *MTA*, looked up from folding some napkins and said to me:

***“Abid sahib have you ever seen a reception like this before?”***

The truth was I had not and the sense of panic increased as the clock neared 11am.

I have always seen that when there are events with guests, Huzoor invariably comes exactly at the specified time and yet no guest was even seated.

### **Chaos to calm**

A few minutes later I looked up and saw that it was now 11am.

In the Mosque and in the overflow room behind the Mosque, Ahmadis were still frantically setting up the tables and as they were doing so I looked towards the entrance and saw Huzoor, having come down from his residence, enter the room exactly on time.

Upon seeing the state of panic, Huzoor immediately instructed that the guests should be brought in immediately. He said that tables could be set later but the main thing was that the guests should not be left outside and nor should the reception be delayed unduly.

The blessings of *Khilafat* are such that Huzoor's words seemed to trigger an instant change in the environment.

From a state of panic, suddenly there was a sense of focus in the local *Jamaat* and they immediately started bringing the guests up and within minutes the hall started filling up and everyone seemed much calmer.

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

Knowing it would take a few minutes before everything was ready, Huzoor proceeded to his own office and graciously called me to spend a few minutes with him.

As I entered, Huzoor said that the weather in Malmo was much cooler than it had been in Denmark and so told me to close the window and switch off the fan.

Huzoor asked me how many guests had come. I said that the local *Jamaat* had said that there were at least 100 but it had seemed fewer to me.

In response, Huzoor said:

***“Even if there are only 30 or 40 guests it does not matter – at least those 30 or 40 people will hear the true message of Islam and will then be able to spread it within their own circles.”***

Ultimately, the local *Jamaat*'s figure was correct and over 100 guests did attend.

Nonetheless, I was struck by the beauty of Huzoor's words, wherein he did not care if the audience was one of dozens or one of thousands, all he cared about was the opportunity to spread the true teachings of Islam.

Thereafter, Huzoor smiled and said:

***"Abid you were also folding tissues and setting the table!"***

I nodded and said ***"Yes Huzoor"*** but was astonished at how Huzoor knew this.

I then mentioned how some of the local *Jamaat* members had expressed their happiness that Huzoor had praised the financial sacrifices made by the local Ahmadis during his *Friday Sermon* the day before.

Upon hearing this, Huzoor said:

***"They should also remember that I said that building the Mosque was just the first step and now it was their duty to fill it and to display the true teachings of Islam at all times."***

### **Mahmood Mosque Reception**

After a few more minutes, Huzoor was informed that the guests were now seated in the Mosque and everything was ready.

Thus, at 11.20am the formal reception finally began.

Following a welcome address by Amir sahib Sweden, the *Mayor of Malmo*, Kent Andersson delivered a short address in which he said:

***“I would like to welcome His Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad to our city. I have followed his efforts to spread peace in the world and so his presence here today is a great honour.”***

### **Huzoor’s address**

Following the guest remarks, Huzoor took to the stage to deliver the keynote address, in which he highlighted the true purposes with which Mosques were built.

Reassuring the guests about the Mosque, Huzoor said:

***“Let me reassure all of our guests and the people of this city and nation, that there is no need to fear this mosque. Instead of spreading hatred and malice, true Muslims and true mosques transmit only love, peace and brotherhood throughout society.”***

Huzoor mentioned how during the time of the Holy Prophet (sa), Allah the Almighty ordered for a Mosque to be demolished because it was being used to incite disorder and conflict, rather than as a place of worship and a house of peace.

Huzoor said that ***“the Quran is very clear that Mosques built with such ill intent should be knocked down”***.

Huzoor continued:

***“Let it be clear that the doors to our mosques are open to all peaceful people who wish to worship God Almighty and are open to all people who desire to spread the values of peace, goodwill and unity.”***



Huzoor also spoke about how Muslims were duty-bound to serve the societies in which they lived and in particular to care for their neighbours and all vulnerable members of society such as orphans or people living in poverty.

Huzoor reminded that such service was to be given irrespective of a person's religion, beliefs or ethnicity. Very beautifully, Huzoor said that Ahmadi Muslims are the people ***“who seek to give hope to those who were previously hopeless”***.

Concluding, Huzoor said:

***“We must make every effort to engender peace, so that we do not bequeath upon our children the ‘gift’ of a broken and tormented world;***

***rather, we must ensure that we leave behind a legacy of a peaceful and prosperous world for our future generations to live in.”***

### **A personal reflection**

I write this diary some weeks after the conclusion of Huzoor’s tour of Scandinavia and just a couple of days after Britain has voted to leave the European Union.

Having witnessed how the UK has seemingly gambled its entire future and thrown the future prosperity of the nation’s children into question, I thought back to Huzoor’s words of warning in Malmo.

It seems it is only *Khalifatul Masih* who truly appreciates that the decisions the world is making today will define the futures of our next generations.

### **Impact of Huzoor’s address**

As lunch was served, I took the opportunity to meet some of the guests.

It was actually quite difficult to meet them as the tables were all joined fairly close together and so to go from table to table and meet different guests required for some flexibility that I am not known for! I had to crouch down or to zig-zag in order to get across the room.

Nonetheless, the effort was worth it, because the more people I met the more I understood and realised just how much impact Huzoor’s words had had yet again.

Many guests appeared quite emotional as they told me about their experience of seeing and listening to Huzoor.

One person I met was a man called *Michael* who appeared to be in his late thirties. His parents were Polish but they had immigrated to Sweden before his birth. Michael said:

***“I believe in God but most people in this country do not and so I am proud that there is a man – your Khalifa – who has come to Sweden who has such a firm faith in God and a Creator.”***

Robert, a Swedish politician, said:

***“In his speech the Khalifa said that you should feel peace from a true Muslim and I felt peace when I met him and so I knew he is a true Muslim. I felt very secure in his presence and upon hearing his voice.”***

A Christian faith leader who I met, Mrs. Jonsson, said:

***“I am amazed, honoured and moved by your Khalifa. I am emotional because today I heard a Muslim leader speak only of peace. This speech, at this time, in this country was very much needed.”***

A Swedish guest called Lars said:

***“Today, I felt as though I was in a different world – it was so inspiring. The Khalifa is a man of peace and he explained, using the Quran, that Islam is peaceful and that religion is a matter of the heart.”***

Another guest, *Anders* said:

***“In Malmo people are scared of Mosques because they are reportedly filled with extremists, but your Khalifa showed us that their way is not the way of Islam. His message was that Jihad is not a thing of guns or weapons but is to be done by the mouth and through the pen.”***

I met a guest called *Peter* who had come as a representative of the Jewish community. He told me that Huzoor’s address had had a very profound effect upon him, whereby it had also motivated him to reassess Israeli-Palestinian relations. Peter said:

***“Your Khalifa made me think that Muslims are our brothers and so my sympathy for the Palestinians has increased knowing now that there will be some amongst them who desire peace like your community does.”***

### **Feelings of an Ahmadi**

After the event, I also met a member of the Swedish Jamaat, *Waqas Nasir*, who told me about his own observations and feelings regarding the reception.

***“When Huzoor entered the Mosque at 11am it was clear we were not ready and in fact the scene was very chaotic. At that moment I thought that Huzoor would be angry and admonish us. However, Huzoor remained extremely calm and merely said that we should bring the guests immediately and that we could set the tables later. Huzoor is so***

***loving, so wise and he is so patient. I truly believe that he has nerves of steel!"***

Waqas sahib continued:

***"I used to live in Rabwah and so I saw Huzoor before Khilafat and he always seemed to stay in the background and it seemed he did not like public speaking at all. Yet today, when I see that same person who addresses Parliaments, who guides the Jamaat and who has the courage of a lion, it makes my faith even stronger that Allah is with Khalifatul Masih every step of the way. It is like that person I saw in Rabwah many years ago has been completely transformed."***

### **Acceptance of Huzoor's prayers**

Later that day, Huzoor met Ahmadi families in *Mulaqat* and following their *Mulaqats*, I was able to talk to some of them about how it felt to meet *Khalifatul Masih*.

I met one young married couple, *Mubashar Mahmood (29)* and his wife *Zanubia Hameed*. Both husband and wife had huge smiles on their faces and the delight and joy they felt was very palpable.

Zanubia sahiba said:

***"When I met Huzoor I felt as though I was in a different world – I felt as though I was in heaven. Huzoor is so kind and he even said that our five-***

***month baby was a very happy and friendly child. When Huzoor said these words I felt as though I would burst into tears with joy.”***

Zanubia sahiba then showed me her son and he was extremely friendly and smiley. She told me that he had been born with a problem with one of his ears, wherein it was not properly formed.

When the child was born she and her husband were extremely worried and so they flew to London to meet Huzoor and to seek his prayers. Upon meeting them Huzoor had prayed for the child and said that they should not worry and he would be fine.

Zanubia sahiba said that upon their return to Sweden her son was given a hearing test. About the results, she said:

***“With the grace of Allah, my son’s hearing was completely fine and even the doctors were surprised by this.”***

### **An emotional Khadim**

During Huzoor’s tour there were many Ahmadis who travelled from nearby countries such as Norway and Finland to meet Huzoor and to attend the opening of the Mosque.

One such person, was the *Sadr Khuddam* of Finland *Jamaat*. When I spoke to him he told me of a personal incident, which had a great impact upon him.

He said that a few days before coming to Sweden he had cut one of his fingers by accident. The cut was quite deep and in the days leading up to the *Mulaqat* the pain became worse and worse and it seemed as though the injury had become infected.

Before the *Mulaqat* he taped his finger so that the injury would not come into contact with Huzoor.

At the end of his *Mulaqat* he had the chance to have his photo taken with Huzoor. Describing those moments, Sadr sahib said:

***“Huzoor held my hand tighter than I could ever have imagined and I actually felt a sudden rush of pain in my injured finger. Anyway, when I left the Mulaqat I immediately removed the tape and bandage and I was completely shocked because it appeared as though the wound had healed and all signs of the infection had disappeared.”***

He showed me a photo of his injury from the day before and it really looked like a very nasty injury and then he showed me his finger as it was now.

All that was left was a tiny scar, the type that you would expect to see a few weeks after such an injury.

Speaking about this incident, Sadr sahib said:

***“To someone else this might seem like a small thing but to me this was a sign of the truth of Khilafat. This incident has truly shaken me and I can never forget it.”***

### **Spending time with a friend**

Those days, a close friend of mine *Qudus Malik* had travelled to Sweden to attend the inauguration of the Mahmood Mosque. Qudus was from the United States but he had spent the past two months in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan on instructions of *Wakalat-e-Tabshir*.

Before returning home, Huzoor had permitted him to attend the Mosque opening and to come and meet him in Sweden. Thus, over those three days I spent quite a lot of time with Qudus and it was very nice to be in the company of a good friend. Qudus has the capacity to talk for hours without stopping – a quality that I most certainly do not possess.

Anyway, over those few days we talked mostly about our experiences of the blessings of Khilafat, however we also spoke about our shared experiences of parenting and of the fact that we had both begun to go grey ever since the birth of our children!

During his stay, Qudus was also able to spend some time in the company of Huzoor and he told me how those moments were amongst the most precious moments of his life.

### **A crowded dining room**

It had been 10 days since Huzoor's tour had begun and at each meal we had eaten *langhar* food and so I have to admit I was beginning to crave something a little different.

I remember thinking to myself that I had reached my limit of *aloo ghosht*, however after a few minutes I felt guilty for thinking in this way.

I thought to myself that I had not come to Denmark and Sweden to eat but rather to fulfil my duties as a *Waqf-e-Zindigi* (life devotee).

Anyway, that evening when I went to the dining room I was more than ready to eat *aloo ghosht* or whatever other *langhar* dish was about to be served.

Nonetheless, I cannot deny that I was very happy to see that the local *Jamaat* had ordered a mixture of *KFC* chicken, pizza and lamb *shawarma* for dinner!

Honestly, I had not enjoyed fast food so much for a long time as I did that evening. I think word spread quite quickly because the dining hall filled up much quicker than on other days.

All the members of *Qafila* and the *MTA* team enjoyed the food a great deal.

### **Emotions of Ahmadis**

The next morning, on 15 May, Huzoor met members of the *Jamaat* in a session of family *Mulaqats*. Again, this proved an opportunity for me to talk to some of those people fortunate enough to meet Huzoor.

One person I met was a ginger-haired Swedish convert called *Per* who had just met Huzoor for the first time.

Speaking about meeting Huzoor for the first time that morning he said:

***“It was extremely enlightening to meet Huzoor. When I asked him for guidance, he told me that first of all I should learn Surah Fatiha and to try and understand its inner meanings.”***

He told me the only issue he had faced since becoming Ahmadi was that most *Jamaat* events in Sweden were conducted in the Urdu language and so sometimes he felt a little isolated.

He had started to learn Urdu in order to help him feel more involved. I said to him it was good that he was learning Urdu but that the local *Jamaat* should also try to arrange some translation for him wherever possible.

I then met a young Khadim, *Hafiz Muhammad Talha Mangla (25)* who had come to Sweden from Pakistan around 8months previously and so he had just met Khalifatul Masih for the very first time.

Speaking about his Mulaqat, Talha said:

***“I am still shaking and it feels as though I had an out of body experience. When I met Huzoor I felt like I was in a different world. In those few minutes my entire purpose of migrating to Sweden was fulfilled.”***

### **Calling home**

For the past few days I had not spoken to my son Mahid because by the time I used to get back to my room in the hotel it was late and Mahid would be

asleep. And so on that day, whilst the *Mulaqats* were continuing I took the opportunity to video call home on *FaceTime*.

When I spoke to him he looked at me excitedly and said:

***“Abba coming soon!”***

I was pleased to see his language skills were developing but also a little concerned that it seemed he thought I would be home imminently!

Nonetheless, it was very nice to talk to him and also to see our infant child Moshahid who seemed to have grown in the week and a half that we had been away.

Whilst talking to Mahid he proceeded to take me on a tour of every room of our home before concluding the tour by opening the blinds and pointing to the garden. Perhaps, he thought I had forgotten what our home looked like!

### **Departure for Stockholm and a case of mistaken identity**

On 16 May 2016, the *Qafila* was to depart from Malmo and travel onwards to Stockholm where Huzoor was due to attend a special reception being hosted by the *Jamaat* in his honour. It was the first time that Huzoor would visit Sweden’s capital city.

For the first time during the tour the weather was very cold and so in the minutes preceding departure I paced back and forth in the Mosque courtyard to try and keep warm.

After a few minutes, Mubarak Zafar sahib called me and said that an Ahmadi from Germany, *Siddiq Dogar sahib*, was requesting to have a photo with me.

I was quite surprised as I did not personally know Siddiq sahib except that I knew he was the brother of Fazal Dogar sahib who works at *Jamia Ahmadiyya UK* as the librarian.

Anyway, I stood for the photo and at that point I found out that Siddiq sahib had mistaken me for Amir sahib France! I was both embarrassed and also a little mortified given that Amir sahib France was a lot older than me!

Huzoor and Khala Saboohi (*Huzoor's respected wife*) came out of their residence at 12.20pm and after a silent prayer led by Huzoor the *Qafila* departed for Stockholm.

Whilst Malmo lay on the south-east coast of Sweden, Stockholm was further north and lay on the western coast. The total drive was to be more than 600km.

### **Lunch and Namaz en-route to Stockholm**

Initially, the *Qafila* drove for one hour and forty minutes before stopping at a *Best Western* hotel for *Namaz* and lunch.

Upon arrival, *Zuhr* and *Asr* prayers were offered in a meeting room at the hotel. When *Namaz* was completed, Huzoor stood up and looked at Mahmood Khan sahib and said:

***"Give Abid the magazine I was reading in the car."***

Thus, as soon as Huzoor left the room, Khan sahib took me to Huzoor's car so he could follow Huzoor's instruction. I was also curious to see which magazine it was.

Often, Huzoor graciously sends me copies of *TIME* magazine that he has read or occasionally some others but on this occasion the magazine was a special edition of '*The Economist*' entitled '*The World in 2016*'.

After *Namaz*, Huzoor and Khala Saboohi had lunch in a private room, whilst the rest of us ate our lunch in the hotel restaurant. At lunch the options were either fried fish in breadcrumbs with roast potatoes and vegetables or steak.

Most of us took the fish option but a few people did choose the steak. I was happy with my choice because when I saw the steak it did not look like a steak but like a flat meat pancake! Whilst the steak did not look great, the fish was very nice.

Later, I asked Huzoor if he and Khala Saboohi had enjoyed lunch and he replied by saying that they too had liked the fish.

Just before we left the hotel, Sakhawat Bajwa sahib told me that the Swedish language was very similar to Punjabi, however the Swedish people looked like *Pathans*. Major sahib was also present and he agreed with Sakhawat sahib but I am not sure if I could see the resemblance myself!

The *Qafila* departed from the hotel at 3.20pm and drove for a further three hours non-stop. Throughout the drive there was constant rain but despite the weather the drive proved to be very beautiful.

One particular stretch was especially striking, wherein there was a vast lake on one side of the motorway and lush greenery and forest to the other side.

### **Stop at service station**

At 6.20pm the *Qafila* stopped again, this time at a service station that seemed quite old and worn.

When Huzoor entered, he walked along a rather long corridor and after pacing for a few moments, Huzoor looked towards a few of us who were stood nearby and said:

***“Just like Sweden is a long and thin country, this service station is also long and thin!”***

Huzoor looked at me and said:

***“Sweden has the biggest land area out of the Scandinavian countries doesn’t it?”***

I presumed so, but was not entirely sure, and so I responded by saying:

***“I think so Huzoor”.***

Anyway, I later checked and Huzoor had been right, as Sweden was the largest country in Scandinavia in terms of land, followed by Norway.

## **Serving coffee**

After a few minutes, I also met Khala Saboohi (*Huzoor's respected wife*) who was seated at a table inside the service station café. She kindly asked how I was and how Mala and our children were.

At that point, Major sahib called me and handed me two cappuccinos to take to the table for Huzoor and Khala Saboohi. When I took the coffee, Khala Saboohi took a cup for herself but said that Huzoor's coffee should be served fresh when he came to the table.

I felt very embarrassed at my mistake realising immediately that the coffee for Huzoor ought to be served absolutely fresh and it was not appropriate to send it in advance. I also was greatly impressed at Khala Saboohi's regard for every small detail when it came to Huzoor's comfort and respect.

I passed the extra cup of coffee to Tariq Shah sahib, from Sweden Jamaat, who was also present and who is a relative of Khala Saboohi.

A few moments later Huzoor came to the table and so I went to get a fresh cappuccino for him. Unfortunately, the café was very basic and so the staff informed they had run out of proper cups and saucers. Thus, Huzoor's cappuccino was served in a very basic mug without any saucer.

As I presented the coffee to Huzoor I felt extremely embarrassed and apologised. However, Huzoor told me not to worry and before I had a chance to bring a spoon, he then started to stir in some honey into his coffee with a wooden stirring stick.

Very graciously, Khala Saboohi then told me to sit at the next table and as I did so Omair Aleem walked over and handed me a coffee in a paper cup, the type you get in most coffee shops.

Upon seeing it, Huzoor said:

***“You should have given us coffee in a paper cup like yours, as I prefer drinking in them in such places.”***

Hearing this, I asked if I should bring another coffee in a paper cup. Smiling, Huzoor that there was no need, before adding:

***“Do you want us to spend all day sitting here?”***

It was a beautiful example of Huzoor’s simplicity that he preferred the idea of a paper cup to a mug at such places.

I also saw some cakes and doughnuts in the café and thought I would bring them for Huzoor and Khala Saboohi.

However, another member of our group said that I should leave it in case they did not like such cakes. Thus, the only thing Huzoor and Khala Saboohi had with their coffees were some small plain *biscotti* biscuits.

Later on I regretted not bringing the cakes as perhaps they would have liked them. In previous tours, I had observed Ahmad bhai (Muhammad Ahmad) when he served Huzoor’s table.

He would bring different dishes or snacks to Huzoor and Khala Saboohi and some they would take, others Huzoor would send back for the other *Qafila* members to enjoy.

Undoubtedly, on this occasion I was lacking Ahmad bhai's judgement and expertise and most importantly his confidence in such matters.

Thus, in spite of the simplicity and humility of Huzoor and Khala Saboohi, I felt as though the standards of my service had been extremely inadequate and poor.

Although I was seated on a separate table, I was perhaps just a metre to Huzoor's left.

Whilst he drunk his cappuccino, Huzoor looked in my direction and asked how I had found Sweden so far. I said that I had only really seen the Mosque so far.

Upon hearing this, Huzoor said:

***“We have been on the road for almost 6 hours now and so have you not seen the landscape and the country during this time?”***

I felt embarrassed and was reminded how invariably it is through glass windows that Huzoor most often sees the different countries he visits, because he very rarely takes time to stop for actual sightseeing. Certainly, there had been no such break in Denmark or Sweden.

## **Arrival in Stockholm**

A few minutes later, Huzoor and Khala Saboohi stood up and headed back to the cars.

After a further 45 minutes of driving we finally entered Stockholm city from where Huzoor was given a police escort to the *Stockholm Sheraton Hotel* where the *Qafila* would spend the next two nights.

After a day of cloudy and rainy weather, by the time we arrived in Stockholm the weather had completely changed. Even though by then it was the evening, the sun was shining extremely brightly.

The hotel was in the city centre and so as we drove towards it, we were able to pass by many beautiful buildings and the entire city centre seemed surrounded by water.

I read later that Stockholm is sometimes referred to as the '*Venice of the North*' and you could see why. Though, I say that having only heard stories of Venice and never having actually been!

Huzoor arrived at the hotel at 7.55pm, where dozens of local Ahmadis and also senior members of the hotel staff greeted him.

Huzoor and Khala Saboohi (*Huzoor's respected wife*) were escorted to their room and thereafter we also were taken to our respective rooms. I was again sharing with Mubarak Zafar sahib, as I did throughout the Sweden tour.

Dinner was served a little later in a room booked by the *Jamaat* in the hotel and thereafter Huzoor came downstairs to lead the *Maghreb* and *Isha* prayers later in the evening.

At the end of a long day, I looked forward to a few hours of sleep before *Fajr*. Throughout the tour thus far, *Fajr* had ranged from 4am to 4.15am and so I thought it would be at a similar time in Stockholm but when I asked Munir Javed sahib he said “3am”.

At first, I thought I had misheard and so I asked again and he repeated that *Fajr* would be at 3am!

Knowing how tired I felt, I set 5 alarms on my phone to make sure Mubarak sahib and I both woke up in time. Thankfully, we woke up on the first alarm.

### **Story of an elderly convert**

The next morning, 17 May 2016, Huzoor met Ahmadi families from the Stockholm *Jamaat* in *Mulaqat*. The *Mulaqat* session also took place in a meeting room at the hotel.

One of the first people to meet Huzoor that day was an elderly Swedish convert to Ahmadiyyat called *Muhammad Yusuf (72)*. I met him moments after his *Mulaqat* with Huzoor.

He told me how he had come to accept Ahmadiyyat five years ago. It so happened that one day he was walking in Sweden when the heavens opened and so he got caught in severe rain.

He looked for some shelter and saw the local Ahmadiyya centre and so walked into it in order to stay dry. An Ahmadi who was present gave him some literature and though he was suspicious he decided to read it.

Muhammad Yusuf sahib said:

***“I read the literature that I had been given and two phrases stuck out and really touched and impressed me. One was ‘Love for All, Hatred for None’ and the other was ‘Jihad is with the pen, not with the sword’. These two phrases inspired me to learn more and ultimately, I realised that Ahmadiyyat was the true Islam.”***

He added:

***“Five years later I have no doubt that I made the right decision. Ahmadiyyat is a safe haven from what is wrong in the world. For example, it is a safe haven from extremism and radicalisation.”***

He told me that his family and friends had been upset when he accepted Islam and even now some found it difficult to accept.

Nonetheless, they had seen with their own eyes that Ahmadiyyat was a religion of “love and kindness” and so the situation was much better than before.

He told me that now his wife, who was not Muslim, specially prepared *Iftari* for him to open his fasts during the month of *Ramadan*.

## **Emotions of Ahmadis**

I met another Ahmadi, *Zeeshan Khurram (35)*, originally from Rabwah and who had moved to Sweden in 2010. I met him moments after his first ever Mulaqat with *Khalifatul Masih*, though he had seen Huzoor in Rabwah a few times before he became Khalifa.

Speaking of that period in Rabwah, Zeeshan sahib said:

***“I still remember seeing Huzoor for the first time in 1997 when he became Nazir-e-Ala and even back then, I remember thinking that he is a man of rare spiritual purity. Seeing him all those years ago, when I was just a teenager, had a very deep impact upon my heart.”***

Zeeshan sahib continued:

***“My father died when I was just seven years old and our family had no money and so we applied for a Jamaat scholarship to pay for my school fees.***

***Initially, my application was rejected but then I wrote directly to Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (ra) and he approved the application immediately. Our current Khalifa, who was then Nazir-e-Ala, handed over the fees to me.***

***Thus, I am a witness who can testify that Khalifatul Masih is he who cares and loves orphans. He is the person who takes them by the hand, gives them comfort and love, who shelters them and affords them protection.”***

With tears in his eyes, Zeeshan sahib said:

***“I swear I am ready to sacrifice my life, my wealth, my everything for the sake of Khalifatul Masih because it was Khalifatul Masih who saved me when I had nothing.”***

I met a young married couple, *Ashar Waseem (29)* and his wife *Faiqa Nudrat (29)* who were both originally from Lahore. They were both extremely friendly and very excited to have met Huzoor. Both of them were beaming with delight.

Telling me of their experiences, *Faiqa sahiba* said:

***“I just cannot stop smiling. Those moments with Huzoor seemed to pass in a second and even now I cannot believe I just met him. I can tell my blood pressure is high right now but I think this is a good sign that my spirituality is increasing having met Huzoor!”***

She then began to laugh and said her husband became very confused in front of Huzoor and struggled to get his words out.

I told her not to worry and that even though I had the good fortune to meet Huzoor regularly, I still made such mistakes on a regular basis!

I also met three Ahmadi converts. Two of them, *Ayman (22)* and *Almas (27)* had come to Sweden from Syria and Iraq as refugees, whilst the third man was called *Jesus Martinez (55)* and was a convert from South America.

They each spoke of the positive changes in their lives since they accepted Ahmadiyyat and also the emotion of having met Huzoor earlier that morning.

Ayman sahib from Syria said:

***“I am so emotional having met Huzoor today. He is such a wise and loving man. Whatever he says has depth and inner meanings. We also spoke about the war in Syria and Huzoor said that cruelty was never acceptable and so whichever people or groups were acting unjustly were wrong and acting against the teachings of Islam.”***

Almas sahib from Iraq, who had accepted Ahmadiyyat two years previously, said:

***“I am so happy that I cannot put my feelings into words. I have tears of joy because I have met the Khalifa who is beautiful, who is love and who is there to guide us all. Meeting him was the best moment of my life.”***

Jesus Martinez sahib said:

***“I have been Ahmadi for just three months and so I feel very privileged to have already met the Khalifa. It was extremely faith-inspiring to see such a pure and pious person. It may sound strange but inside of me I already feel a change and that I am now closer to God.”***

### **A few blessed moments**

Once *Mulaqats* concluded that morning, Huzoor called me to his office at the hotel for some time.

I mentioned to Huzoor how I had met a German Khadim a couple of days before, who had noticed some years ago that Huzoor often read from his notes when delivering speeches.

The Khadim said that he had wondered if reading from notes would have the same impact as reading ‘*off the cuff*’ as he had seen Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (rh) do.

However, over the years whilst doing security duty at various receptions he had seen for himself the huge impact that Huzoor’s words had wherever he went. The *Khadim* told me that he now felt embarrassed at his earlier thoughts.

Upon hearing this, Huzoor said:

***“Remember the revelation of the Promised Messiah (as) that ‘You have been helped with prestige’. If we believe that this revelation continues till today and that Allah’s support continues to be with Khilafat then it does not matter how Khalifa-Waqt delivers his address because Allah the Almighty will continue to bless his words.”***

Huzoor then very kindly told me of one of the reasons why he tends to read from notes.

Huzoor said:

***“The reason I use notes for my sermons and speeches is because if I did not then my speeches would be much longer. When I deliver addresses in Jamia Ahmadiyya I normally deliver them off the cuff and my intention is to speak for only 10 or 15 minutes but invariably my speeches there end up being 40 or 45 minutes long.”***

Huzoor then mentioned the address he was due to give later that day in Stockholm. Initially, the Sweden *Jamaat* had proposed for Huzoor to travel to the Swedish city of Kalmar for a day during the tour.

It was intended that Huzoor would make a formal address in the city, however due to certain issues the plan was changed and the Kalmar part of the trip was cancelled.

Mentioning this, Huzoor said:

***“I have modified the address I was going to give in Kalmar and will give it here this evening. The notes I had originally prepared for Stockholm can Insha’Allah be used on another occasion.”***

I also mentioned to Huzoor that he had instructed that I travel to USA to attend the *Khuddam Ijtema* in California a few days after our return to London. I mentioned how my friend Amer Safir, the *Editor* of the *Review of Religions*, had been in the United States for two months and had been very popular with the *Khuddam* there and so I worried they would find my talks boring by comparison.

Rather than admonishing me for worrying about trivial matters, Huzoor responded with great love and kindness. He asked me what the topic of my speech was at the *Khuddam Ijtema* and so I informed that it was '*Blessings of Khilafat*'.

Upon hearing this, Huzoor said:

***"When you start your talk, remind the Khuddam that Khilafat-e-Ahmadiyya was established according to the prophecies of the Holy Quran and of the Holy Prophet (sa). If we believe this and that Allah is a Living God, then we must also believe that the Help of Allah remains with Khalifa-Waqt as it ever has in the past."***

Huzoor continued:

***"Then tell them that you have travelled with Khalifa-Waqt and seen first-hand the blessings attached to Khilafat and share with them some of the incidents you have experienced. Also, tell them about the non-Ahmadi and non-Muslim people you have met during my various tours and how their impression of Islam had completely changed for the better after listening to and meeting Khalifatul Masih."***

Huzoor said:

***"From this tour, tell them about the lady whose husband thought he would be the victim of a terrorist attack if he attended the Copenhagen reception, however after attending both of them felt only peace."***

I was extremely grateful for Huzoor's guidance. I had not at all expected such detailed guidance given how busy Huzoor was during the tour.

Due only to Huzoor's guidance and prayers, when I went to the USA subsequently the talks I gave went much better than I could have expected, *Alhamdolillah*.

Those moments with Huzoor were extremely precious. Sometimes, you get a feeling that Huzoor may be upset with you and in the previous two or three days this thought had entered my mind. Thus, those informal moments with Huzoor were a source not just of happiness but also relief.

Whether Huzoor was upset with me or not I do not know and perhaps I had imagined it, but personally I think it is good to have these feelings from time to time because it reminds you to do *Istighfar* and to increase in the worship of Allah.

### **Reaction to Huzoor's media interview**

That morning, Amir sahib Sweden approached me in the lobby of the hotel looking a little anxious and worried.

He told me that members of Sweden's governing party (*Social Democrats*) had just informed the *Jamaat* that they would not attend the evening reception where Huzoor was due to deliver the keynote address.

Previously, it had been expected that a few MPs from that party would attend.

The reason for this was that they had read Huzoor's interview with a Swedish newspaper in which Huzoor had said that homosexuality was contrary to Islamic teaching and also against the teachings of the Bible.

The politicians from the ruling party said that they had been 'disappointed' with this position and so would not attend.

Initially, Amir sahib asked me if I would inform Huzoor of this development, however a few minutes later when Huzoor came down from his residence, Amir sahib himself informed him.

Later, that morning when I met Huzoor he mentioned this issue to me. I responded by saying that their attitude was incredibly disappointing.

Huzoor then said:

***"They are politically motivated and the ruling party believes that by taking this step they will save their government and their party but they are mistaken and in fact the opposite is true."***

Huzoor's words were extremely powerful. As always, Huzoor exhibited complete trust in Allah and complete certainty in the truth and wisdom of Islamic teachings.

Whilst I was sure that the event would continue to be a great success and very blessed, I was very saddened that the governing party had acted in such a myopic fashion.

Rather than remembering the continued peaceful history of the *Jamaat* in Sweden and rather than recalling the huge social and humanitarian contribution of Ahmadi Muslims to society, the Swedish government had chosen to focus on one issue where our peacefully held religious views were not in line with theirs.

It so happened that when the evening reception occurred, one *Member of Parliament* from the *Social Democrats*, Mrs Hillevi Larsson attended the reception and in fact addressed the audience.

During her speech, she spoke incredibly well and condemned the persecution of Ahmadi in the very strongest terms and said that Ahmadi were the people who responded to all forms of hatred with nothing but love and peace.

She also praised Huzoor's commitment to spreading peace throughout the world and said that she was honoured to welcome Huzoor to Sweden.

Given the background and how other members of her party had stayed away, I felt her remarks were some of the best I had ever heard from our guest speakers at such events.

Huzoor also appreciated her courage, loyalty and strength of character.

Indeed, later that evening Huzoor told me of what he had said to her after her address.

Huzoor said:

***“I said to the MP from the Social Democrats that earlier today I thought that your party was finished, however you have single handedly saved it with your words and presence at our reception. I hope and pray that you become your party’s leader.”***

Most certainly, Huzoor’s words of appreciation were considerable and testament to the character of Hillevi Larsson.

I was somewhat unsure if I should publicly mention this issue and controversy or not.

Thus, in Sweden I asked Huzoor for his guidance in this regard and he responded by saying:

***“Yes of course you should mention it. You should openly write about it so that people clearly understand our views and our beliefs.”***

### **Walking in Stockholm**

That afternoon, there was a break following *Zuhr* and *Asr* for a few hours and so whilst other members of the Qafila went for lunch, I grabbed my coat and decided to go for a walk.

I did not really know where I was going and so I just kept walking along the city centre’s waterfront. It was a bright, sunny day and so those couple of hours were extremely pleasant and refreshing.

After walking for an hour in one direction, I finally turned back and headed back towards the hotel.

On my way back I came across some shops and so took the opportunity to purchase a few gifts for home.

I had no idea what the exchange rate was and so I was unsure of how much I spent but still I was glad to be able to pick up a few Swedish things.

Thankfully, when I checked my bank balance a few days later I was relieved to see that everything had been priced fairly reasonably!

### **Meeting with dignitaries**

That evening, the Sweden *Jamaat* hosted what proved to be an extremely blessed reception at the hotel in which we were staying.

Before the reception commenced a number of the dignitaries were also afforded the opportunity to personally meet with Huzoor.

During the meeting, the dignitaries were able to ask Huzoor various questions and to seek his guidance on various issues.

One guest asked Huzoor about the *Jamaat's* continued efforts to promote peace in the world. In response, Huzoor said:

***“Our mission is to save the world and to spread peace amongst all of mankind. We desire to leave behind a legacy of love, peace and***

***compassion in the world. No matter how challenging the circumstances we will never give up in this effort.”***



One of the MPs in attendance said that if someone is persecuted or attacked they tended to respond with hatred or violence but she had noted that Ahmadi Muslims were completely different and remained patient no matter what.

Upon hearing this, Huzoor said:

***“We are following the teachings of our Founder (as). He taught us that the way to win the hearts of people was through love, patience and tolerance. This is the reason we never react violently and we never take the law into our hands.”***

## **Stockholm Reception**

Huzoor was then escorted from his office to a reception hall where more than 60 Swedish dignitaries and guests had come to listen to Huzoor.

The event started at 7.15pm and after Tilawat and a welcome address by Amir sahib Sweden, various guest speakers took to the stage.

One guest speaker was Hillevi Larsson MP who had asked Huzoor about the persecution of Ahmadis in the earlier meeting. She said:

***“I simply cannot understand why the Ahmadi Muslims are persecuted and it is even more unfathomable that those who attack you are Muslims themselves. Yet the more hatred you face, the more love you give. The more war, the more peace you bring.”***

Valter Mutt, MP, Green Party said:

***“You, Ahmadi Muslims do not only talk about peace, as some politicians do, but you are really working towards it.”***

## **Huzoor’s address**

After the guest addresses concluded, Huzoor then took to the stage and spoke in detail about the refugee crisis that has afflicted Europe over the past year and gave solutions about how this crisis could be handled.

Huzoor's words were extremely pertinent, given the fact that Sweden had absorbed 160,000 refugees in the past year, far more than any other country apart from Germany.



During his address, Huzoor outlined the responsibilities of both the host country and also of the refugees themselves.

Huzoor said:

***“The refugees escaped their previous lives in the search of peace, and so now having been granted shelter and security here, it is incumbent upon them to live here peacefully and to abide by the laws of the land.”***

Huzoor continued:

***“I would suggest and advise the government and policy makers that they should ensure that the rights of the local people are not unduly affected or neglected in any way. This is a very delicate issue and must be handled with extreme caution and care because if there is any resentment on the part of the local people it could lead to an extremely dangerous chain reaction.”***

Huzoor explained that whilst refugees should be cared for and protected, the *Government* should not give them preferential treatment because otherwise the local people could turn on the immigrants leading to confrontation and conflict.

Huzoor said that could result in the “*marginalisation and isolation*” of immigrants and could make them vulnerable to radicalisation and extremism. This was the “*dangerous chain reaction*” Huzoor referred to.

Thereafter, Huzoor outlined Quranic principles for establishing peace in the world. In particular, Huzoor focused on the need for justice and fairness at all levels of society, which he referred to as the “*gateway to establishing true peace*”.

Huzoor also spoke of the role of the major powers and international institutions such as the *United Nations*.

Huzoor said:

***“Where conflicts arise, international organisations, such as the United Nations, should act impartially and equitably and their sole motivation should be to establish peace and reconciliation between all parties.”***

Huzoor continued:

***“The UN Charter specifically states that its objectives are underpinned by a desire to save mankind from the mistakes that led to the two World Wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Having undertaken this huge responsibility, the***

***United Nations must seek to fulfil its noble objectives and truly value the peace of the world as the most significant issue of our time.”***

Just as he had done at the reception in Malmo a few days earlier, Huzoor concluded by calling on the world to consider the consequences of our acts of today on our future.

Huzoor said:

***“The question we should all ask ourselves is whether we desire to leave behind a better world for our children and future generations to live in? Or do we wish to hand over a legacy of warfare, bloodshed and untold sorrow and grief?”***

### **Impact of Huzoor’s address**

I met many guests that evening and you could see how touched they were by Huzoor’s words.

One of the guests I met was a Christian Iraqi man called *Salam* who had come to Sweden recently as a refugee. As such, he was personally affected by the issues Huzoor had discussed in his speech.

Salam said:

***“In Iraq there is not a single person like the Khalifa (Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad) because the Khalifa speaks only truth and tells honestly what is happening in the world.”***

With a mixture of sadness and anger at the fate of his people, Salam said:

***“I wish the Iraqis had listened to the Khalifa because then I would not have had to leave my home country as a refugee and would not have had to face the Swedish people as a beggar.”***

Another guest, Mrs. Sylliba said:

***“The Khalifa’s message is very simple – respect one another and to accept each other’s differences and not use them to incite conflict. I appreciate very much the fight he is making for peace through peace itself.”***

A Swedish guest, Goram said:

***“It was interesting how he said that if refugees are not responsible it could lead to a vicious cycle of hatred developing. He wants to stop the divide in the world increasing and this can only be praised.”***

One guest, Aaron, was particularly emotional. He said:

***“This was the most peaceful event I have ever had the fortune to attend. People from all walks of life came together to listen to the message of peace of the Islamic leader. It was a privilege as he is a truly great leader and he deserves his place in history.”***

There were many other people I met and also who other Ahmadis met who expressed their good fortune at having the opportunity to see and listen to Huzoor.

The event in Stockholm had been arranged in just over two weeks but despite this had proved to be extremely blessed and yet another occasion where *Khalifatul Masih* had spread Islam's true teachings in the most wonderful fashion.

### **Managing to find dessert**

The food at the reception had also been very delicious. The main course was grilled salmon with mashed potato. As I ate the salmon, I thought to myself how it could all have been very different, as originally the plan was to serve the guests Asian *desi langhar* food cooked at the local *Jamaat* centre in Stockholm.

Thankfully, the *Jamaat* changed this decision because they had concerns about transporting the food through the city during heavy traffic hours. Never before had I been happy to hear of potential traffic but on this occasion certainly I felt no sense of sadness!

The grilled salmon was great but I was a little disappointed that though dessert had been included on the menu it had not been served. I resolved to go back to my room after *Namaz* and eat a block or two of chocolate to satisfy my sweet craving.

However, after *Namaz* concluded I realised that I was not alone in wondering where the dessert had gone. It turned out dessert had been served after we had left the hall but thankfully there was plenty left and so almost all *Qafila* members, along with various members of Sweden *Jamaat* returned to the reception hall, where we were served quite delicious *crème brulee*.

### **Precious moments**

When Huzoor left the hall at 9.25pm, there still remained 20minutes until *Maghreb* and *Isha*. Rather than return to his residence Huzoor went and sat on a sofa bench in the public area outside the room where we would offer Salat.

A moment later, someone told me that Huzoor had called me and so I immediately went over to where he was seated. Very kindly, Huzoor told me to sit down next to him and thereafter Huzoor spoke about the reception. *Alhamdolillah*, he seemed pleased.

Huzoor said:

***“Considering this function was arranged at the last minute the event was very good and there was good attendance. However, it would have been better if the media had attended.”***

Regarding the media, Huzoor later also questioned Amir sahib about this and said that he hoped the local *Jamaat* had purposely not invited the media after the ruling party had objected to part of Huzoor’s interview from the previous day.

Amir sahib said this was not the case and that the media had been invited but their main focus and interest had been the Mosque opening in Malmo.

Huzoor then told me that he had purposely chosen to discuss the refugee situation in his address because Sweden had been directly affected and so he

wished to inform them of the best way to handle this issue in light of Islam's teachings.



I mentioned how the feedback I had received from guests clearly suggested that the guests had appreciated this fact and thereafter I proceeded to mention some of the conversations I had had with guests.

I gave the comment of one guest who had said:

***“Your Khalifa was aware of and referred to local Swedish issues and news that even I was not aware!”***

Upon hearing this, Huzoor smiled and said:

***“Yes, even one of the MPs said to me after that he was not aware of one local news report I had mentioned in my speech.”***

Thereafter, Huzoor said:

***“Here in Stockholm the days are very long because Maghreb time is 9.45pm and Fajr time is 3am.”***

I responded by saying that when I was informed Fajr was at 3am, I thought that Munir Javed sahib was joking!

*Alhamdolillah* those moments were extremely precious, as Huzoor seemed very relaxed and satisfied with the event.

### **A blessed second week**

*Alhamdolillah*, the second week of Huzoor’s tour of Scandinavia had come to an end and what a truly blessed week it had been.

Huzoor had not only inaugurated the Mahmood Mosque but had addressed receptions in Malmo and Stockholm and been interviewed by multiple media outlets and held various meetings. In addition, Huzoor had personally met hundreds of Ahmadis.

I looked forward eagerly to the rest of Huzoor’s visit to Stockholm and to the final part of the tour in Gothenburg.

### **End of Part 2**

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