

Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Peace Conference: United we Stand – The Foundation for Lasting Peace

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November 26, 2016
WFWP Watford/UK



Over a month ago I received an email from the President of the Watford Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association inviting me to speak at one of their Peace conferences on 'United we Stand – The Foundation for Lasting Peace'. The topic was very much along the line of what I have been doing in Watford and I accepted the invitation.

The Conference, a women only event, took place on Saturday 26th November 2016 at one of the local community centres. Most of the conference was focused on an extended presentation on the origin and beliefs of their organisation. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Association was established in India by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in 1889. He claimed to be the Mahdi and Messiah of the latter days, prophesized by Prophet Mohammed and foretold by the Holy Quran. He felt called to bring a peaceful revival to Islam and recognised all faiths as revelations from the same source – "the One God who is the creator of all and who continues to communicate with mankind". The motto of the Ahmadi is 'Love for All, Hatred for None'. The organisation has taken part in various peace and interfaith conferences and has been involved in a great variety of charitable works. Even though the Ahmadiyyah Muslim Association is still greatly persecuted and rejected by traditional Muslims, they have grown and are now represented in around 200 countries.

After a lengthy presentation with short films and Power Point presentations, various guests were introduced and invited to say a few words. Among them: a representative from the Watford Elected Mayor, two community Policewomen, a Prevent officer, someone from the 'Jo Cox' campaign and 2 other speakers.

Time was running out when they called me and introduced me as the representative of the Women's Federation for World Peace in Watford. Going back to the title of the conference, I spoke about the fundamentals of peace. Even though human beings have wished and prayed for peace for generations, still we have not been able to substantiate peace in our world. What are we doing wrong? Compared to the Ahmadi's view that mostly focuses on justice in order to bring peace, I conveyed the centrality of love, of true love as the source of peace. To resolve the problem of peace, we need first to resolve the problem of love. Love which is defined by 'Living for the sake of others' is fundamental to bring forth a world of peace. I then mentioned about our various activities in Watford which include: the Watford Bridge of Peace which brought together women from different backgrounds in a sisterhood ceremony starting with Christian and Muslim women, the Watford Celebration, an annual event which celebrates the rich diversity of our town, and the various interfaith activities which include our recent interfaith pilgrimage visiting various places of worship around Watford.

Recognising their common concerns for Peace and the need to stand together, I invited them to join us in our various activities and efforts to bring our town together and build bridges of friendship and reconciliation among all the communities in Watford. They responded positively to our request and promised to keep in touch and work together.

We ended the afternoon with a delicious Indian meal and enjoyed each other's company.