

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Ever Merciful



20 March 2018

PRESS RELEASE

HEAD OF AHMADIYYA MUSLIM COMMUNITY SAYS TIME HAS COME TO STOP BLAMING ONLY MUSLIMS FOR THE WORLD'S PROBLEMS



- **Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad says inequality, extreme poverty, international arms trade and unjust foreign policies are the driving forces in radicalisation during 15th Annual Peace Symposium**
- **Caliph says rise of far-right “*evokes memories of dark days of the past*”**

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Press Secretary AMJ International

- **His Holiness proves that Islam rejects all forms of extremism & conflicts of today are 'geo-political' and not linked to religion**
- **Muslim leader says world powers being blinded by short-sightedness and tunnel-vision**

On 19 March 2018, the *World Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, the Fifth Khalifa (Caliph)*, His Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad delivered the keynote address at the *15th National Peace Symposium* hosted by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community UK.



The event was held at the Baitul Futuh Mosque in London with an audience of more than 900, from 31 countries, including 570 non-Ahmadi guests comprising Ministers, Ambassadors of State, Members of Parliament and various other dignitaries and guests.

During the event, His Holiness presented Angelina Alekseeva, the representative of Dr Leonid Roshal, a noted paediatrician from Moscow, Russia and Chairman of international charity *Fund to Help Children in Disasters and Wars*, with the *Ahmadiyya Muslim Prize for the Advancement of Peace* in recognition of his outstanding medical and humanitarian services.



During his address, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said that the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community would never cease its efforts to spread peace in the world. He urged world leaders and governments to “*change their priorities*” and to help ease the suffering of people in developing nations.

His Holiness vehemently condemned the *international arms trade* and said that those nations who were producing weapons being used in war-torn countries

had *“blood on their hands”*. He also said that children born into extreme poverty or in areas of conflict were easy and vulnerable targets for terrorist recruiters. His Holiness spoke of the dangers of extremism amongst Muslims and the increasing threat of far-right nationalists. His Holiness also refuted claims that Islamic teachings promoted any form of terrorism or extremism.



Speaking about the continued efforts of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community to spread peace and to promote mutual respect and tolerance, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

“Our faith demands us to try and urge people, in all parts of the world, whether rich or poor, whether powerful or oppressed, whether religious or irreligious, towards peace and justice.”

Speaking about global priorities, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

“In recent times, one of the issues that many politicians and intellectuals have debated and campaigned about, is climate change and specifically a reduction in carbon emissions. Certainly, striving to protect the environment and to look after our planet is an extremely precious and noble cause. Yet, at the same time, the developed world, and especially the world’s leaders, should

also realise that there are other issues that must be tackled with the same urgency.”



Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad continued:

“People living in the world’s poorest nations do not concern themselves with the environment, or the latest figures on carbon emissions; rather, they wake up each day wondering if they will be able to feed their children.”

Highlighting the long-term consequences of poverty, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

“We must not consider such hardship as other people’s problems. Instead, we must realise that the result of such poverty has severe implications for the wider-world and directly affects global peace and security. The fact that children have no option, but to spend their days collecting water for their families, means that they are unable to go to school, or to attain any form of education. They are stuck in a vicious cycle of illiteracy and poverty that is seemingly endless and hugely damaging to society.”

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad continued:

“Frustrations are being preyed upon by extremists, who entice the impoverished with financial reward and by promising a better life for their families. Similarly, the targeting of illiterate youth means that the extremists have free rein to radicalise and brainwash them.”

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad further said:

“Poor nations must not be looked down upon, rather we should consider them as part of our family – our brothers and sisters. By helping the developing nations stand on their own feet, and by giving their people opportunities and hope, we will actually be helping ourselves and safeguarding the future of the world.”

Referring to the rise of nationalism and the threat of the far-right in the Western world, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

“As a result of recent terrorist attacks and widespread immigration to the West, there has also been a dangerous rise in nationalism in many Western countries, evoking fears of the dark days of the past. It is particularly disturbing that far-right groups have become increasingly vocal and have seen their membership rise and have even made political gains. They too are extremists, who seek to poison Western society, by inciting the masses against those who have a different colour of skin or who hold different beliefs.”

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad continued:

“In addition, the rhetoric of certain powerful world leaders has become increasingly nationalistic and belligerent, as they have pledged to put the rights of their own citizens above all others. I do not dispute the fact that it is the responsibility of governments and leaders to look after their own people and to protect their interests. Certainly, as long as the leaders act with justice, and do not infringe upon the rights of others, attempts to better the lives of their citizens is a great virtue. However, policies that are based upon selfishness, greed and a readiness to forfeit the rights of others are wrong and a means of sowing discord and division in the world.”



His Holiness spoke of the hypocrisy rooted in the international arms trade and the danger it posed to the world. To boost their national economies, world powers were selling “inhumane” weapons that were destroying towns and cities and unjustly robbing millions of people of their futures.

He said that in countries like Syria, government soldiers, rebels and terrorists were fighting one another but despite their divergent interests, they all had one thing in common – that the vast majority of their weapons have been produced externally in the developed world.

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

“Quite openly and proudly, the major powers are trading arms that are being used to kill, maim and brutalise innocent people. Regrettably, such nations are focused only on attempts to boost their economy and to maximise their nation’s capital, without pausing for thought at the consequences. They desperately seek to attain the largest possible contracts to sell destructive weapons that, once fired, do not distinguish between the innocent and the guilty. They proudly sell weapons that make no exception for children, women or the infirm. They shamelessly sell weapons that engulf and obliterate towns and cities indiscriminately.”



Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad continued:

“Countless children are seeing their parents being killed in the most inhumane fashion and all they can do is wonder why their parents have been taken away from them. Thousands of women are left widowed, hopeless and vulnerable. What good can come of such devastation? All I see is a generation

of children being pushed into the arms of those who seek to destroy the peace of the world.”



His Holiness said that scores of young children and teenagers in conflict-ridden nations were being orphaned through airstrikes. Such youths were bound to react and were being drawn into extremism.

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

“Instead of being in school, getting an education, so that they grow into decent, law-abiding citizens, the only education an entire generation of children is getting, is how to master grenades or rocket launchers, how to do suicide attacks and how to wreak havoc in the world.”

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad further said:

“At the beginning, I mentioned that a major focus of the international community is climate change and a desire to keep the air that we breathe clean. Is there anyone who thinks that heavy bombardment has no effect on the atmosphere? Furthermore, if peace ever does prevail in the war-torn countries, their towns and cities will have to be rebuilt from scratch, and this in itself will be a huge industry that will cause an increase in harmful emissions and pollution. Thus, on the one hand, we are trying to save the planet, yet with our other hand, we are senselessly destroying it. In light of all of this, I firmly believe that world powers are being blinded by short-sightedness and tunnel-vision.”

His Holiness also spoke of the repeated foreign policy errors made by certain Western countries. He said that the *Iraq War* had soon been exposed as based upon false pretences, whilst the intervention in Libya in 2011 had proven to be a complete failure resulting in the country becoming a “*hotbed of extremism*”.

His Holiness also warned about the risk of escalating tensions between the United States and North Korea. Even though the *President of the United States* had recently indicated a willingness to meet North Korea’s leader, His Holiness warned that there was no guarantee of a deal because hatred was “*entrenched*” on both sides. His Holiness said that even if a deal emerged between the United States and North Korea there was no guarantee it would hold, and, in this regard, he cited the Iran nuclear deal of a few years ago, which he said was now “*hanging by a thread*”. Thus, he urged the leaders of all nations and their representatives to tread with caution and to pursue diplomacy and strive to de-escalate tensions.

Urging mankind to shy away from ever-increasing materialism and to promote equity and justice for all, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

“If we are to leave behind a legacy of hope for our children, and bequeath a peaceful world to our future generations, we, irrespective of our religion or beliefs, need to urgently change our priorities. Instead of being consumed by materialism and a desire for power, every nation, whether rich or poor, must prioritise the peace and security of the entire world above all else. Instead of embarking on an arms race, leading to death and destruction, we must join the race to save and protect humanity.”

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad continued:

“Instead of shutting down borders and ports in warring countries, causing for innocent children to be left starving and the sick being deprived of medical treatment, we must open our hearts to one another, knock-down the walls that divide us, feed the hungry and help those who are suffering.”

Condemning all forms of extremism carried out in the name of Islam, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

“Even though so-called Muslim terrorists claim to act in Islam’s name, I do not believe that we are witnessing a religious war; rather, the wars being fought, and atrocities committed, are only for geopolitical gains. The so-called Jihadi terrorists and extremist clerics serve only to tarnish the name of Islam and undermine the efforts of the vast majority of Muslims who are peaceful and law-abiding citizens.”

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad continued:

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



His Holiness concluded by presenting the example of the Founder of Islam, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (*peace be upon him*).

His Holiness described the brutal persecution faced by the Holy Prophet (*peace be upon him*) and his followers in Makkah during the early period of Islam.

For example, Muslims were martyred, were made to lie on burning coals and Muslim women had their bodies strewn to camels that were made to run in opposing directions.

Referring to the example of the Prophet of Islam (*peace be upon him*), upon returning victoriously to Makkah, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

“When the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) returned victoriously to Makkah, he did not take a single drop of blood in revenge; rather, according to the command of Allah the Almighty, he proclaimed that all of his tormentors and all those who had violently opposed Islam, were to be instantly forgiven. He declared that under Islamic rule, all people would be free to practise their own religions and beliefs, without any interference or cause for fear. His only condition was that each member of society remained committed to peace. He instructed that all people, no matter their caste, creed or colour, were to have their rights protected and be treated with respect at all times.”

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad continued:

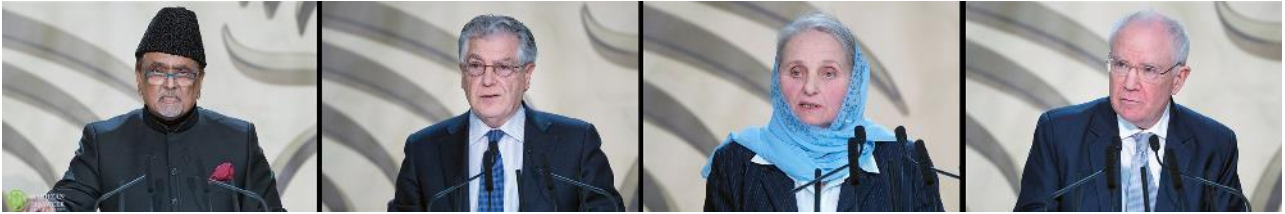
“This was the timeless and magnificent example of the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) and it is this spirit of compassion, grace and mercy that Muslims and non-Muslims need to adopt in the world today. It is this spirit of forgiveness and benevolence that all nations, whether large or small, rich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

Prior to the keynote address, various dignitaries spoke about the importance of striving for peace and religious freedom in the world.

Rafiq Hayat, the *National President of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community UK* said:

“The notion of ‘us versus them’ sows the seeds of division rather than unity.

Our message to all who spread hate is clear, extremism and terrorism will not succeed and that through means of cohesion and unity we will defeat it.”



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

Dr Aaron Rhodes said:

“I am gravely worried about the situation of Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan and other countries. You are a community being punished for your moral and social achievements. You insist on political freedom for all, but are denied the right to vote and other citizens rights unless you forsake your most cherished, sacred vows. You stand for the rule of law, but endure murder, torture and discrimination, as perpetrators enjoy impunity and are encouraged and protected by state authorities. You believe in religious freedom but are denied the right to profess your faith and risk prosecution if you defend yourselves. You are demonised, ostracised and marginalised.”

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

“This symposium that you organise annually, since 15 years, is one of the most important meetings in our continent. It is dedicated to reflection of risks

and commitment related to the common good... I want to express all our fraternal solidarity to the members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, victims of persecution, perpetrated by religious extremists. We will always be at your side in defending religious freedom of expression.”



Mrs. Angelina Alekseeva, the representative of Dr Leonid Roshal, recipient of the *Ahmadiyya Muslim Prize for the Advancement of Peace*, said:

“It is very important for everybody to make every possible effort to strengthen worldwide peace in his own way... Dr Roshal has come to the decision to hand his award to a charitable fund which helps children with severe consequences of brain traumas and spinal traumas.”

The event concluded with a silent prayer led by His Holiness. Both before and after the proceedings, His Holiness met personally with various dignitaries and guests and held a press conference with members of media.

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Further Information: media@pressahmadiyya.com