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A Personal Account

Part 2

By Abid Khan

Introduction to Part 2

In *part 1*, I wrote about Huzoor's engagements and various events leading up to the Peace Symposium 2018. *Part 2* will include details of the Peace Symposium itself, as well as further blessed events that took place in the days that followed.

Press Conference

Alhamdulillah, on 17 March 2018, Huzoor arrived at the Baitul Futuh Mosque a few minutes before 6pm to grace the Peace Symposium 2018 with his presence.

Huzoor immediately proceeded to the Exhibition room where he held a Press Conference with media representatives.

Journalists from various media outlets, including the *Evening Standard*, *The Independent* and several others were present.

One journalist asked Huzoor his views about the so-called '*Punish a Muslim Day*', wherein far-right extremists had published a leaflet calling for violence against Muslims in the UK.

In response, Huzoor said that such campaigns were, in part, a reaction to the terrorist atrocities perpetrated by so-called Muslims in the UK and elsewhere. However, Huzoor said that to target the entire community of Muslims because of the act of a few extremists was completely wrong.

Huzoor said:

“If a few Muslims have done attacks and conducted brutalities, does it mean that we should indiscriminately target all Muslims and kill them or that it is ok to hurt every single Muslim? So, I think the government and authorities should take measures to protect the Muslims.”



Another journalist asked Huzoor how he saw the long-term future of the world and whether violence and conflict were likely to increase over the next sixty to seventy years.

In response, Huzoor said:

“I always say that to bring an end to the violence we must recognise Our Creator, we must respect each other and we must do justice. If justice does not prevail in the world then the world will continue to suffer. Alternatively, if a Third World War erupts people will then come to understand that what they have been doing was wrong.”

Huzoor continued:

“Either you reform yourself or wait for the punishment that, according to my belief, is the Wrath of Allah. So, let us pray that it (conflict and injustice) stops and that the Third World War does not erupt.”

Pushing the boundaries

During the Press Conference, I stood a few feet from Huzoor and I became tense when one of the Asian journalists in the audience asked a second question.

We had briefed the journalists in advance that, due to the constraints of time, they would only be able to ask one question each.

Whilst all the other journalists had respected this, the Asian journalist asked a second question and I could see from his body language that he was getting ready to ask a third.

I gestured to one of the MTA staff to take the microphone from him so that it could be passed to another journalist. However, when he approached the journalist, he stubbornly refused to give the microphone back!

As soon as Huzoor had completed his answer, the journalist began to ask a third question. At that point, with trepidation, I approached Huzoor and indicated that time was very limited.

Most graciously, Huzoor acknowledged my concern and himself told the journalist that due to time restraints he should give someone else an opportunity.

I was extremely grateful to Huzoor, as the situation was such that only he could have handled it because the journalist was not willing to listen to the rest of us!



A symbol of love and peace

The Press Conference concluded with a question from a journalist who had travelled from Spain. He said:

“Your Holiness, I have come from Andalucía, south of Spain, whereas you know, in a little village called Pedro Abad, in 1982 was built the first Mosque in Spain for more than 600 years. What does that Mosque

(Basharat Mosque) mean to you and for the entire Ahmadiyya community?

In response, Huzoor said:

“For a very long period of time the Muslims were not allowed to construct a Mosque in Spain but when finally permission was granted by the Government, we felt it appropriate to construct a Mosque in Spain that would prove to be not only a place of worship but also a symbol of peace and harmony. A symbol that proclaimed to the Spanish people that Mosques were not the cause of creating disturbance or doing harm to others but were are a source of illuminating and spreading the light of love, peace and harmony!”

Huzoor’s words were a beautiful way to end the Press Conference and, as it concluded, I breathed a sigh of relief that it had transpired successfully.

Thereafter, over the next half an hour, the guests continued to arrive for the main event, whilst Huzoor met some dignitaries privately before leading the Maghreb and Isha prayers in the Mosque.

The Peace Symposium

The Peace Symposium commenced at 7pm in a packed Tahir Hall. More than 900 people were present, including almost 600 guests.

Following the recitation of the Holy Quran, a welcome address was given by Amir Sahib UK followed by guest remarks.

Dr Aaron Rhodes, renowned Human Rights activist and *President of the Forum for Religious Freedom Europe* spoke about the persecution faced by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Pakistan.

Dr Aaron Rhodes said:

“I am gravely worried about the situation of Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan and other countries. You are a community being punished for your moral and social achievements. You stand for the rule of law, but endure murder, torture and discrimination, as perpetrators enjoy impunity and are encouraged and protected by state authorities. You are demonised, ostracised and marginalised.”

Dr Luigi de Salvia, *Vice President of the World Conference of Religions Europe for Peace* said:

“This symposium that you organise annually, since 15 years, is one of the most important meetings in our continent... We will always be at your side in defending religious freedom of expression.”

A Russian winner

Thereafter, Huzoor presented Angelina Alekseeva, the representative of Dr Leonid Roshal, a famous paediatrician from Russia with *the Ahmadiyya Muslim Prize for the Advancement of Peace* in recognition of his outstanding medical and humanitarian services.

Giving the Peace Symposium Prize to a Russian doctor would not normally be considered controversial but given that political tensions between the UK and Russia that had peaked in the days leading up to the Peace Symposium, I imagined some of the guests or journalists may have thought that it was an interesting choice.



If anything, giving the award to a prominent Russian was an embodiment of the fact that our Jamaat is a spiritual and religious community that is not influenced by politics.

Given the huge tensions that existed, related to the poisoning of a former Russian spy in the UK just days earlier, worldly organisations might have taken advantage of the situation by deciding to withhold the award or to give it to someone else. Certainly, if we had taken that decision I am sure we would have garnered a lot of media coverage, but every decision made by the Jamaat is based on justice and fairness.

Thus, where a Russian doctor had done some amazing humanitarian work, the Jamaat presented him with its Peace Prize, regardless of other factors.

Huzoor's address

The keynote address delivered by Huzoor was emotional, powerful and extremely faith inspiring. I, and surely all of the Ahmadi Muslims listening, felt great pride listening to the magnificent way in which Huzoor delivered the true teachings of Islam and analysed the politics of the world.



I wrote in *part 1* how I was fortunate enough to be present when Huzoor dictated his notes a few days before.

Yet, hearing Huzoor deliver his address in front of the audience was a completely different experience.

Huzoor covered so many topics and linked each one together delivering an address that I am sure will go down in history.

I firmly believe that mankind will one day look back and either think that '*If only we had listened to the words of the Khalifatul Masih, or I hope and pray they will say 'Thank God that we heard his message and were able to take heed'.*



One thing I noted and was noted by others as well, was that Huzoor's oratory was somewhat louder than on other occasions. I asked Huzoor about it the next day and he confirmed that he did elevate his voice more than normal.

During his address, Huzoor urged world leaders and governments to "*change their priorities*" and to help ease the suffering of people in developing nations.

Huzoor vehemently condemned the *international arms trade* and said that those nations who were producing weapons being used in war-torn countries had "*blood on their hands*".

He also said that children born into extreme poverty or in areas of conflict were easy and vulnerable targets for terrorist recruiters.

Huzoor spoke of the dangers of extremism amongst Muslims and the increasing threat of far-right nationalists and also refuted claims that Islamic teachings promoted any form of terrorism or extremism.

Speaking about global priorities, Huzoor said:

“In recent times, one of the issues that many politicians and intellectuals have debated and campaigned about is climate change and specifically a reduction in carbon emissions... Yet, at the same time, the developed world, and especially the world’s leaders, should also realise that there are other issues that must be tackled with the same urgency.”

Huzoor continued:

“We must realise that the result of such poverty has severe implications for the wider-world and directly affects global peace and security. The fact that children have no option, but to spend their days collecting water for their families, means that they are unable to go to school or to attain any form of education. They are stuck in a vicious cycle of illiteracy and poverty that is seemingly endless and hugely damaging to society.”

Huzoor also spoke about the rise of nationalism and far-right sentiment in Western countries.

Huzoor said:

“It is particularly disturbing that far-right groups have become increasingly vocal and have seen their membership rise and have even

made political gains. They too are extremists, who seek to poison Western society, by inciting the masses against those who have a different colour of skin or who hold different beliefs.”

Very powerfully, Huzoor said it was time for the world to stop blaming only Muslims for the world’s problems.

Huzoor said:

“Whilst I accept that the evil acts of some Muslims have greatly damaged society, I do not accept that it is only Muslims who are to blame for the volatility of today’s world... Suffice to say, that now is the time that humanity distanced itself from the notion, that only Muslims are to blame for the problems in the world.”

Huzoor concluded by calling on the world to follow the blessed example of forbearance and forgiveness of the Holy Prophet (sa).

Huzoor said:

“When the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) returned victoriously to Makkah, he did not take a single drop of blood in revenge; rather, according to the command of Allah the Almighty, he proclaimed that all of his tormentors and all those who had violently opposed Islam, were to be instantly forgiven.”

Huzoor continued:

“This was the timeless and magnificent example of the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) and it is this spirit of compassion, grace and mercy that Muslims and non-Muslims need to adopt in the world today. It is this spirit of forgiveness and benevolence that all nations, whether large or small, rich or poor, need to develop. Only then will long-term peace be attainable.”

Impact of Huzoor’s words

Alhamdulillah, the impact of Huzoor’s address was instant and far-reaching.

Following the event, Huzoor personally met with hundreds of guests who each thanked Huzoor for his courage, honesty and sincerity.



Many sought the opportunity to have their photo with Huzoor recognising the importance of his message and being extremely humbled by his grace and kind personality.

Even though it had been a long and tiring evening, Huzoor stood and waited until every guest who desired to meet him had the chance to do so.

Separately, dozens of interviews and conversations took place in which guests spoke of how Huzoor's speech had personally affected them and how they could only admire his words and his efforts to invite mankind towards peace and justice.

One guest was Professor Leif Wenar, the *Chair of Philosophy and Law at King's College*. He is the author of the acclaimed book '*Blood Oil – Tyrants, Violence and the Rules that Run the World*'. Professor Wenar had met Huzoor a year earlier at the Fazl Mosque.

After listening to Huzoor's Peace Symposium address, Professor Wenar said:

"It was a real honour for me to meet His Holiness once again. I am going to go home with a lot to think about, in terms of inequality and its effect on world security.

Professor Wenar continued:

"His Holiness is obviously such a wise and decent man whose priorities for his community are always for peace and reconciliation and the coherence of all people. These are things that I very much believe in and I believe in him as a leader of his community and of the world."

Another guest and former Minister of State, Sir Edward Davey, Liberal Democrat MP, said:

“His Holiness was challenging politicians in his speech to make sure that we put peace the top of our list of priorities.”

A guest from Italy said:

“I just met His Holiness and I told him that his speech was the nicest and most beautiful speech I have ever heard in my life and I think he has elevated Islam and the thought of peace to the highest point imaginable.”

A visibly emotional non-Ahmadi Iraqi lady said:

“During his address, it seemed as though the Khalifa had opened up a book of truth and the book that he presented is one that all mankind should read. He is such a brave person to be able to say these critical words in front of local politicians without any sense of fear. I kept praying for the long life of the Khalifa because I have never heard a Muslim leader speak with such grace ever before.”

A lady, who had attended last year’s Peace Symposium but could not attend this year watched the live stream, was *Councillor Christina McGilligan* and after the event she said:

“A powerful address by His Holiness and I hung on to his every word. I could feel the depth of his humanity as he delivered a speech that should go out to every Councillor in the land and every corner that can be

reached. It's a long time since I heard such a poignant and significant address, full of compassion, truth and guidance with simplicity that must not be ignored – or be it at our peril."

Speaking about her experience of watching the live stream, Councillor McGilligan said:

"I was thrilled to sit in the comfort of my own home on such a bitter cold night yet feel the warmth of the Peace Symposium 2018!"

A guest from France said:

"Normally religious leaders speak only about religion but the Khalifa's speech was much broader and a lesson in geo-politics! It was an address that could be delivered at the world's greatest universities. At the same time, His Holiness did not ignore religion but explained the truth about Islam and what it really is."

The guest continued:

"We have a problem of radicalisation in France and people fear Muslims and so I really hope the Khalifa comes to France and is given a lot of media coverage because he is the only Muslim leader who can reassure our people. I am Jewish but I am ready to stand with your Khalifa as he leads the effort to promote peace and to prove that Islam is a peaceful religion."

Meetings with foreign delegations

The next day, Sunday 18 March 2018, Huzoor met various delegations of guests who had come from abroad to attend the Peace Symposium.

The delegations were from *France, Belgium, Ghana, Niger, Iceland, Hungary, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway* and *Holland*. A further meeting with guests from *Greece* was held on Monday morning.

In each of the meetings, the guests were able to convey their appreciation of Huzoor's message at the Peace Symposium and to ask questions.

A guest from Belgium, a *Director* at a well-known think tank, took the opportunity to comment on Huzoor's address. He said:

"Your Holiness, your speech at the Peace Symposium has given me great strength. It has increased my faith in humanity. Indeed, I had always wondered where in the world was the true representative of Islam and last night I found my answer – it is you. Thus, it is a great honour and privilege to sit before you and to meet you. Your words are an inspiration to mankind and you have proven that Islam is a religion of peace."

A guest from France informed Huzoor that he worked as '*peacemaker*' in the Middle East.

In this role, he sought to bring different groups and politicians from opposing sides together and played the role of a mediator.

He informed Huzoor that, in his opinion, the main obstacle to peace was the divergent interests of the various Governments, who were unwilling to compromise.

Upon this, Huzoor said:

“We can only hope and pray that one day there will be peace in the Middle East and that the innocent people will be relieved of their suffering. The only way is for all of the parties and the different sides to show sincerity and be determined to attain peace. They must earnestly desire peace and be willing to make sacrifices in order to achieve it. This is the only way.”

Huzoor also met with a *Minister of State* from the African country Niger, during which the Minister said:

“I was sent here officially by the President of our National Assembly and having participated I wish to say that the Peace Symposium was a symbol of peace for our time. Every word you spoke had a very deep meaning and especially the part about the hypocrisy of the arms trade had great significance. Your address was a revolutionary speech that has won the hearts of those who listened and I personally will continue to contemplate and ponder over your words for a very long time.”

The Minister continued:

“As I listened to you, it was my deep desire and wish that every Islamic leader in the world learned from you and taught the same things that

you teach. If this were the case then surely the Muslim nations would become centres of peace and prosperity.”

The Minister also informed Huzoor that his Government had resisted pressure from rich Muslim countries to persecute Ahmadi Muslims.

In response, Huzoor said:

“It is this type of religious tolerance that is very much needed throughout the Muslim world. If such values were practiced by all Muslim leaders then the problems of the Muslim world would cease and instead of extremism and sectarianism, the true value of Islam and the strength of the Muslim Ummah would dawn upon the rest of the world.”

Huzoor continued:

“It is my prayer that the Muslim nations become exemplars of justice and service to humanity. It is my prayer that the Muslim nations come to utilise the resources Allah has granted them in the best way and for the benefit of all mankind.”

In his meeting with guests from Iceland, Huzoor mentioned that recently a new law had been proposed in Iceland outlawing male circumcision.

Speaking about this issue, Huzoor said:

“This is a very divisive issue that can cause a lot of unnecessary tension and hurt amongst the Jewish and Muslim communities. You should let

your Government know that it is not wise to turn every single matter into a political issue.”

Huzoor continued:

“For the sake of gaining political popularity amongst certain segments of society, such issues are raised from time to time, yet all they serve to do is to alienate certain communities and weaken social cohesion. Thus, my message to your Government is that they should not interfere in private religious matters.”

Meeting with Ghanaian Minister for Information

Huzoor also met with Mustapha Abdul Hamid, *Ghana’s Minister of State for Information*, who had travelled especially as a representative of the Ghanaian Government to attend the Peace Symposium.

The meeting was conducted in an informal and light atmosphere, as Huzoor and the Minister spoke of their shared love for Ghana.

After hearing that the Minister was originally from the city of Tamale, Huzoor told the Minister about his own experiences in Ghana.

Huzoor said:

“Between 1977 and 1985, I lived in Ghana. Half of the time, I lived in the North and half of the time in the South. This included two years living in

Tamale. Throughout my time in your country, I tried to do justice and to serve the nation to the best of my abilities.”

The Minister informed Huzoor that the main road from Tamale to Kumasi was in very poor condition.

Huzoor asked why the Government had not improved the road and the Minister responded by saying that they were still a ‘new’ Government and so had not had enough time to bring about such improvements.

Upon this, Huzoor said:

“It is your Government’s duty to improve the roads and one year is more than enough to bring about huge change if you are determined and focused. Thus, you should not waste any more time and so through your actions let the people of Ghana know that your Government is a ‘Government of the people’ who is improving the infrastructure and one that is intent on raising the living standards of the public.”

The Minister told Huzoor that he was very close to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and that he was ‘*virtually an Ahmadi*’.

In response, Huzoor smiled and said:

“You are a Muslim and so you are an Ahmadi because a name of the Holy Prophet (sa) was also Ahmad!”

Meeting with Greek guests

Two guests from Greece, a political consultant and a local journalist, also had the opportunity to ask Huzoor various questions.

On most matters, the guests fully agreed with Huzoor's analysis and the teachings of Islam, though on one or two issues you could also see that their views were different.

Nonetheless, the meeting was held in a very cordial and friendly atmosphere, which the guests appreciated a great deal and Huzoor also enjoyed.

The Greek journalist commented on Huzoor's address at the Peace Symposium. She said:

"Your Holiness, we both loved every minute of your speech. Your words were virtuous and sincere. My only question is whether it is really possible for us to all co-exist peacefully?"

In response, Huzoor said:

"Only if people realise their duties towards God Almighty and towards their fellow man. However, increasingly people are materialistic and selfishness is rising and so under such conditions peace cannot prevail."

The political consultant, currently working as an official adviser to a well-known Greek Mayor, also spoke about Huzoor's address. He said:

"I really liked the fact that you quoted an author and gave references of media columns in your speech. As a political consultant, I know that politicians are often hesitant to do this but the fact you were willing showed your humility and it was a very effective way of substantiating your core message."

The guest said that he thought a natural progression for all major religions in the modern world was to have female clerics.

In response, Huzoor explained that Ahmadi Muslims followed the teachings of the Holy Prophet (sa) and that during his time women were not Imams of men but could lead other women in prayer.

Huzoor said that even Western authorities were realising that keeping men and women close together constantly was not always wise. Huzoor cited how a 'women's-only safe zone' was set up at Berlin's New Year's celebration and how 'women's-only offices' were opening in New York.

Huzoor said:

"If men and women are the same in every respect, why do the men and women compete separately at the Olympic Games or at other sporting events? It is because there are differences. Hence, you accept that men and women are different but you cannot accept that it means they can have different roles in society."

Huzoor continued:

“Our philosophy is that we should let women be free, independent and let them excel without letting the shadow of men get in the way! The best and most fruitful trees are those that are in a position to absorb light without any obstacles in their way.”

In response, the guest said that his experience was that in single-sex schools the boys were ‘*obsessed*’ by girls but in mixed-schools they were less so. Hence, he believed it was better to keep boys and girls together and to allow free-mixing.

Upon this, Huzoor smiled and said:

“Yes, that is one theory! However, it is one that I do not subscribe to! Rather, Islam teaches us to remove those situations where there is a chance, no matter how small, of abuse or for those acts to take place that can hurt families and weaken society.”

Upon hearing Huzoor’s answer the guest nodded. He may not have changed his views entirely, but it was clear that he understood the rationale behind Islamic teachings much better than before.

Finally, he asked Huzoor if it was permissible to ‘*adapt*’ religious texts and to reform them according to the era in which a person is living.

In response, Huzoor said:

“Most of the scriptures and sacred texts were for their time and their era, however, the one exception is the Holy Quran. It is a universal teaching for all eras and all times. There is no problem or issue that we face for which we cannot get guidance and help from the Quran. Every issue in today’s era can be solved by the Quran.”

Huzoor continued:

“Arabic is a vast language and each word of the Holy Quran can give rise to multiple interpretations or meanings. In this way, the interpretation of verses can be different, yet the revealed text can never be changed because that is the means of weakening and destroying our faith.”

Press Conference with International media

A few days before the Peace Symposium, Huzoor instructed me to make a list of all journalists coming from abroad to attend the Peace Symposium.

Alhamdulillah, journalists from North America, Africa and across Europe were due to attend.

In past years, after the Peace Symposium, such journalists would meet Huzoor with their respective delegations and would interview Huzoor in his office.

Given this, I humbly recommended that a formal press conference was held in which the foreign journalists could meet Huzoor on Sunday morning in one meeting. It would save Huzoor's time and also ensure that he was not asked the same question repeatedly by different journalists.

Most graciously, Huzoor approved this suggestion and so at 11am on Sunday 18 March a Press Conference was held in the Mahmood Hall in which 10 media outlets from abroad attended.



The first few questions were from journalists based in Canada and thereafter a journalist from Holland took the microphone and said:

"Your Holiness, unlike the previous questioners I am not from Canada. I am from Holland but of course, the Canadians liberated Holland during World War 2 and so thank you to the Canadians!"

Huzoor enjoyed his comment and laughed.

Thereafter the Dutch journalist asked:

“I really liked your speech, but I do wonder if perhaps you are too optimistic about human nature and human history. We have always seen that there have been good people and bad people and we have always seen wars and conflicts. Thus, is it not inevitable that such conflicts will continue forever?”

Huzoor smiled, perhaps at the fact that he had been called an optimist because in the past certain Western politicians had suggested that Huzoor’s view of the world was too pessimistic, only to later recognise the accuracy of his statements.

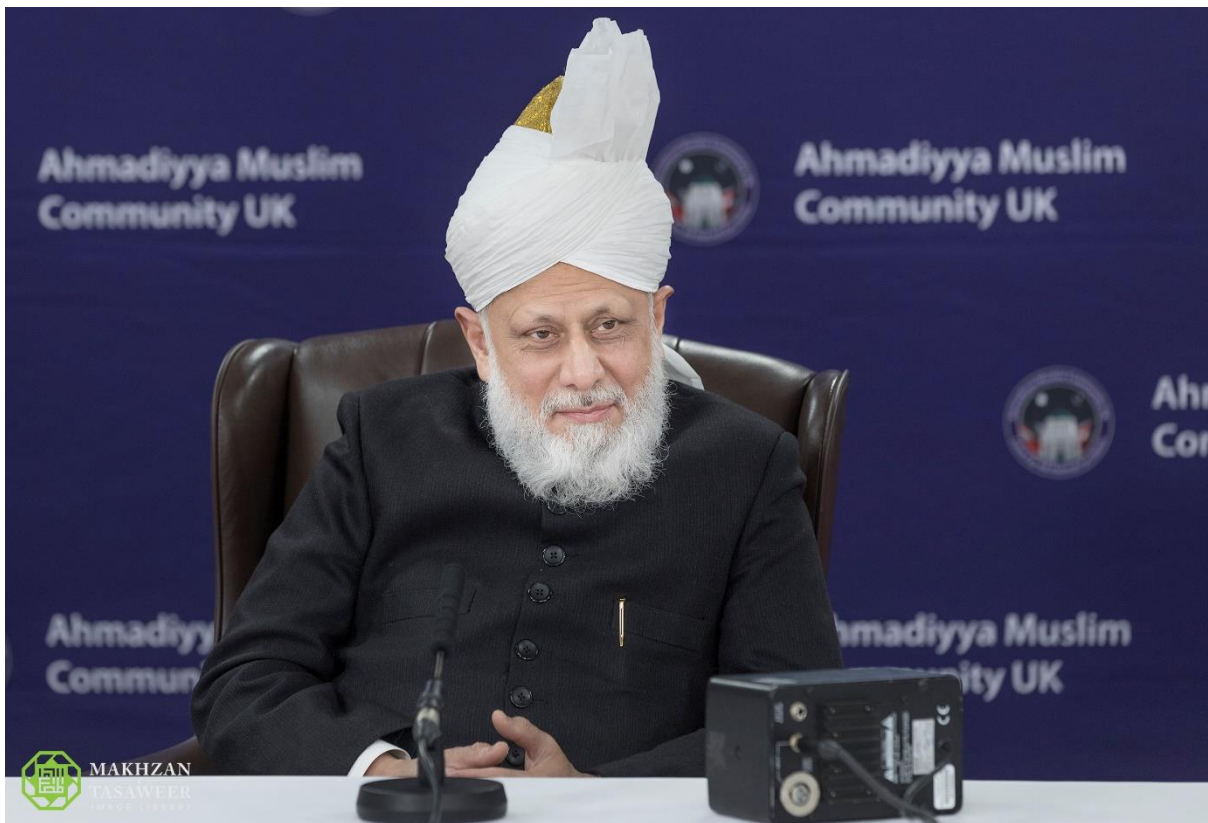
Huzoor said:

“You may say that I am an optimist, but we believe in the acceptance of prayers and we believe that it is always possible to get better results. The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community made it clear to his followers that it was their mission to inform people of their duties and responsibilities to mankind. This is what we are doing and will continue to do.”

Huzoor continued:

“If you look at religious history, the Prophets always had to face persecution and opposition and initially they had very few followers,

whilst the numbers of miscreants who harmed the peace of society were not law-abiding and acted against the commandments of Allah were far greater. However, in the end, the Prophets succeeded and fulfilled their missions.”



Huzoor continued:

“Hence, we believe that ultimately the number of people who are good moral people and who follow the commands of God will increase. If however, the situation of the world continues to spiral out of control, I believe that the law of nature will come into force and mankind will have to suffer the Wrath of Allah.”

An Italian journalist referred back to Huzoor's address at the European Parliament in 2012 and to the part where Huzoor urged Europe to stay united. He asked if Huzoor's views had changed after Brexit.

In response, Huzoor said:

“What I said in 2012 at the European Parliament was according to my belief and my beliefs have not changed. If Europe stays united it will be stronger and have a greater voice in the world and will be in a position to stand up to the major powers like America and others. Personally, I voted against Brexit and so my views have not changed at all!”

A journalist from Sweden, of Bosnian origin, mentioned the *Bosnian War* in the early 1990s. He said that until the end there were Bosnian Muslims who remained optimistic that change would come, even as their brothers and sisters were being killed in their thousands.

Comparing it with the situation of Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan, he asked if it was sensible for Ahmadis to remain optimistic that change would come or whether it was better for all Ahmadis to accept their fate and leave Pakistan once and for all.

In response, Huzoor said that ever since the persecution of Ahmadi Muslims had become State-sanctioned, Pakistan had faced crisis after crisis and even non-Ahmadi columnists and commentators were now writing that there seemed a direct link between the enactment of anti-Ahmadi laws in Pakistan and the failure of the nation. Nevertheless, Huzoor made it clear that Ahmadi Muslims would not become hopeless.

Huzoor said:

“We believe that Allah the Almighty hears every one of our prayers and that no sincere prayer will ever go wasted. We will never give up and we will never turn against the country. We will always be loyal to it. We will always be honest and sincere to our nation. We will remain forever law-abiding.”

Very emotionally, Huzoor continued:

“No matter what cruelties they perpetrate against us it can never shake our faith and nor will they be able to change our behaviour! For we understand the beauty and value of remaining honest, law-abiding and moral at all times.”

Thereafter, a Spanish journalist who was producing a documentary about our Jamaat asked Huzoor how the Jamaat planned to spread its ‘peaceful ideology’ in Spain.

In reply, Huzoor smiled and said:

“We Ahmadis are united at one hand and so all Ahmadi Muslims follow their leader and, as a result, all Ahmadis are peaceful. Hence, if all the Spanish people accept Ahmadiyyat then everything will be well and good!”

Upon this, both Huzoor and the journalist laughed. Such a dream may seem far-fetched at this time, yet I am quite sure that Huzoor had full conviction

that a day would come when true Islam, under *Khilafat-e-Ahmadiyya*, would spread again throughout the Spanish nation.

After Huzoor had concluded his answer, I informed him that the 30-minute timeslot had concluded because I knew Huzoor had many further meetings scheduled that morning.

However, Huzoor noticed that one journalist, from Macedonia, had yet to speak and so Huzoor offered him the opportunity to ask a question.

Despite meeting thousands of people each year, Huzoor recognised the face of the journalist and asked if he had met him in Germany.

The journalist confirmed that he had met Huzoor and expressed his surprise and joy that Huzoor had remembered him.

He asked Huzoor about the prospect of long-term peace in the world prevailing.

In response, Huzoor said:

“To create true, long-lasting peace will take time. You cannot change a person’s heart overnight. From our perspective, we Ahmadi Muslims do not want any power. We do not want any government. We do not want any wealth. All we want is to change people’s hearts and make them realise their duties towards their Creator and towards their fellow beings.”

A complete answer

The foreign media who had assembled for the press conference to meet Huzoor were all extremely pleased to have the opportunity.

However, one journalist, from Austria, later mentioned that he had felt Huzoor's response to his question had been '*diplomatic*'.

He had asked Huzoor a question about the development of an alliance amongst civil society in Pakistan, comprising minorities, who could work towards the eradication of the blasphemy laws.

Unfortunately, during the Press Conference, his question was not clearly phrased.

After hearing his view that Huzoor's answer was 'diplomatic', I invited him to send his question in writing, which he did a few days later.

His written question was:

“Besides the Ahmadiyya Community, also other minorities including Christians, Hindus, Sikhs and Jews have been severely affected by the Pakistani blasphemy laws. Do you think it is possible to create a civil society alliance that is dedicated to restoring freedom in Pakistan?”

At the next opportunity, I presented his question to Huzoor.

Upon hearing the journalist thought his answer was ‘diplomatic’, Huzoor smiled before saying:

“I could not understand at all what he meant because the way he phrased the question was not clear. Anyway, now I know what he was asking so you should write down what I say and send it to him.”

Rather than disregarding the comment of the journalist, Huzoor did not wish for any ambiguity to be left and so spent the next few minutes dictating a detailed response.

Huzoor explained the power of extremist Mullahs in Pakistan and how the Pakistani Government were ever fearful of their ability to mobilise the masses.

Huzoor cited the recent example of how a provision of the *Khatme-Nabuwat* blasphemy law was very slightly amended leading to an uproar in Pakistan, where the extremists were able to take the Pakistani Government hostage and force the reversal of the initial change. The end result was that hatred of Ahmadis was further entrenched.

Thus, Huzoor explained that no matter how closely aligned the different groups were, no Government of Pakistan would likely ever have the courage to bring about real change.

In his response, Huzoor also explained that under the current electoral system, Pakistani Ahmadis were entirely disenfranchised from the democratic process and in this way the persecution they faced was unique.

Huzoor said that Ahmadis would rather forfeit the right to vote than to declare themselves as non-Muslims.

Huzoor said:

“We can never disassociate ourselves from Islam, no matter the pain or torment that we have to face as a result.”

Thereafter, Huzoor said:

“As for a progressive civil society movement which is used to promote human rights in Pakistan and to try and bring positive change through peaceful means, we would be happy to assist and to cooperate to the best of our means and abilities with other groups.”

Huzoor continued:

“In terms of belief, I also wish to make it clear that according to our beliefs there is no punishment whatsoever for blasphemy in Islam. Thus, the Pakistani laws, which may claim to defend Islam, do nothing but offend it and disregard the absolute principle of freedom of religion that is an inherent part of Islam.”

As he concluded his response, Huzoor smiled and concluded by saying:

“I hope I have now answered the question to your satisfaction, however, if there is any further clarification required or you are not satisfied

please feel free to write back and I am happy to further elaborate and explain.”

Upon hearing Huzoor’s answer, I said:

“Huzoor, I am sure that he will be satisfied by what you have said and any thoughts of a ‘diplomatic answer’ will have ended!”

Indeed, the next day, the journalist wrote back and was extremely grateful that Huzoor had taken the time to respond to his question and made it clear that he fully understood now what Huzoor meant and appreciated his answer a great deal.

An example of Huzoor’s grace

Our *Press & Media* team had made a concerted effort to invite media to the Peace Symposium and to attain media coverage of the event.

We were actually better organised than in the past and we had a bigger team, yet in the days after the Peace Symposium, it dawned upon us that the media coverage had been very limited.

Personally, I felt extremely ashamed and as though we had let Huzoor down and not fulfilled our duties.

In recent years, I have been able to inform Huzoor of increasing media coverage of our major Jamaat events but on this occasion, I had to inform Huzoor that we had not achieved our goals.

Most graciously and compassionately, Huzoor did not reprimand us or express his disappointment.

Rather, after I presented my report to him, Huzoor said:

“Jitna hogya, acha hogya hai”

Meaning:

“Whatever coverage was received was good.”

Where this comment further increased our love and gratitude to Huzoor, the entire experience also showed us that, as in all other things, good results were ultimately due only to the Blessings of Allah the Almighty and not due to any of our personal efforts.

An outside perspective

Alhamdulillah, one writer who did come to the Peace Symposium and who wrote a detailed and positive portrayal of the event was a young writer called *Tegan Tallullah*.

Tegan has founded her own blog about the ‘*politics of climate change*’ called *The Climate Lemon* (theclimatelemon.com).

A few days after publishing her article, Tegan shared with me her personal experiences and reflections of attending the Peace Symposium.

About meeting Huzoor, Tegan said:

“I found His Holiness to be very articulate, solemn and compassionate, showing great empathy not only to the poor and innocent but even to bigoted people who hate Muslims.”

Tegan continued:

“I am not religious and I don't personally look to any religious figure for moral guidance. However, I recognise that the majority of the world population do, so in that way, religious leaders are extremely relevant and influential, and if they use that power to promote values of peace and cooperation then I think that's fantastic. As I said in my blog, I found His Holiness' speech to be so insightful and touching - if he inspires millions of Muslims and others that can only be a good thing.”

Describing Huzoor's speech as 'very profound', Tegan added:

“During the speech towards the end, His Holiness spoke about how Muhammad (sa) is an exemplar of forgiveness, treating his defeated enemies with civility even after they engaged in such brutality. Of course, I am not one of those people that think Islam is naturally violent, I have always found that view very ignorant. But even so, I was quite surprised at that, I didn't know the Quran contains such a lesson of forgiveness.”

Having noted the lack of media coverage this year herself, Tegan said:

“I would have liked to see more media coverage of the symposium. Call me cynical but it's almost as if some publications have ignored it because it doesn't fit their preconceived narrative of what Muslims do and believe!”

I could not agree more with her last comment.

Meeting with Canadian Atfal

After a short break for lunch following the morning meetings and interviews, Huzoor held a 45-minute *Question and Answer* session with around 100 members of Atfal who had travelled from Canada to meet Huzoor.

During the meeting, a member of Atfal asked how a person would know if their repentance had been accepted by Allah for a mistake or sin they had committed.

In reply, Huzoor said:

“There is one way to know if you have been forgiven and that is if you abstain from wrong acts in the future. If you keep repeating your mistakes it means you are not forgiven but if you stop and have no desire to do that wrong thing again you can consider that Allah has accepted your repentance.”

Huzoor continued:

“You should always have the habit of seeking forgiveness from Allah and doing Istighfar as much as possible. It is not necessary that Allah the Almighty will forgive instantly. There are narrations that show it can take much longer. For example, there is a story of an elder who sought forgiveness for a very long period and it was only after thirty years had passed that he was forgiven by God. At that time, Allah the Almighty said that He was now accepting all the prayers that the man had made over the past thirty years.”



One boy asked Huzoor if he could become a professional athlete. Upon this, Huzoor asked him if he was a *Waqf-e-Nau* and the boy confirmed he was.

Thereafter, Huzoor said:

“As a Waqf-e-Nau it is your duty to spend your life in a way that benefits other people. If you are an athlete, you might run a few miles but how will

that serve humanity? Thus, you should try to pursue a more valuable profession – become a doctor, a teacher, an engineer or anything where you can serve humanity and better the lives of other people. Alongside this, feel free to continue athletics or other sports but your main focus should be on pursuing something that is useful for humanity.”

Another boy asked Huzoor how he personally tolerated difficult situations and trials.

In response, Huzoor said:

“Every person faces some trials at points in their lives but when such difficulties occur they should not just collapse in tears and feel sorry for themselves. Certainly, men should be strong and face adversity with strength and faith and above all should seek the Help of Allah the Almighty. They should ask Allah for the strength and patience to overcome their problems and the wisdom and knowledge to tackle them.”

Huzoor continued:

“Alongside the prayer, they should use the brain that Allah has given them to try to solve their problems to the best of their abilities. In this way, there is no problem or challenge that cannot be overcome. If we pray sincerely, Allah will never leave us.”

As the meeting concluded, Huzoor said that he had noticed that most of the boys had come to *Fajr* at the Fazl Mosque. He asked how long it took them to

come from their accommodation and was told it took 25 minutes. Huzoor seemed very pleased that the young boys had made such an effort and appreciated it.

Huzoor said:

“Masha’Allah you have all done very well and put your tiredness to one side for the sake of Namaz. Allah bless you all.”

Moshahid’s glasses

During March, I took my younger son Moshahid for an eye appointment. Even though he only recently turned two, I had suspicions he would need glasses like me and Mahid. When I saw the doctor, my suspicions were confirmed, as she informed he should start wearing glasses straight away.

Getting Moshahid to wear the glasses was a challenge that we were not looking forward to, as he is going through a stage where he likes to throw everything that he gets in his hands! Thus, within three hours of getting his glasses, he had broken them and was on to the spare pair. Within another 24 hours, he had managed to break the spare pair as well!

I had not told Huzoor about this but a few days later, Huzoor himself remarked to me:

“I heard that Moshahid broke his glasses on the first day! You can get special frames for children that are flexible and made from a rubber-like material and so you should get him some of those!”

It was a very useful and much needed tip for which we were extremely grateful.

Re-launch of Al-Hakam newspaper

On 23 March 2018, Huzoor delivered his Friday Sermon at the Baitul Futuh Mosque.

As it was the *'Promised Messiah Day'*, Huzoor spoke extensively about the claim of the Promised Messiah (as).

Towards the end of the sermon, Huzoor made a special announcement, in which he announced the relaunch of the Al-Hakam newspaper, which was the first Jamaat newspaper started in the time of the Promised Messiah (as).

I have to admit I had not known of *Al-Hakam* until a day earlier when Asif Mahmood Basit sahib, *Head of the Ahmadiyya Archive and Research Centre*, informed me of the relaunch and I certainly did not understand its true significance until I heard Huzoor's words in the sermon.

Huzoor said:

"Today, I wish to make an announcement and give some good news that the Al-Hakam newspaper is being relaunched and will be published weekly here from London henceforth. This is the first newspaper started during the time of the Promised Messiah (as)."

Huzoor continued:

“Hence today, on the Promised Messiah Day, it will be relaunched. There will be a small print edition but it will also be available online at www.alhakam.org. Similarly, there will be an Al-Hakam app for mobile phones and tablets. Now that is being relaunched again, I pray that may Allah enable Al Hakam to continue publication permanently. Since this newspaper will be in English, English speaking Ahmadis should derive maximum benefit from it.”

Following the Friday Prayers, Huzoor officially relaunched *Al-Hakam* by pressing the launch button on a tablet placed near the stairs of the Baitul Futuh Mosque.



Upon doing so, Huzoor said:

“Allah Mubarak karay” – “May Allah the Almighty bless it.”

Reflections of a Waqf-e-Zindighi

Later, I took the opportunity to speak to Asif Mahmood Basit sahib about the Al-Hakam relaunch and he also narrated some of his experiences working under the guidance of Khilafat.

Asif sahib has written some of his experiences in Urdu in a very personable and interesting series of diary recollections and it was captivating to hear him describe some more incidents.

Asif sahib explained that the *Ahmadiyya Archive and Research Centre (ARC)* was established by Huzoor in 2014 to gather together and properly archive historical artefacts, articles and contributions that comprise the rich history of the Jamaat.

Telling me a little about the work of the *ARC*, Asif sahib said:

“For more than 125 years people have stored historical Jamaat documents or artefacts in their suitcases or in files in their homes or elsewhere in different parts of the world. Thus, Huzoor instructed our office to collect this history so that it is safely preserved but also so that our future generations come to know of the rich legacy of our Jamaat which teaches us so much about our history and where we have come from.”

Asif sahib explained to me that *Al-Hakam* had been established in the time of the Promised Messiah (*as*) and then again during the era of Hazrat Khalifatul

Masih II (*ra*) but eventually ceased to print. The main reasons were a lack of funds and difficulties in print and design.

Asif sahib said that ever since restrictions had been placed on the publication of *Al-Fazl* in Rabwah, he thought of seeking Huzoor's permission to launch a newspaper from London.

Initially, he thought of an Urdu newspaper but his colleague, Qaasid Muin, a young Missionary, suggested that it should be published in English so that Western audiences would be able to learn about the Jamaat's history and increase their knowledge.

Explaining how he presented the proposal to Huzoor, Asif sahib said:

"On 19 November 2017, I presented our proposal of relaunching Al-Hakam to Huzoor. As you will have noted yourself, Huzoor has two ways of giving approval. Sometimes he will say 'Ok you can do it' but Huzoor does not express much interest and it is my experience that those projects rarely prove worthwhile. Rather, Huzoor merely gives us a chance rather than simply saying 'No'."

Asif sahib continued:

"On the other side, there are occasions when you present something to Huzoor and he immediately expresses enthusiasm and encourages you a great deal. Huzoor will not only give approval but will give suggestions and instructions on how to proceed. Those are the projects that you know have the hand of Khilafat behind them and will be blessed and this was

the case with Al-Hakam. Instantaneously, Huzoor happily approved it and fully encouraged us. Thereafter, throughout the process, Huzoor guided and helped us at every step.”

I asked Asif sahib about the actual relaunch and the fact Huzoor mentioned it in his Sermon and it was very interesting to hear the reaction of the Jamaat following Huzoor’s announcement.

Asif sahib said:

“We knew Huzoor would launch the website after Jumma but we had no idea that Huzoor would mention it in his Sermon before. In my heart, I ardently hoped that Huzoor might deem it worthy of mentioning but I could never consider asking Huzoor to include mention of something in his Friday Sermon.”

Asif sahib continued:

“When Huzoor gave the website address of www.alhakam.org the response was instantaneous. From having zero traffic, within ten seconds of Huzoor announcing it, we had 400 hits on the website. The website was not yet live and so we put up a notice to say that it would be live soon. Similarly, within half an hour, hundreds of people had downloaded the app.”

Asif sahib further said:

“We had planned to play a promo on MTA after the sermon about Al-Hakam but the way Huzoor lovingly mentioned it as a ‘good news’ meant that if we had spent all of our lives promoting it we would never have been able to attract people the way Huzoor did by using those words.”

Speaking about the responsibility felt by him and his team, Asif sahib said:

“Where we were emotional and joyous, we also felt a heavy weight of responsibility. For when Huzoor graciously announced it he also prayed that this time Al-Hakam continues forever.”

As we concluded our meeting, I asked Asif Basit sahib what he had learned from Huzoor over the past decade or so in which he had been serving as a Waqf-e-Zindighi (life devotee) in London.

To my surprise, this question caused Asif sahib to become visibly emotional, as he recounted some advice Huzoor had given him some years ago.

His voice cracking with great emotion, Asif sahib said:

“I have learned so much but, from the perspective of a Waqf-e-Zindighi, certain guidance Huzoor gave me at the outset stands out. Huzoor told me to have tolerance, to have fortitude, to show patience, to be determined and to persevere no matter what. He told me not to react to every comment or situation and he said that even if others wronged me I should try to tolerate it silently.”

Asif sahib continued:

“I swear if Huzoor had not given me this guidance and instruction I would have been a complete failure as a Waqf-e-Zindighi. As long as I shall live, I shall be ever grateful to Huzoor for this.”

After regaining his composure, Asif sahib said:

“Also, I have learned that we should never think that we know Huzoor or understand him completely or that we know what he will say or do. Anyone who thinks that will be making a grave error. We can never reach that stage of understanding because Huzoor is a true man of God and we can never comprehend his spiritual connection with Allah the Almighty.”

A rare opportunity

A few days after the Peace Symposium, my wife Mala had the blessed opportunity to attend a *daftari Mulaqat* with Huzoor, as a member of the *Review of Religions* team, in which she serves.

In the days leading up to the Mulaqat, Mala became increasingly nervous. She asked me many questions about the format of *daftari Mulaqats* and what Huzoor could ask her. She prepared as best she could but remained extremely nervous. Even under normal circumstances, she finds it very difficult to speak in front of Huzoor.

On the day of the Mulaqat, she went to the Masjid and throughout the morning I was hoping and praying all will have went well.

Later, when I met Mala, she was both relieved and emotional. She said:

“Huzoor is so kind and so patient. I was told to give the first report to Huzoor during the Mulaqat and my heart was beating like never before and I was filled with nerves, yet Huzoor listened to everything I had to say, with so much patience and was extremely encouraging. It was the first time in my life that I had the honour to give a report to Huzoor and certainly it was the greatest honour I have ever had.”

Failing to heed

As per routine, I had the honour to keep Huzoor informed of the latest political and media developments in the world during the course of the month. One topic that came up a few times in March was an increasing scandal related to the social media network *Facebook*.

One afternoon, I mentioned that it was being reported that third parties had acquired the personal information of millions of people from Facebook. It had even led to some prominent users of social media to say that it was time ‘delete Facebook’.

Having given the report, I said:

“Huzoor, we Ahmadis are lucky that you told us years ago that we should avoid Facebook and so we have been saved from having our data compromised and misused.”

With a look of sadness and regret, Huzoor said:

“The sincere Ahmadis who listened to me were saved but I know there were still many who continued to use Facebook and who knows to what extent their personal information has been spread or misused.”

Jamia Ahmadiyya Convocations

On Sunday 25 March 2018, Huzoor travelled to the Jamia Ahmadiyya UK college premises in Haslemere to preside the combined Jamia Convocation ceremonies of Jamia Ahmadiyya UK, Canada and Germany.

During the event, Huzoor presented *Shahid* degree certificates to a total of 43 graduates, 18 from UK Jamia, 14 from Canada and 11 from Germany.

Prior to the awards, reports were given by Principal Jamia Germany, Principal Jamia Canada and a senior teacher of Jamia UK. For my personal taste, the first two reports were a bit too long. The UK Jamia report was shorter and this was something that Huzoor noticed himself. Thus, when he began his address, Huzoor said that perhaps to save his time or perhaps because the audience was already familiar with Jamia UK, the report had been shorter but this did not mean that the activities of Jamia UK were any less. Rather, if anything, there were even more.

During the course of his address, Huzoor reminded the graduates of their duties and said that it was imperative that they lived their lives in an exemplary fashion and that they spent every possible moment in the service of their faith.

Huzoor said:

“It is your duty to safeguard humanity by bringing it back towards God Almighty. This is the real purpose of devoting your lives and to achieve this supreme goal, you must seek to fulfil your potential and to utilise all your faculties and capabilities. Remember, this is no easy task and so you will have to be fully determined and never waver in your efforts.”



Later in his address, Huzoor spoke of the need for the Missionaries to show patience and to guide people with love.

Huzoor said:

“Much wrongdoing and conflicts arise from the fact that people think ill of others. Thus, even if others think ill of you or treat you unkindly, you must not react in a like fashion. Rather, you must wish such people well and guide them with wisdom so that they come to realise the error of

their ways and comprehend that whatever was in their hearts was false. This will only happen if your hearts are filled with love for others.”

Following the address, Huzoor led a silent prayer and then stayed on site at Jamia for a further couple of hours, during which several group photos were taken with Huzoor. Thereafter, Huzoor led Namaz and joined all of the guests for lunch.



A spiritual father

After the event, I spoke to some of the young Missionaries who received their Shahid degrees from Huzoor on that day.

Qamar Ahmed Zafar, a graduate of Jamia Ahmadiyya UK, narrated a story that illustrated how closely Huzoor kept an eye on Jamia Ahmadiyya.

He told me that once another student was having difficulties sleeping on a very old mattress and so Qamar gave him his own mattress to use.

Qamar did not mention to anyone that *he* now needed a mattress, and more than a month passed by.

Explaining what happened next, Qamar said:

“A while later I went for a Mulaqat with Huzoor and as soon as I entered, beloved Huzoor said: “Are you not the one who has no mattress?” I was shocked but I replied “Yes Huzoor”, I had not told Huzoor about this, in fact, I had told nobody so it was completely beyond my imagination that Huzoor would ask me this.”

Qamar continued:

“This just shows how caring Huzoor is for every Jamia student and he personally takes great care into the welfare of all his students like they are his own children. And yes, just for the record, when I returned to Jamia after the Mulaqat, I was given a mattress straight away!

Qamar told me about an occasion where a passing comment made by Huzoor to him came true. He said:

“Once I went to meet Huzoor in a Mulaqat and when I shook Huzoor’s hand, he smiled and said, ‘You have gotten stronger’. I was a bit embarrassed and thought maybe I had shaken Huzoor’s hand too hard. However, I believe this was actually a prayer of Huzoor for me because later on during the year I decided to take part in the weightlifting competition in the National Ijtema and I managed to secure a position much to my surprise and to the surprise of everyone else. This is when I

understood that a man can achieve so much if he secures a connection with Khilafat even if he sees himself as incapable of doing so.”

I personally was surprised to hear Qamar had attained a high position in weightlifting as he has always been very thin and so I was also sure that it was an example of how Allah blesses everything said by the Khalifa-Waqt and how he can see things in us that we ourselves are not aware of.

Qamar also told me of a more recent incident, which had proved a lesson for him and one he hoped would serve as a lesson for others.

Towards the end of his time in Jamia Qamar started answering allegations against Islam or Ahmadiyyat by posting videos on *YouTube*. Having started this project, he wrote to Huzoor to inform him but in reply, Huzoor asked whether Qamar had sought his permission before he started uploading videos.

Qamar said:

“After receiving Huzoor’s letter, I immediately closed the channel realising my grave mistake. I learnt that a Missionary should not do anything without seeking permission no matter how small. I also learnt that no matter how good of an idea somebody may have, our role is to serve according to the desires of beloved Huzoor and it is true what the Holy Prophet (sa) said: “The Imam is a shield which one fights behind”. Therefore, I urge all my brothers to learn from my error and never ever try to go ahead of what Huzoor has instructed us to do.”

Another graduate of Jamia Ahmadiyya UK, *Zulfiqar Abbasi* shared some of his reflections. He said:

“There were a lot of mixed emotions on Convocation day, from anticipation and excitement to fear and sadness. There was a lot of excitement too, the feeling of receiving my degree from the blessed hands of Huzoor and making my parents feel proud of this achievement. There was also a sense of sadness as I had spent seven years in Jamia and now I'd be leaving a place in which I had many blessings, such as the one-to-one Mulaqats with Huzoor and the whole atmosphere in Jamia of brotherhood.”

I also spoke with *Ahmad Nooruddeen Jangeer Khan*, who told me how Huzoor guided the students of Jamia Ahmadiyya. Nooruddeen said:

“In reality, Huzoor is the one who has been training us, guiding us and providing us with the means to pass through the seven years of Jamia. From the syllabus to the food menu, Huzoor is the one who approves everything. Huzoor is the one who checks our exam results and makes decisions regarding our future.”

Nooruddeen continued:

“Huzoor is the one who asks us to write to him. He is the one prays for us and gives us advice at every step. Huzoor is the one who comes in person to Jamia and sits with us for a few hours in classes. Huzoor is the one who allows a van full of Jamia students to come and pray behind him in Masjid Fazl every day. The nearness we gain with Khilafat is something we could

never have imagined and the moments we spend in Huzoor's office will be cherished memories that live with us forever."

Umar Rashid (27), a graduate of Jamia Ahmadiyya Germany told me how the Convocation reminded him of the blessed personage who started the *Waqf-e-Nau* scheme.

"A special incident for me was to visit the grave of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (rh) at Islamabad after receiving the Shahid degree. After all, I am from the Waqf-e-Nau scheme and so me and my parents went there to pray for him and to remember him and to thank Allah the Almighty for that person who changed the life of my parents and me. Now the vision of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (rh) is coming true and I have the great honour and opportunity to serve in this divine cause on the frontline."

Qasid Warraich (25), a graduate of Jamia Ahmadiyya Canada, told me about his experiences of the past year, where he and his class fellows, have had the opportunity to be personally guided and trained by Huzoor in London.

Speaking of how Huzoor had personally guided him and his class, Qasid said:

"We have been in the UK since last year's Jalsa Salana UK. Since then we have been sent to Africa and Pakistan for one month's training and the remainder of our stay has been in the UK near Huzoor. By the complete Grace of Allah, we have had between 7 to 9 personal Mulaqats with Huzoor and have had 3 class Mulaqats during this period."

Qasid continued:

“Besides this, whenever Huzoor would walk through the Private Secretary’s Office to meet a delegation, we were blessed to have some very special moments. Huzoor would always make jokes so we would feel comfortable. Sometimes, he would ask us questions to know us better and I felt that Huzoor was himself making an effort to get to know each of us on an individual basis. For example, at the beginning, Huzoor advised a few of us to put our pictures on our letters to him.”

Speaking of Huzoor’s love and affection, throughout their stay, Qasid said:

“On one occasion, Huzoor asked one of our classmates if his knee was still hurting as he had written about injuring it in a letter. On another occasion, Huzoor called a classmate of mine to his office after reading about a problem he had mentioned in his letter. Further, on several occasions when we would get sick or injured, medication was provided under the instructions of Huzoor. Also, the marriages of two of our classmates were arranged through the direct involvement of Huzoor.”

During their time in London, the Jamia Canada graduates also got to see first-hand the relentless nature of Huzoor’s work and his complete devotion to the Jamaat.

Qasid said:

“On a daily basis, we witnessed how hard Huzoor works. Throughout our stay in the UK, Huzoor did not take a single day off. There were days when

Huzoor was extremely unwell, yet he would still offer Namaz in the Mosque and go to his office as usual. This is his way of teaching us – Huzoor leads by example.”

Describing what he had learnt above all during his time in London, Qasid said:

“Recently, we had another meeting with Huzoor that lasted more than 90minutes and the point Huzoor constantly stressed upon us was the need for humility. Huzoor even mentioned three couplets of the Promised Messiah (as) about humility and told us to always act upon them.”

Another graduate of Jamia Canada, *Musawar Ahmad (26)*, said:

“Though we have attained our Shahid degree, it still feels as though we have not yet achieved anything. Rather, now we will have to prove ourselves and to Huzoor that our degrees have a lifelong meaning. I know that my true education has just begun.”

Speaking about his experiences in London, Musawar said:

“For the past ten months, I have spent most of my time in London and it has been such a beautiful and blessed experience to be so close to Huzoor for so long. It has been an experience like no other and one that gets better every single day. Spiritually and emotionally, Huzoor is the best mentor and takes complete care of your every need, including those things that you were not even aware of.”

Last minute comments

For the record, the comments of Qasid and Musawar were added by me to this diary at the very last minute.

As always, Huzoor had graciously checked the contents of this diary and, after making some corrections whilst abroad, Huzoor approved it. However, a few hours later, I received an instruction from Huzoor to wait and include the comments of students from the graduating class of Jamia Canada.

Huzoor had noticed the oversight that I had spoken to students of UK Jamia and a representative of Jamia Germany but not from Canada.

Never-ending duties

When starting this diary of a month's activities, I assumed it would be quite short, perhaps just 25 or 30 pages long and certainly no longer than one part.

Yet, the blessings of Khilafat are such that once I started to write, more and more things came to mind and in the end I have written over 100 pages that barely give a glimpse of some of Huzoor's activities over the period of one month in London. I know there are many things that I have missed or was not aware of.

Just from my own Mulaqats with Huzoor, there are many things which Huzoor said to me or comments he made that I should have taken note of but failed to.

Whilst I can remember the general points made by Huzoor in those Mulaqats, my memory is not good enough for me to quote Huzoor and so I omitted to mention many things.

One conversation that I do recall vividly took place on 30 March 2018.

During his Friday Sermon on that day, it was apparent that Huzoor was not in the best of health and so when I reported to him for Mulaqat later I immediately enquired after his health.

In response, Huzoor said:

“Last night was very difficult. I did not feel well at all and kept waking up with fever. In fact, I hardly slept at all. This morning as well before Jumma I was not well but somehow I managed to deliver the sermon.”

As he said these words, Huzoor still did not look well at all. At that moment, with all my heart I wished that I could offer some personal service to Huzoor.

I wished that I could massage him or do something that would help alleviate his physical pain. However, knowing that I was neither skilled in massage and also out of shyness I remained quiet.

Thereafter, I mentioned to Huzoor some news reports, including about the increasing tensions between the Western nations and Russia that had been further ignited during the past few weeks.

I informed Huzoor that the *United Nations General Secretary* had said that he feared that world was nearing another ‘*Cold War*’.

Upon this, Huzoor said:

“He fears only of a Cold War, but my fear is that we are nearing a ‘hot’ war. A war of death and destruction.”

After a few minutes, I saw Huzoor rubbing his head and he looked in severe pain and discomfort.

I asked Huzoor if he would be well enough to travel, as he was scheduled to travel to Spain in a couple of days.

In response, Huzoor said:

“Insha’Allah, I will be better by then. We should remain hopeful for the best always.”

Huzoor continued:

“Even if I am not better, I can rest in the car during the journey. If I remain in London I would have no option but to spend the day in the office.”

I was struck by Huzoor’s words. Whenever the rest of us are unwell, the place where we wish to be is at home. However, Huzoor’s life is different.

His personal devotion to the Jamaat requires that he does not waste any opportunity to serve the mission of Islam and to give his time to the members of the Jamaat.

If when Huzoor is unwell he remained in his residence, nobody would object and rather we would be glad that Huzoor had some time to rest and recover, yet he himself would not allow himself that time.

Instead, Huzoor would return to his office and fulfil his duties.

Thus, the only option for rest are those rare times when Huzoor may be travelling and is in a car, train or plane.

The following day, Huzoor remained extremely unwell, yet, he spent the morning engaged in *daftari Mulaqats* followed by a meeting with new converts from Germany.

In the evening, Huzoor had a full session of family Mulaqats and later attended a wedding of an Ahmadi family at Baitul Futuh.

Unquestionably, Khalifatul Masih is the living embodiment of giving precedence to his faith over all worldly matters.

Unquestionably, Khalifatul Masih would rather hurt himself than disappoint any single Ahmadi from any nation.

Unquestionably, Khalifatul Masih loves us more than we will ever comprehend.

A different type of diary

As I write these words, with the *Grace of Allah*, Huzoor is currently in Spain.

After around five years, it is the first time that Huzoor has travelled abroad and I have not had the opportunity to travel with him.

Thus, the day before he travelled, I told Huzoor that I would miss him a great deal.

In response, Huzoor said:

“If you miss someone or feel sad then you should pray for them. Thus, remember me in your prayers, as this is the way to remain close to me whilst I am away.”

It was beautiful advice and certainly, whenever I have prayed for Huzoor, it does feel as though that distance has lessened and I feel closer.

Nonetheless, I cannot deny that I feel great sadness to be at a distance from him and find myself counting down the days until his return.

It has made me value my past experiences even more.

I have also received a number of messages from people saying that Huzoor has travelled abroad and so they were looking forward to my diary about Huzoor’s Spain tour.

I mentioned this to Huzoor, whilst he has been away, and he responded by saying:

“Reply to such people that this time you will write a diary about Mahid and Moshahid!”

I laughed and enjoyed Huzoor’s comment a great deal and I did actually reply in this way to the people who asked me thereafter!

May Allah the Almighty grant Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba) a long and healthy life and enable all of us Ahmadi Muslims to serve Khilafat in the best way. *Ameen.*

End of Part 2

Any comments or feedback: abid.khan@pressahmadiyya.com