

Muslim Leader Calls For Urgent Action Against Extremism

Keynote Address Delivered by

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Keynote Address at the 11th National Peace Symposium by His Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad^{aba}, Worldwide Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and 5th Khalifa

On 8th November 2014, the Worldwide Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, the Fifth Khalifa, His Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad^{aba}, delivered the keynote address at the 11th National Peace Symposium. During his address, His Holiness categorically condemned the activities of ISIS and other extremists groups as “entirely un-Islamic” and said they were “viciously spreading a network of terror” in the world. Quoting extensively from the Holy Qur’an, His Holiness proved that Islam was a religion of peace that promoted tolerance, mutual respect and understanding at all levels of society. His Holiness also questioned how extremist groups such as ISIS were funded and supported. The event was held at the Baitul Futuh Mosque in London in front of an audience of more than 1000 people, which included more than 550 non-Ahmadi guests comprising Government Ministers, Ambassadors of State, Members of both Houses of Parliament and various other dignitaries and guests. The theme of this year’s Peace Symposium was “Khilafat, Peace & Justice”. During the event, His Holiness also presented Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow, CEO Mary’s Meals UK, with the Ahmadiyya Muslim Prize for the Advancement of Peace in recognition for his outstanding efforts to provide food and education to children in the developing world. Prior to the keynote address several dignitaries delivered brief remarks including: Rafiq Hayat, National President of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community UK, Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister for Communities, Siobhain McDonagh, MP and Chair of the “All Party Parliamentary Group for the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community”, Rt. Hon. Ed Davey, MP, Secretary of State for Energy & Climate Change, Rt. Hon. Justine Greening, MP, Secretary of State for International Development and Most Reverend Kevin McDonald, Archbishop Emeritus of Southwark, who also read a special message from the Vatican.

After reciting *Tashahhud*, *Ta’awwuz* and *Bismillah*, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V^{aba} said:

“All distinguished guests, *Assalamo Alaikum Wa Rahmtullahe Wa Barakatohu* – peace and blessings of Allah be upon you all.

I would like to first of all take this opportunity to thank all of you who have come to attend this year’s Peace Symposium. As most of you are aware, this symposium has been taking place annually for the past decade and has become a permanent fixture in the calendar of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. Normally we hold this event in March, but for various reasons, this year it was delayed until November. Tonight there is also a national Remembrance Day function taking place, because of which some people whom we invited may not have been able to attend.

Nonetheless, I am very grateful to all of you who have come. Your participation certainly proves that you wish to hear about peace from the standpoint of a

particular Muslim sect, because in today's world there is so much said about world peace and the conflicts that have arisen across the globe.

Certainly, the current state of affairs has become a cause of fear and anxiety for much of the world. Whilst it is a cause of great regret, I have no hesitation in admitting that much of the disorder that we see in the world today is occurring due to the acts of certain so-called Muslims. For any peaceful Muslim, who understands his faith, this is a cause of great sorrow and despair. Over the past year, one particular group has viciously spread its network of terror and has become a cause of major concern for the world. I am speaking of the group of extremists commonly known as ISIS or IS.

The actions of this terrorist group are not only impacting Muslim countries, but also countries in Europe and further afield are being affected by its brutalities. We see a disturbing number of Muslim youths from Europe and other parts of the world, who have somehow come to believe that ISIS represents a true picture of Islam and support their ideology. For these reasons they have resolved to help and to even fight for them.

From here in the UK it is said that around 500 people, mostly young Muslims, have already travelled to Syria and Iraq to fight for ISIS, in a war that the terrorist group falsely claims is being fought in the name of Islam. If we look at the numbers of Muslims in Europe who have travelled for this so-called Jihad then we observe that the proportion of Muslims going from the UK to Iraq and Syria is higher than the numbers who are travelling from Germany or most other European countries.

This is extremely alarming and a cause of major concern for the United Kingdom because the agenda and objectives of ISIS and their so-called *Khalifa* are utterly horrific and barbaric.

It is said that their *Khalifa* says he wants to take 'revenge' from the world and to conquer territories and nations. He says he wants to make the Muslims the masters of the entire world and to reduce all non-Muslims to slavery or to being the 'property' of Muslims. He says that punitive action should be taken against every person who offends a Muslim in any way and that Shariah Law should apply to every single person in every single land.

He desires to take away the rights of women belonging to other religions or sects; to suppress them and turn them into concubines or force them to become their wives. ISIS seeks to destroy every religion or sect that differs from its beliefs and wishes to remove current Muslim governments and seize power from them. Thus, if this is all true then their strategy and vision is far-reaching and their basic aim is to destroy the peace of the world.

It is quite absurd to suggest that ISIS or any other extremist group will ultimately ever be successful in taking over the world, because it is quite clear that their plans are completely senseless and based on wishful thinking, rather than reality. Nonetheless, if they are not stopped in their tracks then they could cause a great deal of damage and destruction before they die their own death.

We have witnessed in so many incidents the terror and devastation that even single individuals, without any backing or support, are able to cause. For example, every few months there are reports of another school-shooting tragedy in the United States where dozens of innocent children are killed due to the heinous acts of one lone individual.

Thus, consider just how much suffering and ruin can be caused by a terrorist group, which is gathering together frustrated and restless people from all parts of the world who are ready to give their lives for this unjust cause.

This is especially true given the fact that this group does not just have willing individuals, but is also heavily armed with sophisticated weapons systems and artillery. Indeed, it is not out of the question that they could eventually lay their hands on nuclear weapons. As I said these deranged groups will not attain permanent or long-lasting success but in the short-term it is quite possible that they could conquer certain regions and cause huge destruction. When all of this is considered there is no doubting the horrific threat to the world posed by ISIS and any of the groups that have similar ideologies.

The fact that all of this is being done in the name of Islam sincerely grieves and pains all true and peace loving Muslims because such brutal and inhumane ideologies have nothing to do with the religion whatsoever. Rather, in every way, and at every level, Islam's real teachings are of peace and security for all people. If we look at the Holy Qur'an and also the life and character of the Prophet of Islam, the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, it becomes clear that the early Muslims never initiated any war or violence. If ever the Muslims took part in a war it was purely defensive and their only objective was to stop the oppressors from their cruelty and never to assert their own superiority or to resort to injustice. They never sought to occupy lands or nations or to subjugate the people.

The life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} bears witness to the fact that during the early years of his prophethood in his hometown of Makkah, he only ever sought to spread Islam's teachings through love and affection. However, the Makkan people not only rejected him but they treated him in the most cruel and merciless manner. He and his followers were brutally persecuted to the extent that, under divine command, the Holy Prophet^{sa} had to leave Makkah and migrate to the city of Madinah. However, even after migration, the Makkans did not leave the Muslims alone, but instead travelled with a fully-equipped army and waged

war against the Muslims. It was then that for the first time, on the command of Allah, the Muslims were given permission to fight to defend themselves.

The reason permission was granted is clearly stated in chapter 22, verses 40-41 of the Qur'an where Allah says that permission for a defensive war was granted because if the Muslims did not defend themselves, then the peace of the entire world would be at risk. The opponents did not just wish to eliminate Islam, but in fact wanted to eliminate all forms of religion from the world. Therefore the Qur'an states that if permission was not granted then no church, synagogue, temple, mosque or any other place of worship would remain safe. Hence, the Muslims were permitted to fight back not only to save *Islam* but to save *religion* itself on the basis of the aforementioned verse.

In light of this, you can understand for yourself how utterly wrong the so-called Muslims of today are when they claim that it is permissible to kill non-Muslims; seize their lands or to enslave them. The reality is that Islam is that religion which has guaranteed the right of every individual to live with liberty and freedom. And Islam is that religion which has guaranteed the right of every individual to live in peace and harmony, regardless of their faith or background.

I mentioned earlier how the Holy Prophet^{sa} migrated to Madinah along with his followers and the manner in which the Muslims absorbed themselves into the local society was a perfect model of how to immigrate and integrate into a new society. Before the Muslims arrived there were two main groups who lived in the city of Madinah – the Jews and the Arabs. Upon the arrival of the Muslims there became three groups – the Muslims, the Jews and the non-Muslim Arabs. The Holy Prophet^{sa} immediately stated that it was essential that they all lived together in peace and harmony and so he proposed a covenant of peace between them. According to the terms of this treaty each group and each tribe was given their due rights. The lives and wealth of all parties was guaranteed and any pre-existing inter-tribal customs were also respected. It was also agreed that if any person came from Makkah with the intention of causing harm or mischief he would not be provided sanctuary by anyone in Madinah and nor would they enter into any pact with them. Further, if a common enemy attacked Madinah all three groups would join together and defend the city as one, although it was also stipulated that non-Muslims would not be forced to fight alongside Muslims if the latter were ever attacked or fought outside Madinah. Furthermore, any agreements the Jews had with other groups would be honoured by the Muslims. The Jews would live by *their* religion and the Muslims would live by *their* religion.

When all three groups accepted the terms of this agreement it was also agreed through mutual consent that the Holy Prophet^{sa} would serve as Head of State. Nonetheless, and as I said before, the Jews would not be bound by the Shariah but would be bound only by Jewish laws and customs. This was the perfect

example of tolerance and mutual respect of the Holy Founder of Islam^{sa} and yet today ISIS claims that Shariah Law must be enforced on every person, no matter their religion or background. At that time, the Holy Prophet^{sa} also established the rights of women within that covenant. It clearly stipulated that no woman was to be forcibly removed from her home or against her will. Thus, how can it be right for ISIS to claim that non-Muslim women can be considered their possessions or chattels? According to the covenant, no person would ever be compelled to accept Islam but rather it expressly stated that the Jews and the non-Muslims of Madinah, would be treated with love and compassion and as brothers by the Muslims. Therefore, this is a summary of the treaty which bound together the society of Madinah following the arrival of the Muslims.

History bears witness to the fact that the Muslims followed this agreement to the letter and if the covenant was ever breached it was done so by the other parties. As the accepted leader of Madinah, sometimes the Holy Prophet^{sa} would have to deal with individuals or groups who had breached the covenant or been involved in wrongdoing. But such reprimands were given fairly, according to the terms of the covenant, and not due to any injustice. Thus, this is the true manifestation of government in Islam, whose foundation was laid by the Holy Prophet^{sa} and following him was continued by the 4 Rightly Guided *Khalifas* and throughout the first century of Islam.

And so today, if ISIS or any Muslim government acts against these principles of true justice and equality, then they are doing so only to fulfil their own personal or political interests.

Even if they claim to act in Islam's name, the truth is that their actions have no link with Islam or the teachings of the Holy Prophet^{sa} whatsoever.

If we look at the history of Arabia before the advent of the Holy Prophet^{sa} it was a society in which every tribe sought to assert their rights through warfare and bloodshed. Yet, in that very same society the Holy Prophet^{sa} brought about a revolution in which he established a proper system of judiciary in which each group was treated in accordance with its own traditions or religious beliefs. If one studies early Islamic history in a fair and unbiased manner then he or she will see that during the initial era of the Holy Prophet^{sa} and his 4 Rightly Guided *Khalifas*, the behaviour of the Muslims was impeccable.

Never were they the aggressor in any war and nor did they ever seek to conquer land. Where they sought to spread Islam's teachings they did so only through preaching in an entirely peaceful manner. For example, Islam spread to China and South India and yet nowhere in history does it state that any Muslim armies ever attacked those nations; rather, Islam spread to those countries and other nations through peaceful means. In later periods, some Muslim monarchs initiated wars for various reasons for which they alone cannot be blamed and

even in those wars the inhabitants of the captured countries were never forced to convert to Islam. Certainly, the Qur'an rejects such ventures and teaches only peaceful propagation.

As I have already said, where Allah gave permission for defensive religious wars, it was given only as a means of protecting *all* religions and not just Islam. In many different verses of the Qur'an, Allah the Almighty has laid down various principles of warfare. For example, in chapter 2, verse 191, Allah established the principle of defensive war whereby He said to fight only those who initiate war against you and never transgress or act cruelly, because Allah loves not those who are unjust.

Again, in chapter 16, verse 127, Allah the Almighty commands Muslims to never exceed the limits or to transgress during warfare. Allah says that any punishment must be proportionate to the extent to which you have been wronged.

In chapter 2, verse 194, Allah the Almighty says that during a war, a party should only fight until there is no more persecution and religion can once again be professed freely. It says that if the oppressors desist and the disorder ends then no further hostility should be shown against them.

In chapter 8, verse 62, Allah the Almighty says that if oppressors incline towards peace and extend a hand of reconciliation then the Muslims should grasp it and not question whether they are being sincere.

Furthermore, in chapter 9, verse 4, the Qur'an stipulates that the Muslims must fulfil any covenants or pacts they form with idolaters if the latter have not acted aggressively and have kept the terms of their mutual agreements from their side. Allah says this is a necessary requirement of righteousness and Allah loves those who are righteous.

In chapter 5, verse 9, Allah instructs Muslims to always act fairly and with justice, even in a state of war. Allah says that the enmity of a nation or people should never lead a Muslim to act unjustly as that is against righteousness.

In chapter 8, verse 68, Allah says that it does not behove a prophet to keep captives outside a state of war because to do so would suggest that, rather than God's love, they cared only for wealth or power. Thus, this proves very clearly that outside of war it is forbidden to keep anyone captive and yet today we see that these so-called '*Islamists*' are forcibly imprisoning countless innocent people, whilst defenceless women are being made into concubines.

In chapter 47, verse 5 of the Holy Qur'an, Allah the Almighty has stated that prisoners of war should be freed following the conclusion of a war. In this verse, Allah has said that they should either be freed in return for a sum of money or it

is even better that they should be released out of kindness and as a favour. Thus, when war ends prisoners should be freed and this applies both to male or females. In the early ages, women used to go to the battlefields to support and motivate the men who fought, and in this way, the women were also liable to being captured. The Qur'an, however, made it categorically clear that no woman was ever to be treated cruelly or to be violated in any way.

Regarding the payment of money to free a prisoner, in chapter 24, verse 34 the Qur'an states that if a person is unable to afford to free a prisoner then one should accept installments and free the person. These verses in relation to freeing prisoners of war should be understood in the context of warfare during the early period. At that time, individuals who fought in wars did so at their own expense and would bring their own weapons and so they were permitted to take payment in return for freeing their prisoners. However, in today's wars, it is governments who fund the expeditions entirely and so there is no individual cost to the soldiers. Thus, the matter of how to treat prisoners of war is one for governments or international organisations to determine and not for individual soldiers. Prisoner exchange programmes may occur or other deals between nations may take place at a governmental level in an effort to bring long-lasting peace. Certainly the conditions to personally imprison anyone no longer exist and so to do so would be entirely against Islam.

In the Qur'an, Allah has also said that you should not cast envious glances at the wealth of others and this alone is a golden principle for peace in the world. If this one Islamic commandment is followed then there can never be any question of a Muslim ever taking over the land, territory or wealth of others. In chapter 10, verse 100 of the Qur'an, Allah has said that, as He is the All-Powerful, if He wanted He could make the entire world accept Islam. Yet Allah did not compel mankind and instructed the Holy Prophet^{sa} that force was not permitted to spread the message of Islam and that religion was a matter for each person's heart and conscience.

Therefore it is quite clear that it is never permissible, in any circumstances, to force another person to accept Islam or indeed any religion. Of course, Muslims have been asked to preach the message of Islam, but that is all. Thus, in chapter 18, verse 30, Allah said to the Holy Prophet^{sa} to inform the world that a Truth had come from their Lord, which was a means of success and prosperity and they were free to accept or reject it. These words are crystal clear for all to see and hear. All people are free to believe or not to believe. And so when the Holy Prophet^{sa} was permitted only to convey the message of Islam and nothing further - how then can the so called Muslim leaders of today go beyond this and think they have more power, authority or rights than the Prophet of Islam?

I have therefore briefly given a summary of Islam's teachings, based on various verses of the Holy Qur'an, which prove that the acts of cruelty being conducted by certain Muslim groups and even nations are completely contrary to Islam.

You may wonder why - if it is against Islam's teachings - they are acting in this way. The simple answer is, as I said before, that they are seeking only to fulfil their worldly interests. Their goals are not spiritual or religious at all. They seek to gain worldly pursuits in the name of religion through cruelty and bloodshed.

I say again that any Ahmadi Muslim or indeed any peace-loving Muslim feels great pain that their pure religion is being tarnished and exploited in this unjust way. However, I would also hereby like to question those people, organisations or politicians who claim that Islam is a religion of violence on the basis of the atrocities of the extremist groups.

I would ask them to consider how these groups are able to acquire such funds that allow them to continue their terrorist activities and warfare for so long? How do they acquire such sophisticated weapons? Do they have arms industries or factories? It is quite obvious that they are receiving the help and support of certain powers. This could be direct support from very oil-rich Muslim states or it could be other major powers covertly providing assistance.

When ISIS first came to prominence it was said they took over the weapons of the national army and captured some arms depots - this may be true but it would not be sufficient on its own for them to continue their activities until now. If the supply line of a regular army is cut off then it is impossible for them to continue and yet the supply line of ISIS seems to be continually increasing.

It is said that they now even possess anti-aircraft missiles and other sophisticated weaponry. This all points to a supply line supporting ISIS.

It is also common knowledge that they have huge funds totaling hundreds of millions of dollars and so it can only be assumed they have external support. Many officials, analysts and commentators have openly expressed support for this theory. For instance, a senior representative of the United States Government, David Cohen, who is the Under-Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, has publicly stated that ISIS is "*the best funded terrorist group we have ever confronted.*" He says they are spending tens of millions of dollars each month and making one million dollars daily selling oil on the black market.

We have to ask where and how are they getting such unfettered access to such large quantities of oil? In other parts of the world the transport and sale of oil is heavily monitored and sanctions have been levied against certain oil-rich states. Yet, somehow ISIS seems to be able to bypass all forms of regulation and acquire

and sell vast quantities of oil without any interruption - even though we all know that transporting or trading such huge quantities of oil cannot be easily hidden. It is also said that ISIS receives regular income through ransoms, but this is still a small amount compared to its other sources of revenue.

The funding of these groups is a major problem because it is through these funds that they are able to prey on vulnerable groups or individuals. For example, in one recent report stated that if a family sends one of its members to join ISIS then that family is given thousands of dollars as an initial lump sum and then hundreds of dollars regularly thereafter.

Thus, something has to be done to stop the funding of these groups urgently. The West has now started to realise and acknowledge that this is a war that is actually directly affecting it as well. However, this too is under-estimation – the truth is that this is a war against the entire world.

As a matter of routine, we see that the major powers are able to heavily influence or even dictate policies in Muslim countries on various matters and so the question is why have they not exerted their influence here where it is genuinely required?

Why is there not a joint, united and concerted effort to tackle all forms of extremism? Even the efforts being made now are too small compared to the devastation this group will cause. In my view, what is happening is not only the fault of the Muslim world, but there are also external powers and forces that are contributing to this devastating state of affairs.

For years there have been domestic conflicts taking place in countries like Syria and Iraq and outside powers have funded, armed or supported rebel groups and factions that have grown rapidly and gone beyond the control of their paymasters. They have gone on to wreak havoc and administer all forms of terror based on their extremist ideologies. By stating this I am not saying anything that is not already in the public domain or openly covered by the media. Militant groups such as ISIS are a product of such policies and are now spreading their networks of terror far and wide and affecting the entire world.

Again I say that it is a cause of great pain and concern to me that these evil acts are all being associated with Islam. Nowadays, it is a major concern that Muslim youths from the West are travelling to countries like Syria and Iraq where they are being radicalised. It is quite possible that they could eventually return to their home countries and launch attacks or cause great disorder in this part of the world. Thus, clearly this is no longer a local or Muslim issue – it is an international issue that requires a global and concerted effort to stop these extremist organisations.

Some prominent figures have suggested that it will take 30 or even 100 years for this war with extremism to conclude. Personally, I believe that the militant and extremist groups can be stopped in a much shorter period of time if the world is determined to eradicate them. We must not think that we are free from our personal responsibilities simply by saying it will take decades to end this war – rather everyone must join in this effort to counter global extremism. To simply lay the blame at the feet of Islam or particular groups will not save us from warfare or free us from our responsibilities.

Thus, all peaceful people should pressurise their governments and certainly all politicians and figures of influence should reflect on this and seek to develop peace in the world by promoting true justice in their respective spheres of influence, by taking firm action to prevent the destruction of world peace completely. If we want to save the world then true justice needs to be shown at every level of society and the problems faced in each country should be solved in a fair way that removes frustrations.

No country's wealth should be looked upon enviously and mutual policies should be made to help one other. Most importantly the world must realise that it has forgotten its Creator and they must come back to Him. Only when this happens can true peace be established and without this there can be no guarantee of peace.

I have spoken many times previously about the horrific consequences of another global war and perhaps it will only be after such a war that the world will come to realise the destructive results of the unjust policies that were made only to satisfy personal ambitions and vested interests. I hope and pray that the world comes to its senses before such a disaster comes to pass. I hope and pray that world comes to recognise and accept its Creator. With these words I seek your leave. Thank you very much.”

Key for Salutations:

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| sa | <i>Sallallaaho Alaihi wa Sallam</i> | – “May peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.” This is written after the name of the Holy Prophet ^{sa} . |
| as | <i>Alaihis Salaam</i> | – “May peace be upon him.” This is written after the name of Prophets other than the Holy Prophet ^{sa} . |
| ra | <i>Razi-Allaaho anhu/anha/anhum</i> | – “May Allah be pleased with him/her.” This is written after names of the Companions of the Holy Prophet ^{sa} and of the Promised Messiah ^{as} . |
| aba | <i>Ayyadahullaahu Ta’aalaa binasrihil Aziz</i> | – “May Allah the Almighty help him with His powerful support” Written after the name of the current Khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama’at. |
