



External Relations Desk

**Report for the Term
2003 – 2006**

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**THE
WORLD
FEDERATION**

OF KHOJA SHIA ITHNA-ASHERI MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

Registered charity in the UK No. 282303



1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The External Relations Desk at the World Federation was initiated 4 years ago. The principle aim is to increase awareness of the importance of external relations at the World Federation, regional, Jamaat and community member level.

These relationships occur in partnership with:

- Non-Khoja Shia Organisations
- Other Muslim Organisations
- Other faith organisations
- Voluntary and statutory secular organisations.

- 1.2 Our Shia Muslim community is surrounded by politically precarious situations. It is clear that we cannot exist solely by staying within the insular environment of our own community. Building bridges with other organisations and communities is vital:

- To spread the universal humanitarian message of our Islamic faith.
- To publicise the excellent work being undertaken by our community.
- As a community to gain value from the diversity of the other Shia, Muslim and non-Muslim organisations.
- To achieve common goals which cannot be delivered by ourselves.

- 1.3 The remainder of the report indicates a range of external liaison operations undertaken by various structures within our community. It has been compiled by information from the weekly newswire and from the quarterly Insight magazine. It is not an exhaustive list but the aim is to give a flavour of the range of external work carried out in order to inform the KSI community of the critical importance of external work.

2 DISCUSSION

2.1 External Relations on the World Federation Level

Outlined below is a small sample of external relations pursued on the World Federation Level

- 2.1.1 The External desk has continuously advised the Secretariat on maintaining and enhancing the existing relationships and developing new ones.

- 2.1.2 The World Federation is a founding member of The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB). The World Federation has increased its participation within the MCB in co-operation with the Council of European Jamaats. A number of individuals from our community are now participating in the MCB's various committees and Dr Akber Mohamedali, the Chair of the External Desk, served as the



recent treasurer and has now been elected as the Assistant Secretary General.

- 2.1.3 As a result of this involvement the World Federation and CoEJ have been able to influence and lobby the UK government on the policy affecting the Muslim community. The model of the MCB as a united Muslim organisation is being studied and emulated by other national and world organisation e.g. Ireland, Sri Lanka, Europe and USA.
- 2.2 In October 2003, representatives from the World Federation met the then Minister of Religious Affairs Syed Hussein Barka Shami Al Mousawi. The Minister aimed to encourage Khoja businesses to invest in the reconstruction of Iraq as well as covering the important issue of safety of the Shia Zawwar to Iraq.
- 2.3 In December 2003, representatives from the World Federation met the then British Foreign Secretary Rt. Hon. Jack Straw. The attendance of the World Federation was testament to the organisation's commitment to working for the betterment of the Muslim community, in co-operation with other Muslim groups.
- 2.4 In May 2004, the President of the World Federation met the Chief Minister of the Government of Zanzibar in a discussion centred on the World Federation's pledge of funding a clean water programme.
- 2.5 In August 2004, the World Federation held a meeting with the MCB as part of its partnership for the betterment of all Muslims in the UK, on how to respond to the UK government's Counter-terrorism powers.
- 2.6 In January 2005, the Youth Network Desk attended a Tsunami crisis meeting organised by 'Relief Medicine Education,' a host of different national charities were present. The World Federation representatives highlighted the work actioned by the Secretariat in many of the countries affected.
- 2.7 On 25th January 2005, the head of British Catholic Committee visited the Islamic Education Board. The 2 hour visit centred around establishing links which would allow for a better understanding of each other's faith.
- 2.8 In July 2005, Downing Street invited representatives from the World Federation to join them in a meeting for leaders of Muslim Britain. The Prime Minister was positive in recognising the contributions of British Muslims and also discussed the impact of forthcoming legislation on Muslims.
- 2.9 The World Federation, in September 2005, attended a meeting of the benefactors of the World Ahlul Bayt Assembly. The key objective of the two days was to highlight the socio economic needs of Shias around the world and for co-ordination in such upliftment efforts. The meeting included participants from all over the world including the Gulf States, Lebanon, Syria, US, Africa, India and South East Asia.



- 2.10 In November 2005, the IEB attended an event organised by the Muslim Council of Britain in response to Government Anti-terror Proposals. Delegates heard speeches by lawyers, politicians and scholars. The event was then divided into focus groups.
- 2.11 In November 2005, a selection of youth volunteers attended the Foreign & Commonwealth Office Eid Reception hosted by Rt Hon Jack Straw. The delegation visited the Foreign Office through co-operation with Al Khoi Institute in London. A number of youths have been invited back by Ministers who were impressed with their knowledge, informed opinions and enthusiasm.
- 2.12 The World Federation worked closely in partnership with the Bilal Muslim Mission of Kenya in the Missions' recent work in alleviating famine within parts of Kenya.
- 2.13 The World Federation donated surgical gloves worth \$10,000 to the Government of Zanzibar. A ceremony took place in the main Hospital in Zanzibar.
- 2.14 External Relations on a Regional Level**
- 2.15 CoEJ was invited to join the London Mayor's task group to deal with the impact of the anti-terrorism legislation on the Muslim community in UK.
- 2.16 CoEJ together with representatives from the World Federation were invited to a meeting at the British Home Office on the 2nd June 2004. The Home Office wanted to introduce an amendment to the Immigration Rules under which persons seeking leave to enter as a minister of religion will need to provide a certificate of English competency under the International English Language Testing Scheme (IELTS), although discretions may be given for persons educated in an English-speaking nation following evidence that the individual speaks competent English. The Council of European Jamaats gave its detailed thoughts on the situation.
- 2.17 The NASIMCO Councillor to the World Federation, Habib M Habib, met with the US Presidential Candidate John Kerry at the Democratic National Convention in Boston. John Kerry persuaded Habib Bhai of his party's commitment to the Muslim population of America.
- 2.18 External Relations on a Jamaat Level**
- This is a sample of immense external liaison encompassed by our Jamaats. The extracts indicate some of the beneficial effects associated with external relations
- 2.19 Our Vancouver and Toronto community organised a leadership development programme in 2005 for over 50 people. This was undertaken by the head of the leadership directorate of Microsoft.



- 2.20 Leicester Jamaat youths under the banner of the 'Behloul Society' raise funds for the Red Cross during Ramadhan, for local campaigns such as providing shelter for the homeless. In November 2004, the Behloul Society was awarded a special Certificate of Appreciation for all of its endeavours.
- 2.21 In April 2005, the Jamaat of Orlando commemorated Hussain Day, with over ninety volunteers, organised the day feeding the local homeless.
- 2.22 Parishioners from St Madeleine's Church, Kenthurst, Australia visited the Imam Hassan Islamic Centre in September 2005. The discussion included various aspects of Islamic belief, including the roles of Jesus and Mary, Ramadhan and life after death.
- 2.23 In December 2005 a special luncheon was hosted by the Islamic Humanitarian Service at their headquarters in Kitchener in which members and religious leaders of the Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist and other traditions gathered for an afternoon of prayer, discussion and lunch. The event was covered by the local media and a speech was given by the Governor General of Ontario and from Sheikh Saleem Bhimji regarding common ground between the Abrahamic Faiths.
- 2.24** In May 2006, a joint interfaith event was organised by Leeds Jamaat, Sinai Synagogue, the Reform Jewish Congregation and St John's Church of England. The purpose of the event was for the 3 faiths to learn from each other by sharing a meal and participating in workshops and prayers.
- 2.25 The Qunoot Foundation**
- 2.25.1 The Qunoot Foundation (TQF) was created in July 2005 by Mohamed Sabur and Zahir Janmohamed in Washington DC. The seeds of the organization, however, were planted in the summer of 2004, where 5 active Shia youth interning in various political fields in Washington DC. This was when the World Federation, through Zahir Janmohamed, began its informal program of helping young Shias find internships in Washington DC.
- 2.25.2 Although no one officially applied for an internship, an informal group began to emerge that would meet infrequently to discuss their concerns about the community, the political environment, and the professional options for young Shias. The result was: The Qunoot Foundation.
- 2.25.3 The Foundation, working alongside the World Federation has now been fully active for 1 year. Our accomplishments to date include:

Reports

- Issued report on American Shi'a Muslim Survey 2004, conducted from November 2004 through January 2005. Surveyed almost 1,000 Shi'a Muslims from across the United States.



Conferences

- Held Fall Conference with over 150 attendees from across the U.S. on the subject of "Exploring the Layers of Identity"
- Held Spring Conference with over 40 attendees from the Eastern United States on the subject of "Re-examining the Remembrance of Imam Husayn (A.S.)"

Media

- Conference covered in The Washington Post along with report about on American Shi'a Muslim Survey 2004
- Prominently featured and quoted in Beliefnet article; Washington Report on Middle East Affairs; Alt. Muslim; Naseeb Vibes
- Worked with major news outlets, including the Associated Press, in shaping articles after the Samarra attacks

Podcasts

- Second podcast ever to debut on iTunes under Islam section
- Recorded 20 podcasts on topics ranging from Islam in SE Asia; Iranian elections; calligraphy in Islam; reflection on Azadari and much more;
- To date (June 30, 2006), we currently have 8,018 unique downloads of our podcast

Film

- Through generous funding from the World Federation, the Qunoot team recently went to Pakistan to film a documentary about sectarian violence. The documentary is the first ever of its kind and we hope to debut the film in early 2007.

Scholarships

- Developed strategic partnerships with Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) and Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) to develop Intra-Muslim Outreach Initiative for the Shia Community

Speaking Engagements

- Qunoot team members have spoken and been invited to a variety of events, including but not limited to: MPAC National Conference; CAIR event on future of American Muslim youth; Universal Muslim Association of America (UMAA) convention; Muslim Public Service Network (MSPN) Summer 2006 program.

Financial

- Qunoot has survived almost entirely on generous contributions from the World Federation and a few donations from and by American Shi'a Muslim youth



3 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Raise awareness of the fundamental importance of strong, fruitful and fulfilling external relations across the world, through all the different community levels.
- 3.2 To encourage Regional Federations and large Jamaats to have an identified person from its core team leading this work.
- 3.3 The Desk will communicate the work undertaken in this field in different parts of the world to the whole community.
- 3.4 The Desk will aim to highlight best practice in external liaison to the global community.
- 3.5 The External Desk will develop strategic objectives which are appropriate for each level.