

HUZOOR'S TOUR OF EUROPE

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2019

Part 3

A Personal Account

By Abid Khan

Introduction to Part 3

It has been just over two months since I published the second instalment of my personal account of Huzoor's tour of Europe in September and October 2019.

The delay was caused by a variety of factors, primary amongst them my inability to manage my time better. A mitigating factor perhaps was that during February and early March, my wife had entered the latter stages of pregnancy and so I was required much more at home to help and assist. *Alhamdulillah*, with the Grace and Blessings of Allah, we were blessed with a healthy baby girl in mid-March, our third child.

In the end, it has taken a turn of events unprecedented and devastating to finally focus my mind on completing this series of diaries.

The *Covid-19* crisis has affected each and every one of us and bound us to our homes more than we could ever have expected or imagined. As a result, over the last few days, I was finally able to focus upon writing up the latter stages of Huzoor's extraordinarily blessed tour.

I hope and pray that, as people stay in their homes, they may enjoy having some additional reading material detailing the final days of Huzoor's stay in France, followed by his visit to Germany.

May we soon see again those blessings that we became accustomed to in recent years and some of which, I wish to recount in the following pages.
Ameen

Arrival in Strasbourg

On 9 October 2019, Huzoor travelled to Strasbourg where he would spend the final few days of his visit to France.

On the way from the Mubarak Mosque in St Prix to Strasbourg, the French Jamaat had arranged for Namaz and lunch at a hotel in the French city of Reims.

Amongst other things, Reims is known as the city where French Kings were crowned at its Grand Cathedral for over 1,000 years.

The hotel where we stopped was called *Les Crayeres* and was a converted *chateau*. It had exquisite gardens and I loved walking in its grounds before the journey resumed.

We arrived in Strasbourg, a city bordering Germany and the seat of the European Parliament, in the early evening, shortly before Maghreb and Isha at 7.40pm.

Huzoor and Khala Saboohi (*Huzoor's respected wife*) stayed on site at the Mosque, whilst most of the office staff, including me, stayed at a rented house a few miles away.

Emotions of Ahmadis

On the 10th of October 2019 Huzoor held a session of family Mulaqats in Strasbourg.

One of the people to meet Huzoor was *Khalid Kamran (18)*, who had migrated from Pakistan to France via China in 2013.

Moments after meeting Huzoor for the first time, Kamran said:

"When I was in Pakistan or in China and even here in France, I never imagined one day I would meet Hazrat Khalifatul Masih (aba). Huzoor is so beautiful. His voice was louder than I expected, and his tone of voice was so appealing and gave peace to my heart. Seeing him has made me surer and more certain of my faith. There are many temptations in this Western society but seeing Huzoor has made me determined to stay away from those worldly attractions and to live my life according to the teachings of Islam."

Kamran continued:

"The people here in France - the ones I have come across at least - are not open-minded regarding Islam. They call us terrorists and if they don't say it out loud, then you can feel that this is what they think in their heart. I'm so grateful that Huzoor has come here because his presence and only his presence can change their hearts."

Another person to meet Huzoor that evening was a Moroccan convert to Ahmadiyyat, *Kharicha Rashid (38)*, who lived in Strasbourg.

His elder brother had first accepted in the 1990s when Kharicha sahib was a young boy.

Telling me about his journey to Ahmadiyyat, Kharicha sahib said:

"I used to come with my brother sometimes to the Ahmadiyya Mosque. I was young and even then I could sense even that Ahmadiyyat was true and there was nothing false in it, but I was very young and did not have the ability or courage to accept it. To be honest, I was not that religious at the time.

"It was only earlier this year that I finally accepted Ahmadiyyat. Since then I have stopped smoking, I have acquired a job and above all, I feel peace in my heart. To be honest, the fact I knew of Ahmadiyyat was the only reason I was saved from being radicalised. Otherwise, I could have gone the same way as many of the other Muslims in France - towards extremism. They are the same people as I, but I was the lucky one."

Explaining further, Kharicha sahib said:

"Ever since 9/11, hatred of Islam and Muslims has increased and as Muslims we felt this, we felt anger and as I said, it was only because I knew of Ahmadis and their teachings, that I did not react to this hatred in a fanatical or extremist way. I saw non-Ahmadi Imams who used to come and incite people like me towards a violent Jihad. I saw people who were raising money for extremist causes. Amongst my generation, many were lured towards extremism because they had been branded the enemy by the local people. I cannot describe how fortunate I feel to have been saved."

After recounting his experiences of growing up in France, Kharicha sahib turned to the present day. He continued:

"Today I met Huzoor for the very first time and I can't comprehend the fact that I have met Khalifatul Masih. He has the greatest and highest spiritual rank in the world today and yet I was amongst those who met him! Our mosque here in Strasbourg is beautiful but it is small and Huzoor has so many pressing engagements. Yet still he has travelled all this way to inaugurate it. It shows his humility and his love for us."

Kharicha sahib added:

"Before I met Huzoor, I felt fear that I am meeting such a great personality, yet, despite his status, I found Huzoor to be so loving, so kind and so interested in me as a person. It was faith inspiring."

Inauguration of Mahdi Mosque in Strasbourg

On 11th of October 2019 Hazrat Khalifatul Masih inaugurated the Mahdi Mosque in Strasbourg, France with his Friday Sermon.

After unveiling a plaque to mark the opening, Huzoor proceeded to the *Mehrab* for Jumma.

As Huzoor began his sermon, it immediately became apparent that he had developed flu or a severe cold overnight. Yet in spite of being visibly unwell, Huzoor continued to deliver a sermon of the normal length.



In his sermon, Huzoor spoke of the state of the Muslim world and the negative role some Mosques were playing in the world.

Huzoor said:

“Thousands of Mosques are built every year across the world by Muslims. However, those Mosques that are teaching sectarianism will never lead their worshippers to heaven. Instead of creating the fear of Allah the Almighty and fulfilling the rights of His creation, the Imams and leaders in such Mosques seek only to fulfil their own vested interests or the interests of their particular sects. So-called scholars are creating innovations which have nothing to do with the teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa).”

Regarding the Strasbourg Mosque, Huzoor praised members of the *Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya France*, who had pledged to cover the entire cost of the Mosque.

At the same time, Huzoor said that *Ansar* and *Lajna* should not be left behind and should seek to build another Mosque in France within the next three years.



A delayed interview

Huzoor had graciously approved a request of the French Jamaat to meet members of the French media immediately after Jumma.

Unfortunately, the local Jamaat had given the wrong time to the media, which meant that the journalists were not on site by the time the Sermon had finished.

As a result, Huzoor returned to his residence but asked to be informed if the journalists did come.

Due to the fact Huzoor was unwell and had now returned to his residence, I felt Huzoor should not be disturbed and that some of the local Jamaat officials could give the media interviews. However, as Huzoor had instructed he be notified it was necessary to do so and so Ahmad bhai duly informed Huzoor once they had arrived.

Irrespective of the fact that he was unwell, and he had only just gone up to his residence for lunch a short time before, Huzoor came back to his office and answered the questions of two journalists from different French media outlets.

One of the journalists asked Huzoor why the Jamaat had chosen a location on the periphery of Strasbourg where there were just open fields nearby and not many residents or people in the near vicinity.

In reply, Huzoor said:

“Our community in France looked at various locations for a new mosque to see which was the most feasible. We are not like an oil rich country that has unlimited resources, rather, all of our projects are funded through the personal contributions of our members. Furthermore, in this country, public transport is readily available, and many people have cars and so, God willing, they will come here regularly to offer their prayers.”

Huzoor continued:

‘In the 1920s, the Fazl Mosque was being built in London and our Imam at the time in London wrote to the Second Khalifa (ra) expressing his

reservations about the location of the proposed Mosque – he said that the mosque site was far away from the city of London. In response, the Second Khalifa (ra) wrote back to say that he should not worry and eventually the city would come to reach the mosque! In time, his words came true because Southfields, where the Fazl Mosque was built, is now classed as full part of London and we believe the same will come to be true here in Strasbourg. We should always remain positive - that is our way."



The second journalist asked Huzoor whether the Jamaat was building mosques in Europe as a 'statement' to the Pakistani authorities – meaning whether we were trying to send a message to Pakistan's leadership that, despite the persecution we suffer there, they could not prevent our Jamaat's progress or success.

In reply Huzoor said:

'We build our mosques wherever we have a community and we also build them so that the local people can come to know about the true teachings of Islam. There is no link or correlation to the persecution we face. We did not build this Mosque in Strasbourg to send a message to Pakistan!'

Huzoor continued:

"Nonetheless, we do believe that in return for the patience we show and the sacrifices we make, Allah the Almighty rewards us manifold. So, if they try to seal one of our mosques, God Almighty grants us many others in return."

As the interview continued, it was clear that Huzoor was feeling unwell and so after 15 minutes, I interjected and said:

"Huzoor the scheduled time is now finished".

Upon this, Huzoor smiled and said:

"The journalist wishes to ask some more questions, so let her ask".

Thereafter, she asked three more questions, and it was only when it was clear that the journalist was satisfied that Huzoor concluded the interview.

An example of Huzoor's love for Jamaat members

After the interview concluded, Huzoor walked outside into the courtyard of the complex and looked in the direction of the dining and food marquee where many Ahmadis, who had come for Jumma, were now eating their lunch.

Turning to Ameer Sahib France, Huzoor said:

“Make sure that every single person is well fed. I do not want any person to leave hungry or without eating their fill. If you do not have the money to pay for the cost of food, I will personally give you the money, but no one should be denied food or asked to eat less than their fill.”

It was a beautiful comment and illustrated Huzoor's love for each and every Ahmadi.

I do not know if the comment was made spontaneously or whether a complaint had reached Huzoor earlier that the food was limited, yet whatever the background, Huzoor's comment illustrated his continued concern for the members of the Jamaat.

As Huzoor turned to return to his residence, and in light of his health, I said:

“Huzoor, I wish I was a doctor so I could provide you with some relief.”

Upon this Huzoor replied:

"Even doctors cannot do anything! It will just take some time to recover."

As Huzoor walked up the stairs to his residence I wished that he would take some time to rest.

Yet, a little while later, Huzoor returned to his office and met dozens of Ahmadi families in a full Mulaqat session.

A Guard of Honour

On Saturday, 12th October 2019, a special reception was held to mark the opening of the Strasbourg Mosque.

Many guests and dignitaries, including *mayors* from 8 different towns attended.

Prior to the start of the event, ten military veterans, some of whom had fought in the *Second World War* stood outside the Mosque in formation waiting for Huzoor's arrival.

When Huzoor came out of his residence and walked towards the reception marquee, each of the veterans stood to salute him, raising the standards of their respective battalions.

With grace and humility, Huzoor walked through their *Guard of Honour* and appreciated their gesture of respect.



It was a beautiful moment in which people who had witnessed first-hand the horrors of war rose to honour that person who had done more than anyone else to strive for peace in today's world.

It was a point Mubarak Zafar Sahib, *Additional Wakil-ul-Maal* and also a renowned poet, noted and so he suggested that in our reporting of the event we should mention that those who understood the consequences and impact of war better than anyone else had stood to appreciate the '*Prince of Peace*'.

Based on Mubarak Sahib's suggestion, in our official *Press Release* I wrote:

"Surely those who had stood on the front lines, who had bravely fought in the battlefields and who had seen their comrades succumb in the cause of freedom, knew only too well the value of the warnings given repeatedly by His Holiness about the risks of a Third World War."

Strasbourg Mosque Reception

The reception started at 3:20 PM and the marquee was filled from corner to corner. In fact, a second marquee, set up for the overflow, was also almost full.

It was clear that there was widespread interest and curiosity amongst the local people about the Mosque and the presence of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba) in their part of the world.

Several dignitaries delivered short speeches and each of them spoke of how they initially had held certain reservations about the Mosque project, and they had also sensed such fears or concerns within the wider community.

Each of the speakers noted how, over time, their fears had dissipated as they came to understand and know our Jamaat.

In fact, they apologised for their initial scepticism.

Thereafter, Huzoor took to the stage and addressed the guests about the true purpose of Mosques and highlighted the importance of fulfilling the rights of mankind.

Given that the earlier speakers had spoken of how they were fearful when they learned that Muslims were building a Mosque in their area, Huzoor explained the concept of Jihad and explained why wars and battles had been fought in the early part of Islam.

Huzoor said:

“The Holy Quran categorically states that if the Makkan aggressors had not been stopped forcefully then neither synagogues, churches, temples nor any mosques would remain. In other words, within this one commandment, where permission was granted to fight against the disbelievers, it enjoined the protection of all religions.”

Huzoor continued:

“The early Muslims fought defensive wars against the opponents of religions so that the Jews could go to their synagogues to worship, so that Christians could go to their churches to pray, so that Hindus or the followers of other religions could go to their Temples and so that Muslims could go to their Mosques.”

Huzoor said that if some Muslims had moved away from Islam’s peaceful teachings and preached and practiced extremism then ***‘those Muslims and their actions are to blame, not the teachings of Islam’***.

Subsequently, Huzoor spoke about the humanitarian relief efforts of the Jamaat and how it was necessary for Muslims to serve their neighbours and society.



Huzoor said:

“Where true Muslims fulfil the rights of God by worshipping Him, their hearts will also be filled with the realisation that the same God who instructs us to worship Him, also instructs us to serve mankind.

“In fact, the Holy Quran goes as far as to say that the prayers of such worshippers who fail to fulfil the rights of people, who do not serve mankind, who do not feed the orphans, who do not care for the poor or needy, or who commit injustices, are of no benefit, and in fact are a means of their destruction.”

Impact of Huzoor's address

Following Huzoor's address in Strasbourg, I spoke to some of the guests who each expressed their immense appreciation of Huzoor's address and how they were greatly reassured by his words.

A local resident, *Jean Patrick Robin*, said:

"Before I was fearful and hesitant about the fact that a mosque is being built near me but now it is clear that the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is peaceful and that you are people who desire to integrate and contribute to the local community. I'm not a religious person. I do not believe in God, but I believe in humanity and I could see that humanity was all pervading in the person of your Khalifa. He is a true leader who is inviting everyone towards goodness, tolerance and openness."

The Mayor of a nearby town, *Jean Jacques Ruch* said:

"Everyone was very curious to see your Khalifa and, after seeing him and listening to his speech, the thing that was most notable was his sincerity. He spoke to us with humility. His message was of peace. Every word was from his heart. There was no pretence. The language he used was simple and easy to understand. It is an historic day that such an outstanding and global spiritual leader has come to our area. It shows how determined he is to spread the true teachings of Islam and to remove the concerns of people himself."

Another guest was *Annie Burger*, a teacher and a local resident.

After listening to Huzoor's address, she said:

"The problem is that people think Islam is whatever a terrorist does, even though they know that millions of people who are Muslims are peaceful, but they still look to that one terrorist. Amongst the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, I am sure you are all peaceful because when I look at your leader, I can only see goodness."

Ms Burger continued:

"We live in a small village and yet such a great global world leader came to see us. It shows his humility and his grace, as he could easily have sent a representative, but he chose to come himself. I really hope that his visit is not in vain and that people in this area come to see that Islam is not something to be feared, and in this way I hope my village can be a model for the rest of the world."

As my conversation with her concluded, I could not help but ask her about a gigantic basket of grapes she was carrying. Indeed, I do not think I had ever seen a larger basket of fruit.

She told me she did not want to come empty handed and did not know what an appropriate gift would be but thought that fruit was a safe option. Hence, she bought the basket of grapes and was offering bunches to whoever she met at the mosque.

Travel to Germany

Alhamdulillah, after an extremely blessed few days, Huzoor's visit to France concluded on 13 October 2019.

After a few final minutes with the local Jamaat members in Strasbourg, during which Huzoor planted an apple tree at the Mosque, and sat for photos with local Jamaat members, the Qafila departed at 11.30am.

Within a few minutes we had crossed the border into Germany, where the final two weeks of Huzoor's tour were to be spent.

As we entered Germany, I felt a degree of sadness, because in the early part of the tour, in Holland and France, I had been able to spend a lot of personal time in the company of Huzoor.

I would miss those special days and would forever consider them as some of the most special and blessed of my life.

On the way to Frankfurt, the Qafila got stuck in complete gridlock traffic on the motorway.

There was a traffic incident which meant that all cars were parked on the motorway and people were getting out of their vehicles and sharing snacks with one another!

Finally, after 40 minutes of standstill, the road cleared, and the journey resumed.

With the Grace of Allah, the Qafila reached the Baitus Sabuh Mosque in Frankfurt at 3pm, where Huzoor was welcomed by thousands of Ahmadi men, women and children.

An unexpected meeting

In the years that I have travelled with Huzoor, it was the first time we had arrived at Baitus Sabuh during the day. Normally, we arrive late at night after a long journey from England and so to have arrived early was a luxury! Taking advantage of the extra hours, after Zuhr and Asr, I went to my room and enjoyed a rare afternoon nap!

After waking, I stepped out of my room and to my utter surprise, I saw *Mirza Usman Ahmad* from Rabwah standing a few feet away. I was taken aback, as I had no idea he was coming to Germany.

Usman, the grandson of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih III (rh) and Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (rh), is a few months older than me and during the 1980s and 1990s we had spent a lot of time together growing up.

Since 2004 he had been posted in Rabwah as a Waqf-e-Zindighi and was now serving in the English section of Fazl-e-Umar Foundation. He had travelled to Germany to attend the *Frankfurt Book Fair* and was staying in a room near mine.

Over the next few days, I was able to spend some time with him and recall some memories from our childhood and teenage years.

Inauguration of Mubarak Mosque, Wiesbaden

The next day, on 14 October 2019, Huzoor travelled to Wiesbaden, a prominent Germany city, and the capital of the State of Hesse, to inaugurate the newly constructed Mubarak Mosque.



Upon arriving at the Mosque, Huzoor unveiled a plaque and offered a silent prayer to officially open the Mosque before leading the Zuhr and Asr prayers.

Thereafter, Huzoor was given a tour of the premises, visited the Lajna side and planted a tree at the site.

Huzoor also distributed chocolates to young overjoyed children who rushed towards him seeking to be as close as possible.



A fitting venue

At 6.35pm, Huzoor departed from the Mosque and travelled ten minutes by car to the city centre *Kurhaus*.

Historically, a '*spa town*', the *Kurhaus* in Wiesbaden had served for many years as a spa, utilising the natural thermal springs of the city. When opened in 1907, the Wiesbaden Kurhaus was described as the '*most beautiful spa building in the world*' by Germany's ruler at the time.

In recent decades it has been the venue for speeches by Chancellor Angela Merkel and President Barack Obama amongst others.

It was a magnificent building and, as Huzoor entered, it was filled from corner to corner with hundreds of guests and dignitaries.



During Huzoor's tour of Australia in 2013, a reception graced by Huzoor was held in a rather plain and ordinary hall in Melbourne.

When I and others mentioned that we did not think it was a fitting place for Huzoor to speak, he told us his purpose was to deliver Islam's message and he did not require resplendent venues. All he desired was the opportunity to spread the true teachings of Islam.

Thus, I am sure the fact that the Wiesbaden reception was held in such a striking venue will not have made any difference to Huzoor. Indeed, if it had been possible, I am sure Huzoor would have preferred for the reception to have been held on the site of the Mosque complex itself.

Nonetheless, the Wiesbaden Kurhaus did feel like a fitting place for Hazrat Khalifatul Masih (aba) to grace and speak at.

Wiesbaden Reception

After a welcome address by Ameer Sahib Germany and short speeches by the Lord Mayor of Wiesbaden and local and national politicians, Huzoor delivered the keynote address marking the inauguration of the Mubarak Mosque.

During his address, Huzoor explained the true purposes of Mosques and addressed common fears prevalent in much of society about Islam and Muslims.

Explaining why Mosques were built, Huzoor said:

“Some people in the non-Muslim, Western world think that harmful plans and plots may be hatched in a mosque and fear that it may breed extremists. However, the true purpose of a mosque, as stated by the Holy Quran, is simply to congregate for the worship of the One God. Moreover, alongside the worship of God Almighty, a Mosque serves as a place for Muslims to fulfil the rights of mankind.”

Referring to the universal teachings of Islam, Huzoor said:

“The very first guidance of the first chapter of the Holy Quran is to praise Allah the Almighty, who is ‘Lord of all the worlds’ and who is the Sustainer of all people. He is the Lord of the Jews, and sustains them, He

is the Lord of the Christians, the Lord of the Hindus, and the Lord of the Muslims. This is the very reason that the founder of Islam, The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) always kept the service of humanity at the very forefront, and this is why he (the Holy Prophet) was declared as a ‘Mercy for Mankind’ in the Holy Quran.”



In Germany, immigration from Muslim countries had been a controversial ‘red-button’ topic for a number of years, increasingly so since the 2015 influx of Syrian refugees.

For years, a debate has raged in Germany about whether Islamic teachings and the religious practices of Muslims were compatible with German values and society. In light of this, with grace and eloquence, Huzoor explained how the integration of immigrants could be done successfully.

Huzoor said:

“I instruct the Ahmadi Muslims who have come here to utilise all of their faculties to work for the betterment of this city, to attain education here and serve the country, to serve mankind and to work for the betterment

of this society in every regard. Instead of becoming a burden upon the government or council, immigrants should think of the different ways in which they can serve and contribute to society.”

Impact of Huzoor’s address

After the event concluded, I met various guests, and each attested how they had benefitted and been touched by Huzoor’s address.

A local police officer, *Mr Gores* said:

“The Khalifa made it clear that Ahmadi Muslims are part of our society and want to integrate and you are not hiding anything or trying to harm the peace. He proved that ‘Islam’ and ‘Islamism’ are two different things. One is a religion, the other is a political ideology.”

A local Priest, *Father C. Eastill* said he had appreciated the way Huzoor was defending *religion* in an age where people were rapidly moving away from faith.

Father Eastill said:

“When I started as a Priest there were 50 kids who came to my Christian teaching class but now there are 10 or 15 at most. So, to defend religion and to show people its importance is the need of the hour and the challenge of our era. Your Khalifa has taken on the mantle of defending not just Islam but also religion and I can only praise him for travelling

across the world to highlight the importance of religion and emphasise religious values.”

A local teacher, *Mrs Anja* recounted how *Huzoor’s* address had moved her and expressed her regret that some of her former students had fallen prey to the extremist clerics rather than be exposed to the teachings of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

Mrs Anja said:

“I was emotional and touched by his address. I am a teacher and tragically some of my Muslim students ran away from Germany and went and joined terrorist groups in Syria. To this day, I feel great pain about this. It is heart-breaking. As I listened today, I wished that those young people had heard the message of the Khalifa because then they would have seen what Islam really is and might not have been brainwashed by extremists.”

A young man, *Marcus*, told me he had never before been to a single religious event and so had been nervous about what to expect. He said:

“The Khalifa is a graceful and kind man. The reason I liked his speech so much is because he did not criticise other religions or non-religious people. He said that Islam says there is no compulsion in religion, and we are all free to choose if we like Islam or if we like something else. I did not expect this! His message was that religion is lived through the heart and soul not through bombs or guns.”

I met a Colombian lady, *Olga Calero*, who worked with an organisation that supported women victims of domestic abuse.

After listening to Huzoor's address, Ms Calero said:

"The way the Khalifa spoke about humanity has touched my heart. I have never heard any leader or religious person speak so sensitively, kindly and passionately about caring for other people. He is earnest and truthful, and the best part of his speech was how he defined 'integration'. He said that it is when you are loyal to your country and try to contribute to it and it is not essential that you forget your culture. I completely agree and have never heard a better definition than this."

Press Conference in Wiesbaden

Following the conclusion of the event, Huzoor answered media questions in a *Press Conference* in a nearby room.

One of the journalists asked Huzoor if he had specifically prepared his speech for a *German* audience.

In response, Huzoor said:

"I did not make any preparations or notes for this address. What I said was what came from of my heart and, wherever I speak, I seek to convey the true teachings of Islam. It is not only in Germany that some people are suspicious or fearful of Islam, rather this is common throughout the non-Muslim world. Sadly, many people believe that Muslims are people

who commit brutalities in the name of Jihad. Thus, my purpose is to counter this and to explain what Islam truly represents.”

Huzoor was also asked about a military offensive targeting the Kurds in north east Syria. There had been widespread reports of innocent civilians being killed in the days prior by Turkish forces.

In response, Huzoor said:

“It is wrong and very cruel and against the teachings of Islam, which proclaims that taking the life of one innocent person is akin to killing all of mankind. If there is a dispute it should be solved through dialogue and negotiation. Why is there a need for nations to exert their will through force? Certainly, I do not think this action is permissible or justifiable in any sense.”

Visit to Jamia Ahmadiyya Germany

The following day, 15 October 2019, Huzoor visited Jamia Ahmadiyya Germany in Riedstadt, where he arrived at 2.10pm.

After leading the Zuhr and Asr prayers, Huzoor inspected the accommodation dormitories used to house Jamia students.

As Huzoor inspected various rooms, the *Principal of Jamia Ahmadiyya Germany*, Shamshad Qamar sahib, said further accommodation was required.

Upon this, Ameer Sahib Germany, who was also present, said:

“Huzoor, I think the accommodation standard here at Jamia Germany compares favourably with Jamias in other countries.”

In reply, Huzoor said:

“Yes, but if you increase the capacity you will be able to enrol more students, which will be beneficial.”

Upon this, Ameer Sahib Germany responded by stating they would work to increase the accommodation without delay.

A delicious lunch, including *aloo ghosht*, *kebabs* and *grilled prawns* was served shortly after before Huzoor held a class with Jamia students.

Many of the students sought the opportunity to introduce themselves and to ask questions and Huzoor gave priority to those students who had not met him before.

During the class, one Jamia student asked Huzoor how to build a close and strong relationship with Allah the Almighty.

Very beautifully, Huzoor said:

“It is simple. Prostrate, prostrate, prostrate before Him. Hold onto Him, do not leave Allah no matter what and He will become yours.”

Another student asked if it was possible for a Jamia student to study languages other than those taught in Jamia.

In answer, Huzoor said:

“You have all presented yourselves as Waqf (life devotee) and so you have laid down your lives and pledged to set aside your personal interests for the sake of the Jamaat. Thus, though you may express your interests or desires, it is up to the Jamaat administration to determine if you should pursue them and if it is in the wider interests of the Jamaat. Nonetheless, we need people who speak different languages and so we do generally permit Missionaries to learn a language after they complete their Jamia studies if they express a desire to do so.”

Another student asked Huzoor about *Tabligh* and mentioned a friend of his who was interested in Islam.

In response, Huzoor said:

“There are many good natured people in this society as well. Yesterday, a German person attended the Mosque opening in Wiesbaden and afterwards he met me with deep sincerity and spoke with a great deal of respect and love about my address and so I asked him if he was an Ahmadi – because the way he was speaking it appeared so. In reply, he said that he was not an Ahmadi but after listening to my address he felt he might accept Ahmadiyyat. So, there are many good people in these Western societies and we should pray that Allah the Almighty opens their hearts and enables them to accept Ahmadiyyat.”

A student asked Huzoor his opinion of the famous young Swedish climate change activist Greta Thunberg.

In reply, Huzoor said:

“I have seen some of her clips on social media – she delivers very passionate speeches! Allah has given her the ability to speak confidently and she is using this voice to confront older people in society about the way the planet is being harmed. If she is able to increase awareness and bring about some change it is good. Nonetheless, though global warming is occurring and is dangerous, wars can destroy the world much sooner. So as Ahmadis, we should pray for the peace and prosperity of the world both in the short and long term.”

Smiling, Huzoor added:

“Anyway, she (Greta Thunberg) speaks very well and you who are training to be Missionaries should learn from her oratory, as she speaks with confidence and passion in front of world leaders and large audiences without fear.”

Following the class, Huzoor inspected the Jamia library before departing for Baitus Sabuh at 4.50pm.

Meeting with Darul Qadha Germany

The next morning, 16 October 2019, Huzoor held a meeting with *Darul Qadha Germany (Office of Dispute Resolution)*, a Jamaat body charged with

making determinations pertaining to certain disputes, according to Islamic jurisprudence.

It was reported to Huzoor that the number of cases being dealt with by the Qadha Board had increased in recent years.

Possibly those presenting the report considered it a sign of the increased efficiency of Darul Qadha, however Huzoor's answer illustrated he considered it a cause for concern.

Huzoor said:

“If the numbers of disputes are increasing it shows that the Tarbiyyat Department, the National Ameer, Khuddam, Lajna and other office bearers are not fulfilling their roles to guide and morally train the members. It shows that ignorance is increasing. If the Tarbiyyat was done properly then less cases would reach Qadha.”

Huzoor continued:

“The majority of cases you deal with are divorce cases and in my view the increasing rate of divorce is the fault of both our men and women. In Germany, after getting divorced, some people told that they only got married in the first place due to parental pressure. The German Jamaat should investigate this and whenever any new marriage is arranged, they should ensure that both the bride and the groom are happily and entirely freely entering the marriage. Otherwise, ultimately the lives of the participants, particularly the brides, are seriously damaged.”

Huzoor gave very clear guidance regarding the way that divorce cases should be considered.

Huzoor said it was completely wrong and inappropriate for those hearing the case to ask very personal questions regarding the marriage and such invasive inquiry was violation of the teachings of the Holy Quran.

Huzoor said that each Qadhi (Arbiter) should be well trained and be sensitive and considerate to the needs and emotions of the respective parties.

Furthermore, he said any female who presented her case before the Qadha Board must always have the right to have a female companion or lawyer present for support and advice.

Instructing the Qadhis about what their primary goal should be when dealing with marriage disputes, Huzoor said:

“When dealing with matrimonial disputes your first aim should always be to try to bring about a reconciliation between the husband and wife.”

As the meeting continued, Huzoor turned to Abdul Majid Tahir sahib (*Additional Wakil-ul-Tabshir*) and instructed that a bi-annual exam should take place for Missionaries who were members of Darul Qadha testing their knowledge of Fiqah (Islamic jurisprudence) to ensure their knowledge and understanding was of a high level so they could carry out their duties.

Huzoor was also informed that two members of Darul Qadha were over the age of 80.

Hearing this, Huzoor smiled and said:

“Do they still actively make decisions or is their job just to do dua?”

Giving further guidance, Huzoor said:

“When cases reach Qadha your aim should be to reach a decision as quickly as reasonably possible. Furthermore, you should prepare a report of the reasons why marriages are breaking down and give recommendations of how to prevent the dissolution of marriages based on your findings.”

Huzoor continued:

“As members of Darul Qadha you should have thick skins and always be patient and tolerant. If people get angry with you or speak against you it should not be that you respond in a like fashion, but you should remain cool and calm at all times.

“If you get angry or frustrated it will affect your impartiality and there is a risk that bias or prejudice could creep into your decisions. If in any case, at any point, you feel that you are getting angry or fear that your objectivity will be affected even in the slightest you should postpone the case and another Qadhi should be appointed in your place.”

As I listened to Huzoor's guidance about the objectives of Qadha and the roles of the Qadhis I thought back to my legal training and the Professors and legal experts I learned from. Despite their expertise, none came close to matching the level of detail given by Huzoor to ensure that fairness and justice prevailed.

Speaking about cases which were not clear-cut, Huzoor said:

“There may be cases in which you are unsure about what to do or who to give the decision in favour of. At such times, you must not decide in haste just so you can say you have discharged your duty. Rather, you should write to the Mufti-Silsila in Rabwah or to me directly. Furthermore, you should always be cautious and careful that you do not make any decisions or ruling that contravenes the law of the land.”

Huzoor continued:

“Furthermore, I wish to remind you that you should not make any decision without prayer. Before making any ruling, each Qadhi should do at least two Nafl (voluntary prayer) seeking the Help of Allah.”

Friday Sermon from Giessen

On Friday 18 October 2019, Huzoor led *Jumma* from a large hall known as the ‘*Hessenhalle*’ in the town of Giessen at 2pm.

During the sermon, Huzoor continued narrating historic incidents pertaining to several prominent companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) who partook in the Battle of Badr.



Speaking of the status of those companions, Huzoor said:

“These companions were those people who were of a great status and who attained a closeness to God.”

Speaking about the importance of forgiveness, Huzoor said:

“The Holy Prophet (sa) always considered forgiveness to be the best option, as this was what Allah the Almighty commanded him to do.”

Precious moments in Huzoor’s residence

A day earlier, Huzoor told me he would call me on Friday at some point as he wished to make some revisions to an address he was due to make in Berlin the following week.

I thought it was likely Huzoor would call me in the afternoon after Jumma, however the day passed without Huzoor calling me.

As Huzoor's schedule had been extremely busy, I simply assumed he did not have the time to revise his address and perhaps he would do the revision over the weekend.

To my surprise, at 9pm, I unexpectedly received a message from Ahmad bhai (*Huzoor's Head of Security*) that Huzoor had instructed that I should come to his residence at 10pm.

Thus, a few minutes before 10pm, I went and waited outside his residence with my laptop to hand. A few minutes later the door opened, and Huzoor invited me into the flat in which he was staying in Baitus Sabuh.

As I entered, Huzoor took me into a room to the right-hand side.

The first thing I noticed was an exercise bike and so I asked Huzoor if he found the time to use it.

In reply, Huzoor said:

"Yes, I have an exercise bike in Islamabad and I also have one here to exercise on as well."

Thereafter, Huzoor stepped out of the room for a minute, before returning with the printed copy of his Berlin address.

On the cover, I noticed a long list of handwritten numbers, which I could not understand at all!

Over the next forty minutes, Huzoor went through his address page by page and showed me how he intended to revise it. On many pages, Huzoor had cut out sentences or paragraphs with the objective of reducing the word count.

Where the original text was around 4,200 words, after Huzoor's edits it was reduced to 3,500 and the changes had been made in a way that ensured that each point continued to flow seamlessly from what came before.

Nonetheless, I felt regret that some of Huzoor's beautiful words would not be heard by the audience.

At one-point, Huzoor sought my view on whether all the main points he had dictated remained in the text following the revision.

Upon this, I said that all of the main points Huzoor intended to include remained, but I felt sadness Huzoor had cut down so much of his text due to time constraints.

In particular, I humbly expressed if Huzoor would reconsider keeping a few lines about *women's rights*.

The lines, which I referred to, were as follows:

"In an era, when the rights of women and girls were routinely disregarded, and they were regarded as inferior to boys, the Prophet of

Islam (sa) brought a revolution in the cause of women's rights. He instructed Muslims to love, cherish and respect their daughters and to never consider them lesser to their sons."

I humbly submitted that this was a powerful and categorical statement which could be used in future as a stand-alone quote about the rights of women in Islam and how the Holy Prophet (sa) truly had brought a revolution in society in terms of gender equality.

After listening to my request, Huzoor said:

"In the text there remains a full section about the rights of women in Islam and so these lines are, in essence, repetition of what has gone before. However, when an official transcript is released later these words can be included and so then you will be able to use it as a quote as you desire."

Thereafter, I noticed that on each page of the text there was a single maths equation.

Sensing my confusion, Huzoor said:

"On each page, I have noted down how many words have been added and how many have been subtracted on that particular page. This way, I know the net difference in word count. On the front page you will see I have written down a series of numbers which note how many words have been subtracted on each page and by adding the numbers together I worked out the revised word count."

I finally understood what the series of numbers on the front page represented and I marvelled at how Huzoor found the time to work things out in such detail and had relied on his own mental arithmetic, rather than succumbing to the easy temptations of a calculator like most of us!

As he concluded instructing me on what changes were required, Huzoor asked how the rest of my day had been.

I mentioned I had heard that Huzoor had instructed Ameer Sahib Germany that the *Friday Sermons* in future should be done on site where Huzoor is residing or as near as possible.

Huzoor said:

“Yes, today it took a long time going to Giessen and then driving back to Baitus Sabuh, whereas Jumma could have been offered here. In the UK, some weeks I travel to Baitul Futuh for Jumma but only where there is a margin of time and after planning the rest of my schedule accordingly.”

Huzoor continued:

“During a tour it takes up too much time, which means there is less time for other Jamaat activities. Hence, next week they had planned to do Jumma in Hamburg but I have now told Ameer Sahib that I will offer Jumma at the Mahdi Abad complex (where Huzoor would be residing).”

Working out the route home

As the return date to the UK was starting to come into view, I took the opportunity to mention the journey back home. According to the original plan, the Qafila would travel from Mahdi Abad in northern Germany all the way back to Islamabad in one day.

It seemed quite an ambitious plan given the distance and the fact that there would have to be stops on the way for Namaz and lunch.

Upon this, Huzoor took a seat at a small desk in the corner of the room and picked up a pencil along with a piece of A4 paper upon which his daily schedule had been printed by his office staff.

Over the next fifteen minutes, Huzoor worked out the distances of the possible routes to Calais from Mahdi Abad. He told me to take out my phone and thereafter Huzoor enquired the distances of various cities from one another which I checked using *Google Maps*.

On the paper, Huzoor noted down four different possible routes.

One was from Mahdi Abad to our Jamaat headquarters in Belgium and then to Calais. Another was from Hamburg to Aachen, to Belgium and then to Calais.

A third route was from Hamburg to Cologne to Belgium and then to Calais.

The fourth route was to travel directly from Hamburg to Calais without stopping in Belgium.

As he looked at the map depicting each route, Huzoor said:

“It is my experience that we always get stuck in bad traffic near Antwerp and so, if it is possible, we should take a route that avoids the Antwerp traffic. Take these options to the Private Secretary and tell him to make further enquiries and then I will decide which route we should take.”

I left Huzoor’s residence at 11.10pm and went straight to see if the Private Secretary, Munir Javed sahib was awake so I could give him the details whilst they remained fresh in my mind.

Munir Javed sahib was awake and so I informed him of the discussion and I also asked him if it would be possible to give Huzoor another option of starting the journey back home on the night of the 26th and stopping somewhere overnight before continuing the rest of the journey on the 27th.

I assume this option must have been presented because ultimately the Qafila did leave Mahdi Abad on the night of the 26th and in this way the journey was broken up.

It was the first time I could recall having the chance to discuss Huzoor’s travel route with him and to be involved in this process.

It felt a real privilege and honour to have this opportunity and, most especially, to serve Huzoor as he looked at the possible options himself.

Preparing his addresses

The next morning, I typed up the revised version of Huzoor's notes for his Berlin address.

Whilst working, I was reminded of the days before the tour started, where I had the opportunity to sit in the blessed company of Huzoor for several hours each day over the course of a week, as he prepared his English language addresses for the tour ahead.

I remembered how on one particular day, I spent three hours with Huzoor and almost the entire time was spent working.

By the end, my concentration was flagging and my brain was fatigued, yet when I looked up at Huzoor he was radiant and completely fresh. If it were not time for Namaz, I am sure Huzoor could easily have continued working for a longer period.

I recalled how as Huzoor was preparing his address for the event at *UNESCO* in Paris, he looked through a document which identified some of the achievements of Muslim scholars and inventors around one thousand years ago.

As Huzoor noted the various significant and historic discoveries or intellectual achievements by Muslims his happiness was apparent. .

For example, at one point, looking up from the notes, Huzoor said:

“The word ‘camera’ which is known throughout the entire world is actually derived from the Arabic word ‘qamara’ because the first pinhole camera was developed by a Muslim.”

I also sensed Huzoor’s regret that, generally speaking, the Muslim world had been left behind in intellectual terms in the modern world. This is something Huzoor openly spoke about in an address he made upon his return to England at the *Ahmadiyya Muslim Research Association (AMRA)* conference in December 2019.

Whilst giving dictation for the UNESCO event, Huzoor included mention of several of the Muslim *scientists, mathematicians* and *inventors* who were pioneers in their field and whose work continued to have a great influence on society centuries after their passing.

When I went home that evening it occurred to me that though Huzoor had mentioned those Muslims who had been at the forefront of learning from a thousand years ago, he had not mentioned the work of Professor Dr Abdus Salam sahib.

Overnight, I wondered whether I should mention this to Huzoor in case he wished to include mention of Professor Salam during his address. However, I was extremely fearful of exceeding my bounds, as my sole duty was to take dictation. Huzoor is guided by Allah and so it did not feel right to make any suggestions.

The next day I reported for Mulaqat to take further dictation and, I remained unsure if I should say anything.

To my surprise and delight, before starting the work, Huzoor said:

“Yesterday, I included mention of some Muslim scientists in the UNESCO address, however when I returned home last night, I realised that I had forgotten to mention Professor Salam.”

Thereafter, Huzoor dictated additional lines to his UNESCO speech about how Professor Salam reached the pinnacle in his field and always considered the Holy Quran to be the inspiration guiding his work.

A special watch

During those Mulaqats, whilst the vast majority of the time was spent working, there were occasional moments where Huzoor would pause from his work for a minute or two.

During one brief break, Huzoor asked me how my children were.

Upon this, I mentioned that my elder son, Mahid, had been looking admiringly at a watch that Huzoor had graciously gifted me a couple of years earlier.

I also mentioned how I had been taken aback by Mahid’s subsequent request.

After seeing the watch, Mahid, who is 6 years old, very matter-of-factly said:

“Abba, when you die can I have the watch that Huzoor gave to you?”

As he heard Mahid’s comment, Huzoor laughed out loud and very much enjoyed the innocent lack of sensitivity!

After hearing it, Huzoor said:

“In your house, Mahid is the one who makes bold statements without caution or fear!”

With that, Huzoor turned his chair around so that he was facing his cupboards and bookshelves. It occurred to me that Huzoor was searching for a book for reference. However, much to my surprise and joy, after two or three minutes, Huzoor turned his chair back around to its normal position and in his hand was a silver watch.

Huzoor said:

“Give this watch to Mahid from me.”

Laughing, Huzoor added:

“At least then he will not have to wait until you die!”

I was greatly touched by Huzoor’s kindness and regard for the feelings of my young child.

I looked at the watch for a few moments and noticed that the battery did not appear to be working and so I resolved to get it replaced.

Somehow sensing what was going through my mind, Huzoor said:

“The battery is fine but because it’s a brand new watch there is a small pin in place which is designed to save the battery life until it starts being used.”

Huzoor took the watch back and removed the pin himself before returning it to me. The watch was now working perfectly.

I simply cannot describe how happy Mahid was when I went home that evening and gave him the gift from Huzoor and, ever since, it takes pride of place amongst all of his possessions.

Surely, our beloved Huzoor is he who cares for the feelings and happiness of Ahmadis of all ages, of all races, of all places!

“Burnt his boats”

On another occasion, during a short break, I mentioned a video of *Khuddam* that had circulated on social media a few days earlier in which they were playing a form of Chinese whispers.

Instead of having to convey a verbal message, they had to convey a series of actions. From one person to the next the actions became weirder and further away from the original postures.

Huzoor had himself seen the video and enjoyed it.

Thereupon, Huzoor smiled and said:

“Once, Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra) mentioned that during a game of Chinese whispers the original phrase due to be repeated was ‘The Prince of Wales is coming’, however by the end of the game the phrase had evolved to ‘Give me two pence!’”

Hearing this, I asked Huzoor if Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra) could speak or understand the English language.

In reply, Huzoor said:

“Yes, he could understand English very well and even spoke it. For example, at the Wembley Conference in 1924, before his lecture was read out by Hazrat Chaudhry Zafrullah Khan sahib, the Second Khalifa (ra) spoke for a few moments in English.”

Huzoor continued:

“On another occasion, Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra) chaired a function where English was spoken. During the event, one of the delegates spoke in a rather boastful manner. He mentioned his achievements quite arrogantly and immodestly, and used the phrase ‘I burnt my boats’. By the end, the guests became irritated by his boastful speech. Thus, when Hazrat Musleh Maud (ra) offered the concluding remarks, he started by

saying that ‘The gentleman may have ‘burnt his boats’ but he did not burn his boasts!’

As Huzoor recounted this comment he laughed and smiled in a way that illustrated his immense love for Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (ra).

Huzoor’s regard for Jalsa workers

On the evening of 19 October 2019, Huzoor graciously attended a dinner with the *Afsaraan* (Officers) and *Nazimeen* (departmental in-charges) of the Germany Jalsa 2019, which had taken place a few months earlier.

Shortly prior to the dinner, Huzoor spoke with Ameer Sahib Germany in the corridor outside his office in Baitus Sabuh.

Huzoor said:

“Why has this dinner been arranged for the Nazimeen and Jalsa Afsaraan and not the Muavineen (general workers)? Most of the Muavineen work the hardest at Jalsa and so they should have been included.”

In answer to Huzoor’s question, Ameer Sahib Germany said:

“Huzoor, we did not have room to accommodate all the Jalsa workers and so we had to limit it.”

After hearing the answer, Huzoor instructed:

“Still, if you are holding such a dinner the Muavineen should have been invited.”

Meeting with German lawyer

On 20 October 2020, in between a session of family Mulaqats, Huzoor met with a German lawyer, *Mr Wagner*, who had represented hundreds of Ahmadi families over the past thirty-five years in their asylum cases.

The lawyer informed that though the majority of Ahmadi asylum cases were approved in Germany, increasingly some were being rejected. He said the Judges were applying stricter criteria, whilst younger Judges did not fully appreciate the importance of religion and faith as compared to their predecessors.

Upon this, Huzoor said:

“Even if the younger Judges are not religious or do not understand its value, they should understand the importance of upholding human rights and protecting those people who are persecuted for their beliefs.”

The lawyer said some Ahmadis who applied for asylum did not come to asylum hearings properly prepared and so did not know what to expect and would give answers that did not help their case.

Hearing this, Huzoor said:

“Some Ahmadis are very well spoken and will be able to present themselves well, but others may find the experience daunting and struggle to explain the threat and persecution they face before a Judge.”

Huzoor continued:

“If Ahmadi Muslims tell the entire truth at every stage of the court process then their chances of success will increase because, factually speaking, their claims are genuine. We are a persecuted community and our members are not free to practice their faith in Pakistan. In fact, Ahmadi Muslims are not only stopped from practicing but even professing their faith. What can be a greater injustice than the fact that Ahmadi Muslims are not even permitted to call themselves Muslims? They are not permitted to give their children Muslim names or to greet each other by saying ‘Assalamo Alaikum’.”

Inauguration of Baitul Hameed, Fulda

Later in the day, at 3.50pm, Huzoor travelled from Baitus Sabuh to the German city of Fulda to inaugurate the Baitul Hameed Mosque.

Upon arrival at 5pm, Huzoor inaugurated the Mosque by unveiling a plaque and offering the Zuhr and Asr prayers.

After meeting with Lajna and laying the foundation stone of a private home being built by an Ahmadi family on an adjacent piece of land, Huzoor

travelled to the nearby *Maritim Hotel*, where a reception was held to mark the opening of the Mosque.

In his address to over 330 dignitaries and guests, Huzoor mentioned the fact that Fulda had a very strong Christian heritage, wherein its first Church had been built in the 8th century and, even now, it was known for its continued adherence to Christian traditions and values.



In light of its strong religious heritage, Huzoor said he appreciated the fact that Fulda was a successful multi-cultural city.

Huzoor said:

“One of the guest speakers mentioned that there are more than 100 different ethnic communities living together in this city and for so many

different communities to live together in this city, which was founded on the core principles of Christianity, illustrates the open hearts and welcoming nature of the local people here.”

Huzoor also commented on the fact that Fulda was known as a centre of academic excellence.

Huzoor said:

“Education serves a purpose when it affects the heart in a positive way, when it enlightens a person and motivates him or her towards doing good and taking care of other’s feelings.”



Huzoor said that inter-faith harmony was necessary and taught and practiced by the Holy Prophet of Islam (sa).

Giving an example of how the Holy Prophet (sa) set an everlasting example of compassion towards the Christian community, Huzoor said:

“In Medina, during the time of the Holy Prophet of Islam (sa), there was a Christian delegation who came to meet him. During the exchange, the Christians, who had come from Najran, became restless because the time of their prayer had approached, and they wondered where they could worship. At that time, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) reassured the Christians and said that they could pray and worship in his Mosque. This is the way to create true peace and forming strong bonds and relationships.”

Impact of Huzoor’s address

Following the conclusion of the event, I spoke with some of the guests who shared their views and sentiments regarding Huzoor’s address.

One guest, originally from Turkey, *Eser Koc* said:

“The Khalifa did not speak in a loud or domineering voice, rather he spoke with wisdom and intelligence. Other leaders come and try to impress people with their oratory, but the Khalifa impressed with the weight of his words. He showed that Islam has nothing to do with extremism but is a religion of peace.”

Another guest, *Dr Harold Scheez* said:

“It was really wonderful that the Khalifa did not take the opportunity to speak against Christianity but rather he respected our history and our culture. People think Islam is dangerous but the Khalifa said that it is a religion that teaches no harm is permitted to others in any way.”

A local resident, *Manuel Welberg* said:

“In this Fulda area the AFD (far-right party) has quite a lot of support and they spread regular anti-Islam propaganda but if what the Khalifa says is true then the AFD’s statements are all refuted and proven wrong. Certainly, after this evening, I consider the Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community to be the true Muslim leader of the world.”

A German lady, *Mrs Moniac* said:

“The quality I most admire in the Khalifa is that he has no arrogance and did not try to use religious language to convey his points. Rather, in normal, simple language that everyone can understand he showed us the value of religion and of humanity. His speech was very different to the leaders of other groups or religions I have seen because he spoke from his heart.”

A politician from the SPD Party, *Birgit Kompel* said:

“I was emotional today after listening to the speech of the Khalifa. It was not just his words that affected me but even the pure tone of his voice.

The way he speaks is compassionate and speaks to his love for all people, no matter their faith or beliefs. I am sure that I am not the only person who felt this way – in fact I think I can speak on behalf of every person in the hall by saying that we were all greatly affected by the personality of the Khalifa.”

A few moments with Jamaat members

On the morning of 21 October 2019, Huzoor’s stay at the Jamaat Germany headquarters of Baitus Sabuh came to an end and Huzoor embarked on the next part of his blessed tour for a two day stay in Berlin.

Prior to departure at 11.50am, Huzoor spent fifteen minutes amongst the hundreds of Ahmadis who had come to see him off.

During this period, several Ahmadis had the chance to meet Huzoor and attain the blessings of the nearness to Khilafat.

One of the people Huzoor met was an elderly, long-bearded man.

I had seen him on many occasions throughout Germany and in other European countries. He would often travel long distances to offer prayers behind Huzoor and invariably would be one of the first people to line up to greet Huzoor or to wave goodbye to him upon his arrival or departure.

Wherever or whenever he saw Huzoor he would be unable to control his emotions and would raise extremely loud and passionate *naaray* whilst tears streamed down his face.

On that particular morning, he had been amongst the very first, if not the first, to come to see off Huzoor.

Upon seeing Huzoor come out of his residence into the courtyard, the gentleman raised very loudly the slogan of '*Naaray Takbir*'.

To his complete shock, Huzoor approached him and spoke to him in a light hearted fashion for a few moments.

Huzoor enquired from him if he knew how to spell the word '*Naaray*'. In his joy and excitement, the elderly gentleman struggled to respond but the absolute sense of boundless joy and spiritual contentment was clear to see.

The individual, a convert to Ahmadiyyat, was a very simple man and did not appear greatly educated or well spoken.

Very easily, I could imagine other leaders or people who considered themselves to be educated to ignore such a person, yet Huzoor's love is not limited to the wealthy or the learned. Rather, his love is for every single Ahmadi, every single follower of the Promised Messiah (as), whether rich or poor, literate or illiterate, black or white.

Later, as Huzoor was leaving, the individual who had received Huzoor's love said:

"I felt as though the representative of Allah in this world came toward me - a spiritually weak and unlettered person. Those moments have healed me and those brief moments were greater than all the treasures

of the world. I will never forget that moment and it will forever provide me contentment and happiness.”

With that, the gentleman waved Huzoor off and entered his van, which he drove to Berlin and he was there to receive Huzoor in the evening.

Travel to Berlin

Following a silent prayer, the Qafila departed and travelled for just under three hours before stopping for the Zuhr and Asr prayers and lunch at the Atrium Hotel in the German town of Osterfeld.

The hotel was simple but of a good size. There were dozens of rooms for overnight stays, a large dining area and a more spacious room where Namaz was offered.

Whilst speaking to Ameer Sahib, Huzoor indicated that he liked the premises.

Huzoor said:

“We should make a building in Islamabad similar to this, where there are rooms for guests to stay and a dining hall in which we could accommodate at least 300 people.”

Following lunch, the Qafila re-commenced its journey at 4.15pm and travelled directly to the Khadija Mosque in Berlin, where Huzoor arrived at 6.45pm.

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

After offering Namaz, Huzoor went to his residence at the Khadija Mosque, whilst I and a few others stayed at a nearby hotel.

A late change of venue

The next day, I felt increasing excitement and happiness throughout the day knowing that Huzoor would later make an historic address in the heart of Berlin.

Several Qafila members left earlier to go to the event, whilst Huzoor and a few members of his entourage departed from the Khadija Mosque at 5.30pm.

Along with *Private Secretary*, Munir Javed sahib and *Additional Wakilul Tabshir*, Abdul Majid Tahir sahib, I travelled in Nadeem Amini's car in the latter group.

The event was held at the *Adlon Kempinski Hotel* a stone's throw away from the famous *Brandenburg Gate* and very close to the *German National Parliament* building – the *Reichstag*.

Originally, the German Jamaat had proposed that the event take place in the Reichstag itself.

Even until a few weeks before the event, it was their intention to hold the event in the Reichstag, which is why some people came to believe that Huzoor was to make an address at the German National Parliament.

For various reasons it was not possible to arrange the event at the Reichstag in a proper way.

As a result, Huzoor instructed the German Jamaat to hold the event in a hotel in Berlin.

A day or two before, I had mentioned the late change of venue to Huzoor.

In reply, Huzoor said:

“When the German Jamaat first proposed holding this event in the Parliament I said to them it would be difficult for them to arrange. However, they were adamant that it would be. I permitted them to go ahead with the plan but I still thought it will be very difficult for them to arrange it at this time. In the end, the restrictions being placed by the Parliament officials was such that it was not possible and so I instructed the Jamaat to hold the event nearby.”

Meeting with German politicians

Upon arriving at the hotel, Huzoor was taken to a private meeting room where he met with three Members of the Bundestag, Germany’s National Parliament.

They were *Niels Annen* (SPD Party), *Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office*, *Frank Heinrich* (CDU Party) and *Omid Nouripour* (Green Party).

The meeting was held across a very large square meeting table. To the left, Huzoor was seated and Ameer Sahib Germany and the *National Umoor-e-Kharija Secretary* had the honour to sit either side of Huzoor. On the opposite side of the table, the three politicians sat facing Huzoor.



During the meeting, the politicians commended the efforts of the Jamaat to contribute to society and appreciated the way Ahmadi Muslims had integrated into German society.

Thereafter, Mr Annen asked Huzoor what his '*agenda*' was in coming to Berlin.

It was a rather strange question to ask. Or, at the very least, his question was phrased oddly.

It was not as though they were meeting with a representative of a lobby group or someone seeking help or assistance.

As always, Huzoor was not phased in the slightest.

In response, Huzoor said:

“Our local Ahmadiyya community in Germany believes that the issue of ‘Islamic civilisation and culture’ is somewhat of a burning topic here in Germany and so I have come with one purpose. I have not come to ask for anything rather to inform and explain that there is no reason for Westerners to fear Islam. In fact, the West has a very well established culture and civilisation and so why do people fear that it can be overtaken by Islam?”

The *Minister of State* then introduced Mr Omid Nouripour from the Green Party. He informed that Mr Nouripour was a Muslim.

Upon this, Huzoor said:

“After today’s event, as a Muslim MP, he will be armed with better arguments about his religion!”

As the meeting continued, Huzoor asked the *Minister of State* about the main foreign policy challenges being faced by the German Government and whether he was involved with *Brexit*.

In response, Mr Annen said:

“Yes, definitely Brexit is a situation that is evolving constantly. We are trying our level best to keep the nations of the European Union united and Germany has a special duty in this regard.”

Upon this, Huzoor remarked:

“From what I can sense, Chancellor Merkel has a soft corner for the British but the French are more stubborn and firm in the EU negotiations with UK Government!”

Hearing Huzoor’s comment, the *Minister of State* kept a diplomatic silence!

Though, inwardly, I think he will have agreed with Huzoor’s analysis, as many reports and commentators had expressed similar views during the course of the Brexit process.

Thereafter, Mr Annen asked:

“Your Holiness, do you plan to leave the UK after Brexit?”

Upon this, Huzoor smiled and said:

“No, I do not have any plans to leave!”

Mr Annen further enquired:

“So, you are satisfied living in the UK?”

In reply, Huzoor said:

“I am satisfied wherever there is religious freedom and where the citizens are granted their civil rights. Thus, I am grateful to the British Government for respecting the rights of people to practice their faith and beliefs freely.”

Subsequently, the discussion turned to the persecution faced by Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan.

As he has on other occasions, Huzoor spoke of the need for a voting system in which it was not necessary for Ahmadi Muslims to declare themselves as ‘non-Muslims’ in order to participate in the electoral process.

Huzoor said:

“Every citizen should be able to vote freely irrespective of their religion or faith. I do not hold much hope that the anti-Ahmadi laws will be repealed any time soon but, at the very least, we should not be required to disassociate ourselves from Islam to partake in elections. Distancing ourselves from Islam in any way is something that we can never countenance. If the system is reformed so Ahmadi Muslims can participate in elections, it will enable us to gain a degree of influence and to strive for our basic rights to be protected.”

Upon being asked to what extent he was ‘troubled’ by the persecution, Huzoor said:

“The persecution is wrong and unjust but it does not cause me to become depressed or hopeless. My focus is the wellbeing of our community across the entire world and not just Pakistan. Even our Ahmadis in Pakistan are now used to the persecution and suffer in silence and with patience.”

After further discussions about the persecution and the differences in belief between Ahmadi Muslims and other Muslims, Huzoor said:

“Even in Pakistan, there are some politicians or other people of standing who sympathise with us. Yet, they openly say that their ‘hands are tied’ because they fear the influence of the Mullahs (clerics), who have the power to bring the masses out onto the streets.”

Berlin Reception

Following a brief interval, Huzoor proceeded to the main reception.

The event, in which Huzoor was to deliver the keynote address before an audience of over 80 dignitaries and guests, including *Members of the Bundestag, diplomats, academics, faith leaders and representatives of the media*, was held in an extremely elegant hall within the hotel.

As I sat there waiting for Huzoor’s address, it occurred to me that it had been exactly three decades, almost to the day, since the Berlin Wall came down.

When the famous physical symbol of oppression was shattered the German nation celebrated its freedom and unity.

Now, thirty years later, the Fifth Khalifa of the Promised Messiah (as) was to address the German nation about the means for *true* freedom and unity and was to call on all nations to knock down the metaphorical walls of hatred that existed and divided nations and peoples around the world.

'Islam and Europe: A clash of civilisations?'

Following *Tilawat*, an introduction to the Jamaat was given by Ameer Sahib Germany followed by guest remarks by the three politicians who had met Huzoor earlier.

Thereafter, Huzoor took to the stage to deliver an historic keynote address titled *'Islam and Europe: A clash of civilisations?'*

It proved to be a truly outstanding and enlightening address in which Huzoor addressed head-on the common allegation that the presence of Islam and Muslims was a threat to Western civilisation and culture.

In a powerful defence of Islam and religion itself, Huzoor stated that *atheism* and *Godlessness* were the real threat to Western heritage and civilisation, and they were leading to centuries-old customs and values being suddenly abandoned without pause for thought.

At the outset, Huzoor spoke of heightening tensions and fears in the Western world due to the migration of large numbers of Muslims to Western countries.

Huzoor said:

“Certain governments and members of the public fear a ‘clash of civilisations’ and believe that Muslims are a threat to their society and cannot integrate into the Western world.”



Huzoor proceeded to define ‘civilisation’ and ‘culture’ according to Islamic principles.

Describing ‘civilisation’ as the ‘*material progress and development of a society*’, Huzoor said that ‘culture’ was the ‘*manifestation of the views of a people, their attitudes towards social issues and their practices*’ and rooted in morality.

Huzoor cited the historical example of the *Roman Empire* and the early period of *Christianity* to explain what distinguished a civilisation from a culture.

Huzoor said it was when the Romans accepted Christianity that their great civilisation fused together with a great culture and that period laid the foundation for the values that continued to underpin Western society.

Contrary to popular opinion, His Holiness said that Muslims had no desire to target or undermine Western civilisation. Rather, Muslims sought to emulate the material and technological advancement of the West.

Huzoor said:

“Thus, the assertion that Western or European civilisation is threatened by the presence of Muslims does not hold water. Rather, Western civilisation is influencing other parts of the world and this includes the Muslim world.”

Huzoor said a fear that Western ‘culture’ could be challenged by Muslims was a more rational or ‘legitimate’ fear.

However, he cited various verses of the Holy Quran and examples of the Holy Prophet of Islam (sa) to show that Islam was not in reality a threat to Western culture.

In fact, Godlessness was the real risk to the values held dear by Western nations for many centuries.

In a formidable defence of religion and Islam, Huzoor stated that religion was the basis of Western culture and so it was the continued ascent of atheism and disbelief that was changing society, rather than immigration of Muslims.

Huzoor said:

“In Western countries, whenever a census is conducted it shows that people are less and less inclined towards religion or belief in God. Given this, I believe that the rapid increase of atheism is a far greater threat to Western culture than Islam.”



Huzoor continued:

“Western values are centuries-old and are based upon its religious traditions and especially on its Christian and Jewish heritage. However,

these religious values and cultural norms are under attack from those who oppose all forms of religion and faith."

Huzoor called on Western leaders to protect and preserve their religious identity.

Huzoor said:

"As a Muslim religious leader, I believe you should protect your heritage and culture by focusing your energies on arresting the decline in religion and bringing people back towards faith and belief - whether that be Christianity, Judaism or any other."

Huzoor continued:

"It should not be that in the name of 'advancement' those values and moral standards that have been part of society for many centuries are suddenly abandoned."

In the latter part of his address Huzoor quoted various verses of the Holy Quran that affirmed the great significance and importance of human rights.

Huzoor also spoke about redressing inequalities within societies.

Huzoor said:

"We believe that one of the key ways to help the poor is through education. If younger members of society, who are from broken homes or

who are stricken by poverty, are educated it will enable them to break free from the shackles of destitution.”

At an international level, Huzoor said it was in the interests of affluent countries to aid and support weaker countries.

Huzoor said:

“Rich countries should help the weaker nations of the world build solid foundations. If poorer countries can build up their economies and infrastructures their people will have opportunities at home and have far less reason to migrate abroad. If their nations are stable and prosperous, it naturally follows that the region and the wider world will benefit.”

Huzoor concluded by calling on nations of the world - their leaders and the members of the public - to set aside differences and to forge bonds of unity.

Huzoor said:

“People must realise that words can have far-reaching consequences and so rather than speaking of a ‘clash of civilisations’ or needlessly ratcheting up tensions between different communities, people should refrain from attacking the religious teachings of one another.

As Huzoor concluded his address, I felt a surge of emotion. How lucky were we Ahmadis to have a spiritual leader who guides not only us but the entire world!

Impact of Huzoor's address

I met many guests and dignitaries over the course of the next hour. On the table where I was seated, there were members of the Bundestag and respected academics.

One person I was seated near was an academic and politician from Cologne, *Mr Hirter* who told me that words on their own were '*meaningless*' and only became *meaningful* when acted upon.

Consequently, he said Huzoor's address was, in his words, a '*great theory*' but '*theory alone is not enough*'.

Mr Hirter said:

"I could tell you many great things written in the Bible but it does not mean that every Christian will follow them. So, the question is not 'Is Islam compatible with the West?' but whether 'modern-day' Muslims are compatible with the West and are they willing to act upon the teachings of their faith."

Perhaps he was surprised when I said I agreed with him and we were also taught that actions spoke louder than words.

I said we firmly believed that if modern day Muslims acted upon the original teachings of their faith there would be no issue of incompatibility.

Thereafter, Mr Hirter said:

“Anyway, a person can only be impressed by the Khalifa. He is very wise and intelligent. When I talk to Ahmadi Muslims it is clear they are more educated and tolerant than other Muslims and they always promote peace. It shows that the guidance of the Khalifa is being practiced to some extent at least and that you are acting upon the theory!”

Mr Hirter continued:

“I could also tell that the Khalifa is not like other clerics or Priests. He seems like an ordinary person who has been given a great status but he remains humble and does not try to take benefit of his power and influence like other leaders. Do not think this is a criticism but rather it is something that impressed me and something that I wish to praise. He is a man who speaks from his heart and is not trying to impress anyone – rather he says what he thinks is for the benefit of the entire world.”

Another person seated at our table was a *Parliamentarian* from Berlin, who informed me he was a local *Councillor* when the Khadija Mosque was in the process of being built.

The Member of the Bundestag said:

“There is fear of Islam in Germany – I saw this myself when you tried to open the Khadija Mosque and there were huge protests and so this speech of the Khalifa was very important. The Khalifa came here with a message of knocking down barriers and it is a crucial message in today’s

world. He is completely right that it is irresponsible for anyone to talk about a 'clash of civilisations' because such words increase fears of Muslims and Islam."

Another guest in attendance was a Jewish Rabbi, *Mr W. Rothschild*. He was originally from England but had lived in Germany for thirty years.

Mr Rothschild said:

"The Khalifa said that people are moving away from religion and this is absolutely true. We claim to have 100,000 Jews in Germany but in reality there are just a thousand or a few thousand who actually practice their faith. So he is correct when he says that the values and traditions of the Western world are changing and it is wrong to say it is because of Islam or any religion but rather it is because people are focusing only on the material world."

Thereafter, he said he would not like the Jewish faith to have a global leader like Khalifatul Masih or the Pope.

Mr Rothschild said:

"When there is an absolute leader it is easy for them to be corrupted by the power and control."

I agreed with him that vesting absolute power in any normal person was extremely dangerous.

Yet the one *exception* lies with those who are commissioned by God, be they Prophets or their successors.

I told him of the simplicity of Huzoor's personal life and how simplicity and integrity were defining characteristics of each of the *Khulafa* who had succeeded the Promised Messiah (as).

A lecturer in religion at Heidelberg University, *Dr Georg Neureither* said:

“Whilst the Khalifa spoke it felt as though he was a ‘spiritual father’ and a ‘teacher’ for us. Even though he taught us about morality, his style was not to lecture us or criticise us but to tell us simply what he thinks is right.”

Many of the guests also had the opportunity to meet Huzoor. Normally, at such events, Huzoor would stand and the guests would come to meet him one by one.

However, here a number of guests requested to come and take a seat next to Huzoor at the head table. They each offered their thanks and several spoke of how misinformation had clouded their view of Islam in the past but having listened to Huzoor's address their views had changed for the better.

One particularly demonstrative German lady, who had the chance to meet Huzoor, repeated several times:

“Everything is now clear! Everything is now clear!”

A light moment

The event concluded at 9.45pm and as he walked out of the hotel, Huzoor called me for a moment.

Huzoor seemed pleased the event had concluded successfully.

Sensing that Huzoor seemed relaxed, I took the opportunity to comment on the opulent surroundings of the hotel.

I said:

“Huzoor, this is such an impressive hotel that it seems a shame not to stay here, rather than just coming here for a couple of hours.”

Huzoor smiled and said:

“The Jamaat booked one room for tonight in case it was needed and so you can stay here tonight!”

In response, I said:

“Huzoor, I absolutely do not want to stay here when you are staying elsewhere!”

Though the hotel was splendid, I could think of nothing worse than staying there overnight miles away from Huzoor during a Qafila visit!

A memorable moment at the Brandenburg Gate

As we walked outside, I glanced towards the *Brandenburg Gate* which was just a few hundred metres away.

I could not help but wonder if and when we would have the chance to be in the centre of Berlin with Khalifatul Masih again.

I really desired for Huzoor to spend a few moments to relax and enjoy the historical landmark.

I soon realised I was not the only one contemplating this.

First Ameer Sahib Germany and then Ahmad bhai (*Head of Security*) approached Huzoor and asked him if he would walk towards the Brandenburg Gate and permit a photo with the members of his entourage.

Upon this, Huzoor said:

“I have been here before and seen the gate. It is time for Namaz.”

However, sensing their disappointment, Huzoor changed his decision and walked at a brisk pace towards the centre of the square.

Thereafter, Huzoor stood in the centre and invited members of the Qafila and officials of the German Jamaat to come and stand either side of him.

With the *Grace of Allah*, I also was able to line up in that photo, a few persons to Huzoor's left. I was overcome with delight to have that blessed opportunity.



As the years have passed by, the moments where Huzoor visits tourist attractions or landmarks has declined. So, I knew this was a rare and precious opportunity.

Several people had lined up with their phones or cameras to take photos or video of that moment.

Amongst their line was *Mirza Usman Ahmad* and upon seeing him Huzoor graciously invited him to join the photo and so he was able to stand next to Huzoor.

Usman told me later that those few moments, where Huzoor called him to join the photo, were amongst the most special of his life.

Later in the evening, after we had returned to the Mosque, Ahmad bhai approached me and said:

“During the car journey back to the Mosque, Huzoor specifically asked ‘Abid aa gya thaa photo mein?’”

Meaning:

“Did Abid come in the photo?”

Hearing that Huzoor had enquired about me made what was already a prized moment, even more unforgettable and blessed. *Alhamdolillah.*

Often people ask me what my ‘*most memorable*’ moment with Huzoor has been. It is an impossible question to answer.

Moments are special in different ways. Some for their personal or intimate nature. Some are special because of their historic nature. Countless moments and incidents, each unique and unforgettable in their own way.

That moment in Berlin encapsulated both the private and public. Whenever I look at that photo, I think of the reception that evening and Huzoor’s profound words.

However, I also think back at how I was fortunate to have been able to see Huzoor prepare for that event and to spend long periods in his company and to be able to serve him in my own small and limited way.

An unexpected question!

Whilst I had been riding high in the clouds, I was brought back to earth later that evening at the hotel where I was staying.

I was walking up towards my room when *Muhammad Ahmad*, one of the Qafila drivers took a sudden backward step and appeared startled when I took off my *topi* (hat).

When I asked if everything was ok, Ahmad sahib said:

“Abid sahib, are you wearing a wig?”

It was not a question I had expected or ever anticipated.

As politely as I could, but perhaps a little indignantly, I responded:

“This is natural hair! I have not yet reached the stage where I need a wig!”

In reply, Ahmad sahib said:

“I don’t think I have seen you without a topi before and so when I saw your hair it looked like you were wearing a wig!”

Hotel issues

The following morning, I took a seat for breakfast with *Mirza Usman Ahmad* and *Sadaqat Ahmad sahib*, the *Missionary in-charge* of the German Jamaat at the hotel.

We were discussing how the night before the hotel staff had suddenly informed us that there would be no water connection from 8am onwards. It seemed very strange that a hotel would allow for water maintenance work to take place at 8am, which was the peak hour for people to get ready.

Sadly, our request for them to delay whatever work was being done until 9 or 10am fell on deaf ears.

Accordingly, I rushed back after *Fajr* to shower, whilst poor Majid sahib woke up in the very early hours of the night to shower and do his ablutions.

As I showered, contemplating each second the possibility that the water might stop at any moment, I could not help but think that perhaps this was the type of regimented life people who had lived under the shade of the *Iron Curtain* were used to.

Whilst talking to Sadaqat sahib I learned that hotel problems were not limited to Germany.

He told how he and a Missionary from the UK had stayed at the same hotel in Nunspeet during the Jalsa Salana Holland a few weeks earlier.

Narrating his experience, Sadaqat sahib said:

“We were in the lift in the hotel when it stopped working. For at least thirty minutes we were stuck suspended. The other Missionary became panicked by the gradual diminishing of oxygen! We repeatedly called for assistance and even called the Fire Brigade yet still no one came to help. Finally, I started to shake the door as vigorously as I could and tried to prise it open. Though I could not open the door, it suddenly started to move again and took us down to the basement. Once the doors opened, we ran out as quickly as we could!”

I asked him if they had complained or sought compensation.

In reply, Sadaqat sahib said:

“Yes, we did but they were not really bothered. All they offered us was a free late check-out which was no good to us as we had to leave in the morning regardless!”

Interview with Radio Deutschland

Later that morning, Huzoor was interviewed by a female journalist from *Radio Deutschland* at his office in Berlin at the Khadija Mosque.

The journalist, who had attended the reception the evening before, asked Huzoor why he claimed that atheism was a ‘greater threat’ to Western values than religion and why he linked morality to religion.

In reply, Huzoor said:

“Every religious scripture in its original form taught moral values and so, as people have moved away from religion, a moral decline has taken place in parallel. Human values are not being respected as they ought to be. For example, generally, the respect children have for their parents is less now than in the past. Whereas religions have taught people that they should respect and care for their parents and be fully considerate of their feelings and needs as they grow older.”



Thereafter, the journalist asked Huzoor a series of questions about *women's rights* in Islam.

After asking questions about *marriage* and the presence of Ahmadi women at public events, the journalist asked:

“Do you consider that the first place for an Ahmadi woman is in the home?”

Despite the pressing nature of her questions, Huzoor remained unaffected and calm.

In response, Huzoor said:

“Islam has mandated a division of labour between the sexes. Men are taught to earn and provide for their families, whilst women are responsible for running the home and raising their children. However, at the same time, Islam stipulates that every girl should be educated and those who have the aptitude and ability can certainly pursue worthwhile professions. For example, within our community there are female members who are doctors, teachers and engineers. At the same time, they should not neglect their family responsibilities.”

She asked why Jamaat events are segregated between men and women.

In reply, Huzoor said:

“We believe women can flourish better without the shade of men! If they are separate, they are free... At the same time, women have equal rights to men in Islam. They have the right of divorce, inheritance and many

others, all of which were denied in the West even until some decades ago."

Pause for thought?

In Germany, perhaps more than any other country, Huzoor has been asked by the media many times about *women's rights in Islam* and in particular issues such as *gender segregation* and why Muslim men and women prefer not to shake hands with people of the opposite sex.

Now, due to the devastating spread of *Covid-19*, nations are imploring their citizens not to shake each other's hands and social distancing is no longer frowned upon but something being actively encouraged and enforced.

A clip of Germany's Chancellor, Angel Merkel being rebuffed when she tried to shake the hand of one of her Ministers quickly became viral.

Once this pandemic, *Insha'Allah*, passes and people return to their normal lives I wonder if journalists will continue to ask Huzoor and other Muslims through judging eyes why Islam requires social distancing between men and women.

My guess is that most of them will ask those same questions without a hint of shame or embarrassment.

I do hope I am wrong and that this devastating period will lead to a pause for thought and fair evaluation about those Islamic ideals and values that have so long been looked down upon by the majority of non-Muslims.

Meeting with Foreign Office guest

Following the interview, *Dr Volker Berresheim, Head of Religion at the Federal Foreign Office of Germany* also had the opportunity to meet Huzoor in his office.

As the meeting begun, Dr Berresheim said:

“Your Holiness, I have read your book ‘Pathway to Peace’ and I also attended the event last night. Your book is extremely impressive and your address last night was spectacular. Though, I do not think we are on the brink of a Third World War, I agree with many of the points you raise, particularly about the instability of the world.”



Hearing this, Huzoor said:

“I do not think it is possible to rule out the threat of World War Three erupting. Other people have also suggested that I may be overly pessimistic with my analysis but later, having seen how global instability is increasing, have contacted me to say I was right. Nonetheless, there are many issues and contributing factors that are threatening the peace and stability of the world.”

Huzoor continued:

“International organisations designed to keep the peace, such as the United Nations, are not functioning properly. The European Union is getting weaker – the UK has taken the first step of leaving and who knows if others will follow in its footsteps. I have long advocated that the EU is stronger if it is united but a mistrust has developed between international organisations and institutions and the publics they are meant to represent.”

Huzoor further said:

“People feel that their rights are not being protected and so are turning inwards. Fractures are developing within countries and crossing borders too. When the Cold War ended people thought the era of blocs and alliances had reached an end but now they are reforming.”

The guest suggested that the ‘blocs’ Huzoor was referring to were ‘temporary’.

In reply, Huzoor said:

“Even if you are right, a lot can happen in a short time. It is a volatile situation that could erupt at any time.”

Just over two months after Huzoor spoke, the United States assassinated Iran’s military commander.

For a few days, the situation in the world became extremely tense and dangerous.

Just as Huzoor had forewarned, a volatile situation suddenly became a lot worse and threatened to erupt before our eyes. ‘*World War Three*’ was trending on social media.

Through the *Grace of God* and the prayers of *Khalifa-Waqt*, the situation calmed down to some extent, yet it was a stark reminder of how prescient Huzoor’s repeated words of warning for the world really are.

As the meeting drew towards a close, the guest said he considered the separation of religion and State to be important.

Upon this, Huzoor said:

“You are right. It is extremely important to keep politics separate from religion, otherwise there cannot be peace.”

Huzoor continued:

“Who will make the clerics realise that their role is to guide people about their religion and to stay out of politics? Sadly, in some Muslim countries the clerics are more like politicians than religious leaders.”

An inappropriate request

Following the meetings, Huzoor met 50 families in a session of family Mulaqats.

During this period, I sat with Majid sahib (*Additional Wakilul Tabshir*) in a small office at the Khadija Mosque.

Majid sahib showed me a letter that had been marked to *Tabshir* by Huzoor sent by representatives of the Hamburg Jamaat.

By now they had been informed that the following Jumma would not take place in Hamburg but would take place at the Mahdi Abad complex and their letter sought to persuade Huzoor to reconsider his decision.

It stated that thousands of Ahmadis were expected to offer Jumma in Hamburg but it would be difficult for all of them to be accommodated in Mahdi Abad.

The local Jamaat even went as far as offering to ‘*charter a helicopter*’ for Huzoor to travel from Mahdi Abad to Hamburg for Jumma.

I am sure the letter was sent with love and due to their heartfelt desire for Huzoor to visit Hamburg. However, I felt it was ill-advised and displayed a lack of obedience to Khilafat.

If someone or a particular Jamaat has a view or suggestion it can be given, however once Khalifatul Masih takes a decision it is the duty of the Jamaat members to obey it wholeheartedly.

Furthermore, the suggestion that a helicopter could be chartered was not at all appropriate.

For one, Huzoor is extremely protective of the resources of the Jamaat and does not desire for a single penny to be wasted.

In addition, Huzoor does not take any decision for the sake of his personal comfort or ease. Rather, time after time, he puts aside his own comfort for the sake of the Jamaat.

Thus, the idea that Huzoor would suddenly reverse his decision on the basis of the availability of a helicopter was disrespectful.

Majid sahib showed me Huzoor's reply, which was clear and unambiguous.

Huzoor wrote:

"Insha'Allah Jumma will be offered in Mahdi Abad next week, however if it is not possible for you to manage it then I will offer Jumma in Berlin and come to Mahdi Abad for a few hours only to inaugurate the Mosque."

A special Mulaqat

As the family Mulaqats were coming to an end, Mahmood Khan sahib, from Huzoor's security team, asked me to meet an Ahmadi who was in a state of distress.

The man in question was in floods of tears. He was utterly anguished and desperate. He told how he had come from Pakistan recently but had not been able to get a Mulaqat with Huzoor.

As tears flowed from his face, he said:

"For 15 or 20 years – as long as I can remember – I have dreamed of meeting Huzoor and now I am just a few metres away from him and I still cannot meet him. Why? Please, please help me."

We all desired to help him but, at the same time, we knew that the session was coming to an end and Huzoor had to travel onwards later in the day. Furthermore, there were other Ahmadis who had not been able to get Mulaqat due to time constraints and so he was not the only one.

One of us suggested that he stand outside the office building because Huzoor was due to come outside to have photos with members of the Jamaat imminently.

As we were saying this, I looked out the window and saw Huzoor had already come outside for the group photos. So, we told the man to come outside and wait.

When the photos finished, though Huzoor was walking in a different direction he saw the man who was still crying uncontrollably, and, out of his love and grace, called him towards him and asked him what the matter was.

Somehow, the man drew up the strength to say:

“Huzoor, I wanted Mulaqat with you but I was not put on the list.”

Thereafter, Huzoor spoke to him with great love and affection.

Huzoor said:

“Look, now you are meeting me and having a Mulaqat. You can also have a photo as well.”

With that, Huzoor held the hand of the Ahmadi and a photographer was called.

Afterwards, the man continued to cry and weep but now his tears were not of grief or desperation, rather they were tears of joy and contentment.

Those few seconds were the fulfilment of his lifelong dream.

Arrival in Mahdi Abad

At 4.45pm, after a silent prayer, Huzoor and the Qafila members departed from Berlin and headed to *Mahdi Abad* for the final few days of Huzoor's blessed tour.

After driving 300km non-stop, we arrived in Mahdi Abad at 7.45pm, where Huzoor was greeted by hundreds of Ahmadis from the local Jamaat and from the wider Hamburg region.

The complex, comprising dozens of acres of land in the rural municipality of Nahe, near Hamburg, was purchased in the 1980s.

It had been used by the local Jamaat for its programmes but it did not have a proper Mosque. For many years the only functioning building was an old farmhouse which came with the land and was converted for Jamaat use.

Now, seven years after its foundation stone was laid by Huzoor, the construction of the *Baitul Baseer Mosque* was complete. In addition, a residence for Khalifatul Masih had been built at the site.

On the way to *Mahdi Abad* we were told that the plan was for Huzoor to inaugurate the Mosque upon arrival.

Upon arriving, Huzoor enquired from Ameer Sahib Germany why there was a need to unveil the plaque that evening and why it was not being done at Jumma.

In response, Amir Sahib said:

“Huzoor, as you will be leading prayers here from now, we thought it means it has been officially opened with the first prayer offered.”

In reply, Huzoor said:

“It is not necessary for the official opening to coincide with the first prayer. I am sure Ahmadis have been praying in the Mosque during the past days as well. Unveiling the plaque is just a gesture and is not linked to the prayer itself.”

Hearing this, Huzoor’s own Mosque, *Masjid Mubarak* in Islamabad came to mind. Huzoor moved to Islamabad a month before the actual official opening and all the prayers were offered as normal prior to the inauguration.

Thereafter, Huzoor further said:

“We do not wish to open this Mosque in secret! So, we will open it on Friday with Jumma!”

Inauguration of Baitul Baseer Mosque, Mahdi Abad

On Friday 25 October 2019, exactly a month to the day that we had left England, Huzoor inaugurated the Baitul Baseer Mosque with his weekly Friday Sermon.

During the sermon, Huzoor said Ahmadi Muslims should never take for granted the freedoms and blessings of Allah the Almighty, especially those who were living freely and free from the shackles of persecution and injustice.

Huzoor said:

“Ahmadi Muslims do not have religious freedom in Pakistan. The (anti-Ahmadi) law bars us from building Mosques and fulfilling our obligations to Allah the Almighty and worshipping him. On the contrary, in Germany we are able to build Mosques and to fulfil our obligations to Allah the Almighty.”



Huzoor continued:

“Furthermore, the financial circumstances of most Ahmadi Muslims have improved after moving to the West. Every Ahmadi Muslim living in this part of the world must bear all of this in mind and strive to fulfil their obligations towards God Almighty and towards humanity.”

A sobering address

Later that day, Huzoor graciously attended a dinner with office bearers of *Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya Germany* in a large marquee at the Mahdi Abad complex.

It was not known if Huzoor was going to speak at the event. Personally, I thought it was unlikely that Huzoor would give a speech.

To my surprise, Huzoor did address the Khuddam and his speech was extremely faith inspiring, powerful and touched the emotions of every person fortunate enough to be there.

Huzoor spoke about the status of Khilafat and how Ahmadis, most especially members of Khuddamul Ahmadiyya, were duty bound to protect the institution of Khilafat-e-Ahmadiyya through obedience and absolute loyalty.

Huzoor said:

“It should be kept in mind that a primary responsibility of Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya is the protection of Khilafat-e-Ahmadiyya. This does not mean carrying out security duties. Rather, the responsibility requires the Khuddam to listen to and follow the words of the Khalifa of the time and to convey his message to others. The Jihad of this age is to act upon the Khalifa’s instructions which are guiding mankind towards the peaceful teachings of Islam.”

Huzoor continued:

“Allah the Almighty has decreed an era and time period for each of the Khulafa of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and this will Insha’Allah continue in the future as well and Allah provides guidance according to the era and guides the Khalifa according to the needs of the time.

“Thus, when one period ends and a new Khalifa is elected, and he is guided by Allah, then it is necessary to follow whatever guidance of instructions he gives... It is essential to listen to the Khalifa of the time and to act upon whatever he says, rather than questioning the meaning of his guidance or instructions.”



Huzoor further said:

“Sometimes office bearers speculate amongst themselves about the meaning of the words of the Khalifa of the time or make their own interpretations. If something is not clear and requires clarification, then

ask the Khalifa of the time directly instead of speculating. And if it regards something said by the previous Khulafa, it is the Khalifa of the time alone who will inform what was meant by them and the same is true with the statements and quotations of the Promised Messiah (as). This is not the work of office bearers – it is up to the Khalifa of the time alone to decide such matters.

In conclusion, Huzoor said:

“So, members of Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya and indeed all office bearers must remember that they must look at the words and instructions of the Khalifa of the time and listen to them and act upon them. Allah the Almighty gives life to the Khalifa for as long as He sees fit and the Khalifa continues to fulfil his duties. And when Allah decrees he brings an end to that era and another one begins.”

It was a short address, yet every word spoken by Huzoor was sobering and a reflection of the great status of Khilafat and the duty of every single Ahmadi to listen and obey, rather than to interpret decisions or statements to fit their own needs.

It was a reminder to each and every one of us that we must always stay loyal to the Khalifa of the time and not make comparisons between the statements or instructions of Khalifa-Waqt and his predecessors.

It was a speech which Huzoor delivered without any notes and later, Huzoor told me he did not plan to speak more than a few words but when he stood at the podium the words flowed naturally from his tongue.

This reinforced what I already felt - that this was a message guided entirely by Allah as a reminder to all of us of the true status of Khilafat-e-Ahmadiyya.

A blessed hour

On 26 October 2019, Huzoor's tour had reached its penultimate day, yet there was no sense of '*winding down*' when it came to Huzoor's activities.

During the morning, a full session of family Mulaqats took place and in the afternoon a *reception* was held with guests to mark the opening of the Baitul Baseer Mosque.

Further, every person on the Mosque complex was blessed with a rare and treasured opportunity that day.

Mulaqats ended at 1.10pm and, as Namaz was not until 2pm, we expected Huzoor would either remain in his office or return to his residence after having some scheduled photos with the local Jamaat members.

Instead, Huzoor spent the best part of an hour with the members of his Qafila and the members of the Jamaat who were present.

Most graciously, Huzoor called the members of the Qafila for a photo in the courtyard outside his office.

After the photo was taken, Huzoor was informed that a couple of Qafila members were not present and so he said to call them and he would wait and retake the photo with them present.



Thereafter, Huzoor permitted all the other teams who had travelled from the UK, such as *MTA International*, *Makhzan-e-Tasaweer* and *Review of Religions* to have their photos taken with him.

Many other groups also had this blessed opportunity.

To my intense surprise, Huzoor called me and Amer Safir, *Editor of Review of Religions*, for a separate photo.

As he called us, Huzoor said:

“Review and Press & Media are linked and so you two come and have a photo.”

That moment and opportunity really touched my heart.



Afterwards, I thought about what Huzoor may have meant when he said that *Review* and *Press & Media* are linked. Certainly, both departments publicise the messages and statements of Khalifatul Masih and publish articles and statements. So, in that sense we are certainly linked.

However, my own feeling is perhaps Huzoor called us because there has been a personal link between Amer Safir and me.

We both had our *Waqf* applications approved by Huzoor at a similar time and over the years there had been various projects which Amer and I were assigned by Huzoor to work on together.

A current example were Huzoor's English speeches. Where, I have had, in recent years, the opportunity to take dictation from Huzoor for his addresses, once they have been delivered, Amer has the duty to prepare an *official transcript* for Huzoor's approval.

Regardless, of the reason, both Amer and I were humbled and extremely grateful to have that blessed opportunity.

After the photos, Huzoor inspected the complex and much to their delight and complete astonishment, Huzoor went to the Lajna side, where Lajna members were able to see him and the ladies security team suddenly took over duties of security and escorted Huzoor from one side to the other.

From the men's side we could hear the collective audible excitement of Lajna members through *naaray* or by women excitedly calling out "*Huzoor is here, Huzoor is here!*"

Upon returning to the men's side, Huzoor spoke briefly with Sadaqat Ahmad sahib, Germany's Missionary-in-charge.

After a few moments, Huzoor called me to join the conversation and asked:

"Abid, how many public speeches have I given during this tour?"

Off the top of my head, I said:

"Huzoor, at least 14 or 15."

Hearing this, Huzoor said:

“I have delivered more speeches than that.”

Upon this, Huzoor started counting in his mind and said:

“I think at least 18 have been delivered and another one, Insha’Allah, later today.”

I checked later and Huzoor’s figure was correct.

Huzoor had delivered four addresses at Jalsa Holland.

Another speech was made at the Almere Mosque inauguration, a further four addresses at Jalsa France, followed by Huzoor’s address at UNESCO and two addresses in Strasbourg.

In Germany, Huzoor delivered addresses in Wiesbaden, Giessen, Fulda, Berlin, Mahdi Abad Jumma followed by an address to Khuddam.

An address to guests later that day in Mahdi Abad was to follow and so in total there were 19 public addresses in the space of a month.

This was without factoring in Waqf-e-Nau classes, a Jamia Germany class, press conferences and media interviews, meetings with officials and hundreds of family Mulaqats.

It truly had been a whirlwind of a tour!

Reception for Baitul Baseer Mosque

After a break for lunch, a special reception marking the opening of the Baitul Baseer Mosque was held in a marquee at the Mosque complex, attended by over 145 guests.

During the event, which started at 4.50pm, an introduction to the Jamaat was given by Ameer Sahib Germany, followed by short guest speeches.

Thereafter, Huzoor addressed the guests and he highlighted the true purposes of mosques and the vital importance of the peaceful co-existence of different communities and races.

Huzoor spoke about the importance of upholding high moral values and fostering a spirit of mutual respect within society.

Huzoor said:

“It was mentioned by one of the earlier speakers that this Mosque has been built in a small village. Whether a place is a village, a small town or a densely populated city is irrelevant. What truly distinguishes a place is the moral character of the people who live there and how they live and interact with other people.”

Huzoor also referenced one of the guest speakers who served at a high level within the Army and explained how he and his family had certain reservations 30 years ago when Ahmadi Muslims came to the Nahe area.

The speaker said that the reservation was of such a level that he thought that the banner of *'Love for All, Hatred for None,'* was just an 'act' and 'propaganda'. Now, thirty years later, the neighbour openly admitted that he had been wrong, and that Ahmadis had lived up to the demands of *'Love for All, Hatred for None'* in all respects.



Regarding this incident, Huzoor said:

"After spending thirty years with Ahmadi Muslims, the sentiments of fear amongst the neighbour has gone away. This is because Ahmadi Muslims have come here and have presented the true meaning of Islam, which instructs its followers to uphold the rights of their neighbours."

Huzoor spoke about the lack of peace in the world and said it was because people were focused on their *differences*, as opposed to those things that united them.

Huzoor said:

“To eradicate conflict and hatred in the world we should focus on our commonalities as opposed to our differences. The Holy Quran has instructed the People of the Book to come together upon a matter which is common amongst them. It does not say to scrutinise the differences, rather, it speaks about looking at what is common. That common thing amongst them all is God - Who is One and Who we worship. This is the common thing found in all religions.”

Huzoor continued:

“If we understand this point and truly worship One God and work to fulfil His rights and acknowledge that every living being has been created by Him then there will be no religious, cultural or other forms of conflict.”

Impact of Huzoor's words

As with every address Huzoor delivers, his words had a profound effect on the vast majority of people attending.

After listening to Huzoor's speech, a local politician, Mr Hoffman said:

“The vision of the Khalifa is not short term but is long term. He is far-sighted. He sees not just what is happening today but also what could happen in years to come. He is worried about the state of humanity and wants all people to unify and cooperate. It was particularly apparent how he is a ‘defender of religion’ rather than just a defender of ‘Islam’.”

A local resident, Mrs Walter said:

"I thought I knew a lot about religion but I gained a whole new perspective from the speech of the Khalifa. The way he spoke was beautiful and touching. I have always felt saddened when I saw how some women are treated wrongly in some Muslim countries. However, today I feel reassured that what happens in those countries is not because of your religious teaching but is because the people are acting in a wrong and harsh way and we should not lay the blame at the feet of religion. Just to learn this one thing made my attendance worthwhile."

A German teacher, Mrs Bennett said:

"I was invited by a student but was not sure if I should come. I was nervous and apprehensive and only agreed to come after taking the advice of my husband. I am so glad that I came because the speech of the Khalifa was extremely reassuring and filled with new points about Islam that I have never heard before. It was a very appealing message and one that can only serve to strengthen our society and the ties of friendship amongst the community."

Message from a bridge

With the conclusion of the *Baitul Baseer Reception*, Huzoor's formal public engagements for the tour reached an end and straight after the event, Huzoor led the Maghreb and Isha prayers before the journey back to Islamabad began.

After a silent prayer, the Qafila departed from Mahdi Abad at 7.45pm and we drove directly to the city of Osnabruck, where Huzoor stayed the night at the Basharat Mosque.

On the way, whilst we were driving on the motorway, a message came through on the *walkie talkie* that we should all look up at a bridge ahead. When we looked up, we saw dozens of Ahmadis from the Bremen Jamaat holding a banner waving towards Huzoor and Huzoor saw them from his car.

Though they sought only to express their love for Huzoor, I personally thought it was unnecessary for them to gather on the bridge. After all, no driver, especially those driving at motorway speed, requires any added distraction.

By the time the Qafila reached the Basharat Mosque it was 10.30pm and despite the late hour, many Ahmadi men, women and children had gathered to see Huzoor.

A fulfilment of Huzoor's words

The next morning, the Qafila resumed its journey back to Islamabad early morning.

On the way, I read on my phone that the leader of the terrorist group *Daesh*, who had once claimed to be a Khalifa, had died.

It was reported that he detonated a suicide bomb, killing himself and his children, upon being cornered by US military personnel.

As I heard the news, I could not help but think back to Huzoor's statement on national television back in 2014, when Daesh was at its apex, that the organisation and its leadership will '*die its own death*'.

What could be more illustrative of this than when the leader of Daesh blew himself up. How true and prescient the words of the true Khalifa of the time had proven.

Journey back to Islamabad

The journey home continued after a short stay at our Jamaat headquarters in Brussels for Namaz and lunch.

Thereafter, after a day of driving, the Qafila arrived at Calais at 6.30pm where we stopped for half an hour.

During this period, Huzoor and Khala Saboohi (*Huzoor's respected wife*) took coffee, which I was able to assist Ahmad bhai as he served it.

I had noticed all day that there was a small cyst visible next to Huzoor's eye and it was extremely red. I asked Huzoor if he was ok.

In response, Huzoor said:

"Today, it is better and I can see again, whereas yesterday I could hardly see through this eye."

I asked Huzoor if he was taking antibiotics or medication.

Upon this, Huzoor smiled and said:

“I do not need any antibiotics for such things! I am following the desi way rather than allopathy for this. The way I am treating it is to rub and clean the area with warm water and I will wait for it to naturally heal.”

I was surprised Huzoor did not seem at all concerned or feel the need to use any medication.

Seeing my reaction, Huzoor smiled and said:

“When I was young, I also had such issues in my eye occasionally and I always treated it with water and with a little heat generated by rubbing my finger tip on the palm of my hand and placing it on the cyst. Sometimes our desi methods are better than your Western ones!”

Alhamdulillah, when I reported for Mulaqat the next day I saw that Huzoor’s eye appeared fine and the cyst was no longer visible! So Huzoor’s self-treatment had, with the *Grace of Allah*, worked!

Moments later Huzoor proceeded to his car and we boarded onto the *Eurotunnel* and crossed the Channel at 7.25pm.

We arrived back in the UK soon after and drove straight to Islamabad, where Huzoor was greeted by hundreds of members of the Jamaat, including those blessed and fortunate families who had the honour of being Huzoor’s neighbours in Islamabad.

The moment of returning back to Huzoor's home – in the past at Fazl Mosque and now at Islamabad – is always one of the most thrilling and joyous moments of any tour. This time was no different.

On the one hand, I felt a deep sense of gratitude that Huzoor's tour had proven extremely blessed, whilst secondly, as I saw the relieved and overjoyed faces of those people who had been parted from Huzoor for the past few weeks, I felt truly thankful that I had not been separated from him.

Conclusion

Alhamdolillah, Huzoor's tour of Europe was historic and blessed in so many ways.

Personally, I will never forget those personal moments I shared with Huzoor.

I look back at those treasured moments in Holland where Huzoor would come down each evening to the basement and I would be able to meet him or those moments in the corridor of his residence at the Jalsa France complex.

At a Jamaat level, Huzoor graced *event after event, meeting after meeting*, all in an effort to spread the true teachings of Islam and to ensure the moral and spiritual wellbeing of members of the Jamaat.

As the effects of the coronavirus have caused many Jamaat events around the world, even in the Markaz, to be postponed or cancelled, I have come to

realise more than ever before that we must never take such blessings for granted.

Insha'Allah those days of joy will soon return, for Allah the Almighty has promised that *'Surely there is ease after hardship'*.

May Allah the Almighty deliver us from the anxieties and worries of this unique time in our lives.

May Allah the Almighty always protect Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba), his loved ones and all members of the Jamaat of the Promised Messiah (as). *Ameen.*

End of part 3

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