

# Keynote Address at the 7th Annual Peace Symposium

(20th March 2010)



by **Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad**

(Head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya  
Muslim Community)

Peace guarantees the tranquility of hearts but the growing distance away from God is causing restlessness. The theme of this year's symposium was:

## Loyalty, Freedom and Peace

## An Overview of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

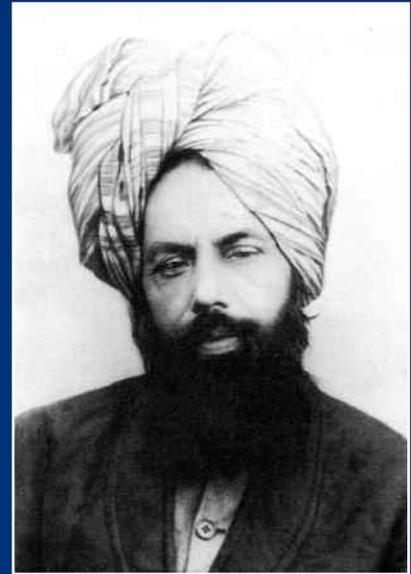
The Ahmadiyya Muslim community is a religious organisation, with branches in more than 193 countries. It is the most dynamic denomination of Islam in modern history, with an estimated membership of one hundred and sixty million worldwide.

It was established by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908) in 1889 in a small and remote village called Qadian in Punjab, India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days and the awaited one of the world community of religions (the *Mahdi* and Messiah of the latter days). The community he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam in its pristine purity that promotes peace and universal brotherhood

based on a belief in the Gracious and Ever-Merciful God.

With this conviction, within a century, the Ahmadiyya Muslim community has expanded globally and it endeavours to practice the peaceful teachings of Islam by raising hundreds of thousands of pounds for charities, building schools and hospitals open to all and by encouraging learning through interfaith dialogue.

The UK chapter of the community was established in 1913 and in 1924 it built London's first purpose built mosque (in Putney). It is therefore one of the oldest and most established Muslim organisations in Britain and now has over 90 branches across Britain.



**Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad  
(The Promised Messiah & Mahdi)**

## A Man of Peace

On 22 April 2003, in the Fazl Mosque in London, Mirza Masroor Ahmad was elected as the fifth Khalifa of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

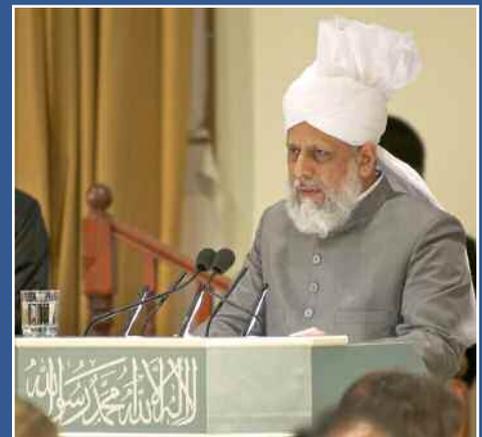
Today the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community stands at one with its fifth Khalifa, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad whose life has been a reflection of dedication, steadfastness, prayer and success. His bond with God leads him to urge his community never to forget the Almighty and never to despair. His focus on prayer is evident for all to see and the fruits of the success of such prayer bear testament to his faith. His sympathy for mankind drives him and his community to serve humanity in the same spirit that the early Muslims served the poor and

the needy. His sense of sacrifice mirrors the spirit of sacrifice integral to Islam. Indeed his very life and mission reflect a pure spirit that is ever wary of its responsibilities and ever vigilant for the honour of Islam, its Prophet<sup>(saw)</sup> and the prophet of the latter days.

*"His Holiness eloquently and persistently returns to these themes of peace and tolerance love and understanding among the followers of different faiths..."*

*...We desperately need the moral leadership and guidance that we can look for to His Holiness to provide..."*

**(Lord Avebury on Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V)**



**Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad**

# Keynote Address at the 7th Annual Peace Symposium

Keynote address delivered by His Holiness, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V, Head of the Worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim community (may Allah strengthen his hand) at the Ahmadiyya Muslim community's Peace Symposium held at the Baitul Futuh Mosque on 20th March 2010. The Symposium was also addressed by Rafiq Hayat, National President of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association UK, Siobhain McDonagh (MP Mitcham & Morden), Stephen Hammond (MP Wimbledon), Laura Moffat (MP Crawley), Justine Greening (MP Putney), Andrew Pelling (MP Central Croydon), Dominic Grieve (Shadow Justice Secretary), Tom Cox (former MP for Tooting), Martin Linton (MP Battersea), Tom Brake (MP Carshalton) and Lord Eric Avebury who received the inaugural Ahmadiyya Muslim Peace Prize.

*(I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah; He is One and has no partner. And I bear witness that Muhammad is His Servant and Messenger. After this, I seek refuge with Allah from Satan, the rejected. In the Name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful)*

All the distinguished guests gathered here tonight, *Assalamo Alaikum Wa Rehmatullahe Wa Barakatohu* – peace and blessings of Allah be upon you all.

After another year, a lovely evening has once again come when our dear friends belonging to different faiths and countries, but who are mostly British, have gathered here because they have a connection with the members of our community.

Some are old acquaintances, of course, and others are new. The fact that people of different countries, religions and cultures have come together and spared us their valuable time proves that they are all noble and decent persons with a desire for achieving a high objective, an objective that is the burning desire of every sincere person in this day and age. And so today, we have gathered here to talk about and listen to that word that can bring about tranquillity and contentment within our heart, and that word is 'peace'!

This is but one word, yet it guarantees the tranquillity of one's heart; it is the guarantor of the tranquillity of our home; it assures the betterment and welfare of society; and it guarantees the prosperity of our nation. So, when this word confers so many benefits then why should we not find it attractive? Why should it not be the burning desire of the heart of every good person?

To achieve anything, you must work hard for it. You have

to make sacrifices. The higher the objective, the higher is the sacrifice required.

It is necessary that a code of conduct be established in which a person has to sacrifice his or her emotions and respect the feelings and sentiments of others. It is necessary that a person should stand on his own two feet and safeguard himself from envying the wealth of others and it is necessary that one should help the poor and yet be happy to live within one's means. In short, if you desire to establish peace at any level, then it is essential that high moral values are exhibited, and guidelines need to be established for this.

The Holy Prophet of Islam, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, has taught us a golden principle, which is to choose for your brothers what you choose for yourself, because the lack of peace is caused by an anxiety of the heart.

And these anxieties are borne whenever deprivation is felt; when one feels oppressed; when one feels inferior, and feels that there is no hope for justice; when the gap between the rich and poor widens; when one feels that there is a lack of equal opportunities for progress; when there are interferences in a person's faith by the powerful; and when a country tries to prove its supremacy over another, and in the name of aid a superior power tries to take hold of the resources of another country.

When this golden principle is forgotten – of choosing for your brother what you choose for yourself – then these and many other similar factors blow peace into pieces.

It is extremely difficult to live up to this golden principle. If we reflect upon these major factors that I have spoken

about that are required to establish peace, then disregarding self-centred persons who only think of themselves, even those who truly long for peace do not follow this principle to the standard required. And that standard, of course, is that what you choose for your brother you choose for yourself.

There are many people who want to create an atmosphere of love, affection and brotherhood, yet how many people are actually willing to sacrifice their own wealth so that the situation should improve and restlessness should end? At an individual level there might be a few exceptions, here and there, where perhaps many people give a petty sum of charity, but it is an insignificant sacrifice and they are barely willing to forsake their emotions. When a large chunk of society and many countries become the victims of deprivation and cruelty, and become restless due to injustice, then hatred grows and such small sacrifices are rendered useless.

If we look at the world today, the majority are victims of deprivation, cruelty and injustice. Many powers are cruel and unkind to their own people, whether the cruelty is in the name of religion or the State itself. And Western governments, directly or indirectly, are involved in this oppression.

For example, will the hunger and famine in Ethiopia ever allow peace to be established in the country? On TV we see that very limited aid is being given to that country, but in this famine-ridden and economically shattered nation, such aid is hardly being used to feed the bellies of the starving people.

A larger amount is spent helping the rebels or the armies of the governments to purchase arms so that the so-called leaders can retain control. Ethiopia is incapable of manufacturing weapons. So the weapons must be reaching them from powerful nations, or from particular factions in wealthy countries who have cast their net like the Mafia.

Why have the powerful countries not tried to find a solution to this deprivation, cruelty and injustice in the world? Merely issuing a statement or summoning a meeting of a committee of the United Nations and expressing disapproval is not enough.

Similarly, it is wholly inadequate for the powerful countries to express sympathy with the Palestinians on TV. Why can an effort not be made to establish peace in the same way as in Iraq and Afghanistan? I am not saying that what has occurred in Iraq and Afghanistan is right or wrong, but am merely pointing out that the more powerful countries took action according to their own perception to establish peace. A Public Inquiry about the Iraq War is taking place at present in the UK and many of the government officials involved are continuing to maintain that the war was

justified, in spite of the fact that the vast majority of the UK public and its politicians consider the action to have been unjustified.

Now the people of Iraq and Afghanistan are reacting in their own way to these acts in response. It was a presumption that if action was not taken against those in power, then there would be a grave threat to world peace, and so action was taken to preserve the rights of the people; but, on the other hand, was similar effort not required to protect the Palestinians from external attacks? Even if we suppose that the Palestinians initiated the war, such a disproportionate punishment could never be justified, whereby innocent children, women, elders and the unarmed are bombarded indiscriminately; an entire city is reduced to rubble. The Western media raised a great outcry, no doubt, and although the superpowers issued statements, no concrete steps were taken to stop Israel from continuing this cruelty.

Can those innocent children who saw their homes being destroyed; who saw their brothers and sisters being killed without any reason; who saw their helpless parents targeted whilst pleading for their lives; can those innocent children ever erase those horrific scenes from their memories?

Their inner frustration will make them anxious, and when this anxiety is manifested, it will result in further disorder and that will lead to a reaction to check it. And as is evident from the history of Palestine, such a reaction will, of course, lead to further cruelty on them.

In today's world, when an event occurs in one place, it is broadcast instantaneously throughout the world. As a consequence of witnessing images of such cruelty, Muslims will, no doubt, develop hatred, and such hatred will continue to increase. Malice and grudges in people's hearts will multiply.

There is already talk of this cruelty being repeated. Let us see what steps these major powers take to prevent this happening.

The Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, has taught us that to develop peace and to remove hatred from your heart a person must help both the oppressor and the oppressed. Hearing this, his Companions said that they could understand the principle of helping the oppressed, but how could they help the oppressor? The Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, replied that you can help the oppressor by stopping him from acting cruelly so that he can be saved from the Wrath of God.

It is necessary, therefore, to take practical steps to stop cruelty, regardless of whether it is the mighty or the weak that are inflicting the cruelty. Peace will not be established



merely by adopting UN Resolutions; practical steps must be taken. It is necessary to establish trust and build confidence and for this absolute equality must prevail. Differences between the rich and developed and poor and developing countries must be eliminated. All forms of veto powers should be removed and the finer points of justice need to be identified. We need to be loyal to our covenants, our obligations and our status, and this loyalty can only occur when it is followed to the letter and spirit of the law; double standards should be eliminated. Indeed, the media has also been calling for this.

The Holy Qur'an has taught us how to fulfil the requirements of justice; it says that even if you have to testify against yourself or your relative then you must do so. How many matters are there that are presented in such an institution that was constituted after the Second World War so that the world could be saved from the horrors of war in future, where the major powers accept criticism against themselves and where they admit their own mistakes?

The decision of not admitting one's own error was taken at that time when the United Nations was formed and a provision for veto power was granted to the five major powers. The fundamental requirement for justice of even giving evidence against oneself was denied. How can this institute establish justice? The strange thing, as I mentioned before, is that they were not loyal to their own principles.

Loyalty is borne from feelings of love and affection. At a personal level the feeling of love strengthens the feelings of loyalty. When a citizen loves his country then he exhibits allegiance and makes sacrifices for the sake of the nation.

If sentiments of love do not exist, then the spirit of sacrifice cannot be formed. Unless a person loves another he can never have good feelings in his heart towards him and he cannot faithfully fulfil the rights due to that person.

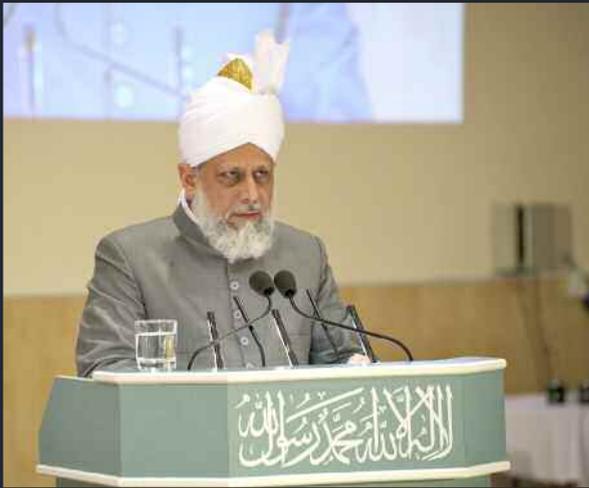
In an age where the electronic media has drawn us closer together, into what is called a global village, its benefit will

only be felt when mutual goodness prevails. If, instead of good feelings, hatred emerges, if restlessness usurps heartfelt peace, then you must accept that this is not progress, but is something that will take you towards horrific destruction.

Here, I wish to make something very clear, and that is the relationship of mutual love, affection and loyalty between one person and another cannot be established until a relationship of love, affection and loyalty with the Lord Who created us is developed. Distress and anxiety exist nowadays in a large part of the world's population because the world has forgotten its Creator. People have forgotten the fundamental teachings of their faith. In fact, a great number of people even reject the existence of God.

The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community has also taught us that the majority of Muslims and non-Muslims have forgotten their fundamental teachings and have gone far away from God. This growing distance from God and religion is increasing the restlessness in the hearts of people. And he said that he had come, therefore, to remove such distance so that the rights of God may be discharged and the rights of God's creation may also be discharged with feelings of love and sympathy. When these teachings are acted upon then we will observe real peace; otherwise, agitation will once again bring about utter destruction in the world.

With reference to peace, I would like to also say that turmoil and restlessness has spread all over the world and every possible way to reduce it should be adopted. Instead of unnecessarily interfering in the affairs of others and erecting walls of hatred, we should look to knock them down. The governments should not interfere where rights are not being violated. No laws should be proscribed regarding those matters that do not endanger the peace of the nation. Of course, where there is a threat to the peace of the nation; where there is a likelihood of harming the prosperity and progress of the nation; where the rights of citizens are unduly curtailed and where a person is made a



“ Currently, the minarets of mosques have also become a major issue, in particular in Switzerland. I said recently at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of one of our mosques in Germany, that if we suppose for one second that conspiracies are being hatched in mosques, then will bringing down the minarets stop such conspiracies? ”

symbol of hate due to his religion, there the Governments should interfere and legislate.

As I said before, and as you are all aware, the world has come together and the measures of distances have changed, and in every country people of different religions live side by side. Therefore, it is necessary and it is the need of the time that within our cosmopolitan societies the bond of love and affection should be strengthened. Respect and honour for one another should be inculcated. Allegiance to one's country should be infused amongst the entire society, and most importantly, the love of God should be instilled in the hearts of the people.

If these things are fostered then they will guarantee harmony within each country, and individual restlessness will be replaced by peace.

Over the past few years the *hijab*, or veil, has been made an issue in Europe. In France, in particular, uproar has been created, and now they are seriously considering legislation that would partially ban the *hijab*. Following on from France, politicians in other European countries, and for their own political motives, are issuing statements supporting a ban and this is becoming a means of injuring the sentiments of Muslims.

Whenever I have reflected on this matter, I have never been able to understand what the problem with the veil is that it has become such a threat to governments. Is it such a heinous crime to wear a coat and cover one's head and chin with a piece of cloth that an entire Parliament should sit to pass a law against it? If it is prohibited for a woman to wear a cloth on her head, then why are men allowed to wear caps and berets on their heads? This means that tomorrow a ban could also be proposed against such caps.

I saw a cartoon recently in a newspaper in which a lady wearing a veil was standing next to a young man wearing a

beret. The young man was saying to the woman, 'no *burqah*', and the woman was saying to the man, 'no beret'.

These issues thus have become a source of sarcasm; however, there are some sober-minded people in whose hands are the reins of the Executive and Legislature who should not interfere with such matters. Should legislation be passed against Christian and Jewish ladies who also adopt religious attire? If bans are imposed against the Muslims, then Muslim countries may impose restrictions on some forms of Western dress in response. This issue has the potential to snowball and it will affect the peace of the world.

By all means, if there is any covering that hides the identity of a person and it is necessary to remove it to identify a person, then the governments or the authorities have the right to do so. But what a travesty, that a woman may be deprived from travelling simply because she is wearing the *hijab*; or a human life may be deprived of care in a hospital and left in the jaws of death because she was wearing a veil. Then, for example, an intelligent girl – who ranks at the top of her class, who is not just a Muslim, but an asset to the country in which she lives, is loyal to her country in every possible way, so much so that the love of her country is ingrained within her and she is willing to sacrifice all her skills and abilities for the sake of the progress of her country – and if this girl is prevented from carrying on her education only because she chose to observe *hijab*, not out of any compulsion, but due to her own free will; does this not render her bereft of her rights as a citizen? Will not this legislation that deprives her of education be the means of wasting a national talent?

This law has not yet been passed in Germany, but due to the bye-laws available to the administration of some schools, an Ahmadi Muslim girl whom I know, who is among the top-ranked students, is being deprived of her education. And there are many examples like this.

This national talent and the future of the country is being denied just because a Muslim girl wants to serve her country and at the same time wants to practise her religion of her own volition and happiness. A girl is being deprived of this right merely because she has a metre worth of cloth on her head.

If this is a crime, then during the winter all European ladies will have to be deprived of their rights when they wrap their heads with scarves. Certainly, it is food for thought that whether it is such a crime to wear this one metre cloth, and whether wearing it renders a woman worthy of being deprived of her basic human rights.

Is this a definition of modern democratic governments that claim to safeguard the rights of its people? Is this the way to bring together people of different nations? Is this the way to foster love and affection amongst people? Most certainly, every just-minded person will oppose this because these things will make the walls of hatred ever higher and destroy the peace of the world.

Currently, the minarets of mosques have also become a major issue, in particular in Switzerland. I said recently at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of one of our mosques in Germany, that if we suppose for one second that conspiracies are being hatched in mosques, then will bringing down the minarets stop such conspiracies?

Firstly, not every mosque can have such an objection raised against it. I said in Germany with certainty, and I say it here as well, that not a single allegation can be proved against Ahmadi mosques in any part of the world, that they are spreading the message of hatred or rebellion. If you really want to make such an allegation, and if you really want to make the allegation of destroying the peace, then wherever the conspiracy can be found, remove it from the map. Indeed, if you become aware of any conspiracies being hatched in any mosque or other place of worship, then it is the responsibility of the government to take immediate action. However, to make it a general rule that Muslims always hatch conspiracies in places of worship will sow the seeds of hatred.

Politicians in some countries make such statements as a means of cheap publicity. In Switzerland, it is only our mosque, the Ahmadiyya Mosque, that has a high minaret, and so in newspapers its picture is printed and it is referred to as 'a symbol of peace and security'. Certainly, not all politicians are alike; there are some politicians who make it clear to even their party leaders that they are not in favour of such religious compulsion.

These days the world is passing through a financial crisis. It is said that the recession has ended, that we have passed through the worst and that now we are emerging from it to recovery.

But the public is still affected; jobs are still being lost; the purchasing power is still as affected as it was before. These are matters for governments and major steps must be taken, rather than making choices based on personal preferences.

Will a woman wearing or not wearing a veil affect the economy of the country or the world? Will the wearing or not wearing of a veil or having or not having a minaret affect the moral value of a country or will it lead to recognition of the Creator? Will the wearing or not wearing of a veil or having or not having a minaret improve or harm the peace of the world?

If it does, then I will be the first to accept it because Islam teaches that you should be willing to sacrifice something small for the greater good. But no! All these actions are strengthening the foundations of hatred.

For God's sake, in order to remove this hatred within your own circles, please act with justice, act with equality, and respect the feelings of others so that the peace can be restored, as has been said by so many guest speakers, almost – not almost – but *all* the guest speakers.

Amongst us tonight, Lord Eric Avebury is present whom I gave the Ahmadiyya Peace Award to just now. I consider him to be extremely honourable because he has always been a stalwart and at the forefront of upholding human rights.

May God enable him to continue this work further, because upholding human rights is the guarantor of world peace.

Likewise there are a lot of other distinguished guests like Tom Cox, who was also a guest speaker and an old friend of the Community; Justine Greening, our MP for Putney; Laura Moffatt, MP for Crawley; Stephen Hammond, MP for Wimbledon and Siobhain McDonagh, MP for Mitcham and Morden. May they continue to work for the cause of developing peace in society as they have already spoken about it.

It is my prayer that mankind understands the value of humanity and fulfils the rights owed to each other.

Finally, I would like to once again thank all of you, who have come here with good sentiments and graced this occasion with your presence and shown respect for fellow human beings.

Thank you very much.



## Extracts of other speeches delivered at the 2010 Peace Symposium

In our politically-correct society, we find that our political leaders state publicly that they do not 'do' God. Yet you all know that, in order to have a society built on fair play, freedom of conscience and care for other human beings, we require a moral code of conduct which normally comes from religion, our faith and our creator. It is true that all religions of the world teach more or less the same principles of morality and ethics, and in many respects share the commonality of belief. Islam, the last religion sent for guidance of mankind, not only teaches the basic principles of societal peace and mutual tolerance. It also teaches man to actively pursue the welfare of people of all levels. ...

When the faiths are practised in their true sense we found that they gave leadership, they gave a sense of morality to the people who practised. But today, because of the corruption of the teaching, we find that people are slowly moving away from faith. Indeed, we see in all three major religions and other religions of the world, that slowly people are drifting away. Sometimes if they haven't drifted away they're very confused as to what the true teaching of their faith is. ...

The ethos of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community is summed up in our motto: Love for all, Hatred for none. The word Islam means peace; peace that is achieved through total submission to the will of God. There is no violence, there is no force, no compulsion in the matter of religion. The Holy Qur'an states "There is no compulsion in religion. Surely, right has become distinct from wrong." Chapter 2, Verse 257. Again God says: "It is the truth from your Lord; wherefore let him who will, disbelieve." Chapter 18 Verse 30. Therefore everyone is given free choice, and the acceptance of faith must proceed from free choice. The Ahmadiyya movement and the Founder of the Ahmadiyya movement have laid stress on the fact that the jihad of the present day is not to be fought by sword but by the pen, which means that we have to struggle to win the hearts and minds of people and not impose our will through pressure. ...The Founder of our community declared, more than one hundred years ago in his book *The Message of Peace*, "Irrespective that we are



**Rafiq Ahmad Hayat**  
The Amir (National President) of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association UK

Muslims or non-Muslims, and although we have many differences, we believe in God who has created this world and all that is contained in it. We also claim commonality as human beings and we live in one country as neighbours. It is our duty that we shall become friends with a clear conscience and honest intentions. We should sympathise with each other in all matters, temporal or religious.....Faith is no faith that does not teach sympathy for mankind. A human being is not a human being unless he displays some element of sympathy. Our God has made no distinction in any nation. Whatever faculties we are given, to the Asian nations have been given, to the Arabians, the Persians, the Chinese, the Europeans, and the American nations. The Earth serves as a common ground to all, and the Sun, and the Moon and the stars perform a common service to all Mankind." These divine manifestations teach us that we should also treat each other equally with amity and with tolerance. Narrow mindedness or hard heartedness have no place in human relations. ...

.. In this respect, a door-to-door campaign is currently taking place to spread the true message of Islam to every individual household in the United Kingdom. This is backed up by an awareness campaign with full billboards, on buses, and extensive coverage in the media (through radio, TV and the newspapers). Our event this evening is also hosted to promote harmony in society and to create a more tolerant, peaceful and moral environment. Let us pray that we will find success in our endeavours.

Let me say how pleased I am to be speaking at the Baitul Futuh mosque today. It's a huge honour to be invited back to speak. I've always thought it's kind to be invited first time, but if they let you come back you're doing alright!

I've often observed with my political colleagues and friends that, no matter what part of the world we're from, we're all essentially the same. Sure, we have different cultures, different languages, and different customs, but I feel we all seek the same things – happiness and well-being – and we all try to avoid suffering and harm. Many of us share important values such as: equality of opportunity; social



**Siobhain McDonagh**  
MP of Mitcham and Morden since 1997. Prior to this, she was the youngest councillor in London when she was elected to Merton Council in Colliers Wood ward in 1982.

justice; individual responsibility; and respect for human

dignity. I think that is what makes us human beings, and enables us to live in a peaceful and harmonious society. To a great extent, these values we share are embodied in the universal declaration of human rights: the right of life, liberty and security, for instance, or the right to be treated with equal dignity. These are examples of basic human rights and I know that the Qur'an asserts these values as inherent and an absolute right to the individual as well.

Unfortunately, the terrorist events in America, Britain, Bali and Spain over the last ten years have demonstrated quite clearly that not everyone shares our respect for human life and dignity, or our desire for a peaceful co-existence. The terrorists linked to these tragic events have wanted us to believe that different faiths and cultures cannot live together, that human life and dignity is not worth preserving, and that we can murder innocent civilians in the name of religion. Fortunately, England is a testimony to the fact that people with diverse backgrounds are able to live with one another in peace. Ethnic minorities now make up around 11 to 12% of the British population, and in London almost 1 in 3 people are from an ethnic minority background. A little over half of the people in this country state their religion as Christian, but what is surprising is that Islam is the second-most common faith after Christianity in this country. The British Muslim population has grown to some 2.4 million residents. According to the Office of National Statistics, it is growing ten times faster than other faith populations. We are indeed a super diverse country but more importantly we are a country where different faiths and cultures are not at war with each other. So, how is it possible to achieve harmony amongst such super-diversity? Well, government clearly has a strong role and they can set legal parameters – as this government has done through the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006, making incitement of religious or racial hatred a criminal offence in

the eyes of the law. Government can also enable greater interactions and understanding between communities, as this government has done through its community cohesion programme in schools and with local communities. But, in reality, we all know that there is a limit to what government can do and that the real business of forging bonds between communities, and expelling extremism from within them, comes down to everyday citizens like you and I.

I have observed before that your community, the Ahmadiyya community, have an extraordinary reputation for charitable work, not just abroad but also here in Merton. But what has always struck me about your community in particular is that your charity has no bounds or limits. You help people from all walks of life – young and old – and most importantly you help people regardless of what faith, ethnicity, or cultural background they are from. This, I have been told, is the true definition of Islam – a religion that is built on the right of life, equality, tolerance, and justice. A religion that advocates the freedom of expression, the freedom of speech, and the freedom to worship as you choose. These are indeed honourable values, and these are the values that we have in common in Britain. These are also the values that stand us apart from extremist Muslims. Peace and social harmony do not come about as naturally as we would like to believe. ... The terrorist events since 2001 have made us realise that sometimes we also need to engage in ideological battles with people who do not believe that different faiths and beliefs can live together. We cannot take peace for granted. It is more important now than ever before that we stand united against hatred, intolerance and ignorance. It is more important now than ever before that we brandish our mutual values of peace, tolerance, and respect. Our enemies are not people who believe in different faiths, our enemies are people who believe that other faiths cannot co-exist.

I was intrigued by Mr President's words of opening introduction, where he said that tonight we were going to look for the sources of peace, find the sources of peace, and discover how peace might break out. A noble aim and a noble aspiration.

We have before us this evening 'Love for all, Hatred for none', and in many Christian churches tomorrow morning the words will go out 'Peace and Goodwill to all Men'. But, ladies and gentlemen, it is also true that so many wars have actually been fought in the name of religion. Therefore, if we want to look for one source of peace, it must be that men of religion stand up for the true nature of their religion and cast out those who seek to corrupt it. For those of us in politics, we have an obligation upon us. For if we are also to help the cause of peace, we must drive out the sources of injustice, and hope and work to ensure that communities can live and pray together.



**Stephen Hammond**  
MP for Wimbledon since 2005. Has also served as Shadow Minister for Transport. Mr Hammond is also a regular attendee of the Community's events including the Annual Convention

I hope that the aspiration to find the source of peace this evening is achieved. I hope that, even if we don't meet that aspiration this evening, that everyone in this room will work for that peace in their lives.

Your Holiness, Mr President, wonderful friends and guests at this truly amazing event. I think when we come together to talk about peace we often forget that the simple acts of peace are happening in our communities day in and day out. I don't believe that there can be a single soul that couldn't support the work of the Ahmadiyya Muslims in our community, and their aims for peace, stability, loyalty and friendship, and their sense of opening up the faith for others to understand. This evening, I am very happy that we have a large contingent of those from Crawley who've been working with the Ahmadiyya Muslims in Crawley, thinking about their future and trying to understand the Muslim faith. I am particularly pleased to have Queenie and John Hopcroft, who are leading lights in our inter-faith movement and who absolutely understand exactly what is happening when the Ahmadiyya Muslims have a superb event, very often in Crawley, opening the doors, trying to get people to understand what the faith is all about. When I have attended those events and seen a wonderful dawning on people's faces – a dawning of understanding - it truly is something to behold. ... So I am deeply grateful for the work.



**Laura Moffat**  
MP for Crawley since 1997 and the first nurse to be elected to Parliament. Also served as Parliamentary Private Secretary in a range of departments including Health, Education & Pensions.

It has been an honour and a privilege to see the community grow in strength and stature in the town of Crawley. It's so important to bring us together and to remind us that at the heart of all of our work – politicians, faith groups, those interested in the armed forces and the police force – is peace. We are interested in peace, and we want peace for the future. This is a great event to come together and make sure that happens. So, thank you very much for inviting us.

Your Holiness, ladies and gentlemen. Whenever I come to an event in this mosque or the London mosque in Southfields, I immediately feel – as I'm sure all of you do this evening – that I am at home with very, very dear friends. Whatever may be the religious beliefs that we have, religion is very very precious and very, very personal to each and every one of us. But as we have already heard from previous speakers, this community is not only committed to its religious beliefs it is also committed to its involvement in a whole range of issues – not only in this country but in countries throughout the world - for the benefit of men and women and their families. That is why I am so very honoured and proud to have had an association with the community of over forty years.



**Tom Cox**  
Former Labour MP for Wandsworth Common and Tooting. Has been in Parliament for 35 years, from 1970-2005. Has a keen interest in and is an outspoken defender of human rights.

gentlemen, I tried to imagine how I would've responded. If someone in my family had been brutally murdered; if someone in my family had been put in prison for years and years without any recourse to real justice. That is why I am so proud and honoured to have such close relations with this community.

Last month I was privileged to visit Pakistan, and it was a visit that Lord Avebury played a very major role in arranging. .. We went to Karachi, we went to Faisalabad, we went to Lahore, and we went to Islamabad. We met people of different religions who had suffered enormously for their religious beliefs in Pakistan. None had suffered more than members of the Ahmadiyya community. We met some men and women who had lost their loved ones who had been brutally murdered because of their religious beliefs, and others who, under the infamous blasphemy laws that that country has, would spend years and years in prison. We also heard of people who were running businesses, but were unable to contract for work in their communities solely because of their religious belief. The thing that struck me so much and the saying of this community - 'Love for all, Hatred for none' – is what we heard time and time again from these people. They were not bitter. I have to say to you, ladies and

The final point I make, as other speakers have already said, it isn't only what we do in this country. What we saw in Pakistan would not be tolerated here in the United Kingdom, and all of us have a duty, because Pakistan is a member of Commonwealth, and we have close links with that country. Each and every one of us has an obligation to see that those laws, the injustices of those laws, inflicted upon men, women and their families are removed as soon as possible. That is something that certainly I am committed to. People like Eric Avebury and our Parliamentary colleagues I'm sure are all committed to that. I hope this country will be at the forefront of seeing those laws removed as soon as possible.

Good evening his Holiness, Mr President and distinguished guests. I think these symposia are so important, because if we are talking about peace I think you really need three elements. I think they go in an order. First of all: communities have to have an understanding of one another and of the different people within communities. So I think out of that then comes: respect. If you then have respect as well you finally get: tolerance for differences. I think in that stage you have laid the foundations for people living together peacefully and as a single community, working alongside one another. I think this peace symposium that we have every year here, and all the work that the Ahmadiyya community do in the mean time – much of which people may not be aware of but right now, as Mr President explained, there is a whole advertising campaign on London buses going on to tell people about what the community is doing, they are actually knocking on doors and talking to people who may never get a chance to come to an event like the one we're at tonight, about what the Ahmadiyya community means and why it's so important.

I think breaking down those barriers is absolutely vital, and I think it does have to happen not just at the national level but also at the local level. I really pay tribute to the work that the community does, and also internationally with its wonderful charity Humanity First. I was honoured to be able to support one of the fund-raising events that was held for Humanity First only a couple of weeks ago. For those of you who aren't



**Justine Greening**  
MP for Putney, Roehampton and Southfields. Also served as Shadow Minister for the Treasury and Shadow Minister for Communities and Local Government

familiar with its work, I would very much recommend finding out a bit more about what it does. It is really a fantastic charity that has altruism at its very core.

I want to just finish off by saying I do think that, although we live in many respects in a secular society, faith is absolutely crucial. If we are going to achieve peace, not just in many parts of the world that are war-torn but actually on a day to day basis, then I think it's not about actually changing people's heads it's about changing their hearts. I think if you want to change people's hearts then the role of religion and faith is absolutely fundamental. I think that the common threads that run through all of our great religions are ones that are fundamentally allowing us to stay together as one community, to live together as one community, and more importantly to grow together as a single community. ... Once again I pay tribute to the community for making this event happen.

It is a very great pleasure to be back here at the Ahmadiyyan mosque. I think that it is very important that we do recognise the vital importance of supporting peace throughout the world. It is important for us to recognise that we have a shared goal as Christians and Ahmadiyyans – bearing in mind that both, as minorities in Pakistan, are so dreadfully persecuted. We should very much look to politicians to be able to say that we should use the powers of government and the powers of Parliament in the UK to speak out of the importance, not only of defending those who are friends and relatives who are persecuted in Pakistan, but also to recognise that it is important to preach the right approach of tolerance and understanding. It is very much important in that phrase – 'Love for All, Hatred for None'. Not only is that good policy, but in many ways when you look at my faith, the Christian faith, in terms of loving your enemy, there was never probably a better piece of political advice from God.

In terms of knowing your enemy and loving your enemy, not only is the right approach in terms of understanding how to succeed politically but also to be able to know that that is the very best way forward in terms of pursuing peace and understanding within the world. It is a very great privilege to be able to come and speak at an event like this, and to join fellow members of Parliament from South London - all of whom have a very real sense of understanding about what this community really does, in terms of its success within South London society and the South London economy.



**Andrew Pelling**  
MP for Central Croydon. Has also served a number of positions from local council, including as a member of the GLA

We all have a responsibility to pursue those aims per se, those aims of loyalty and equality of respect within society but also freedom from the intervention of the state. But most importantly of all to recognise that there can be great faults in man, faults that somehow that we think that our own values are so important and so much better than others, that we think it right to try and impose them on others through military force. The right way to go about it, as this community is so intent on doing, is that it is only by having love for all, not having hatred is the best way forward for the future happiness of humanity as a whole.

Your Holiness, Mr President and guests. I am a great admirer of Islam, and of the Ahmadiyyan community in particular. It seems to me that they set us all a very good example in charitable work and in voluntary work. Above all, a pretty good example of tolerance and respect for one another. We should never let a minority of extremists obscure the fact that Islam and the Ahmadiyyas in particular are very tolerant.

The Islamic country I have visited most is Palestine, as chair of an organisation called the Labour Friends of Palestine in the Middle East. I have visited Gaza and the West Bank three times in the last couple of years. I find that Palestine is a wonderful example of a tolerant community. Muslims and Christians live very happily side by side. Of course there are Jewish Palestinians too who live in harmony in that community. It is only when Israel seeks to take land from Palestinians that there is conflict. I hope finally now you will have seen in the news over the last few days there is a possibility again of peace talks. I very much hope that chance will be seized and we will finally have an independent Palestine alongside a safe and secure Israel.



**Martin Linton**  
MP for Battersea, Balham and Wandsworth. Currently the Secretary of the all-party Arab League group.

I hope equally, perhaps even more so, that in Pakistan there will be a spirit of tolerance and respect for the Ahmadiyyan community. I know from Ahmadiyyans in my constituency how difficult their life can be and how many of them seek refuge in this country. Although we greatly value the contribution the Ahmadiyyan community make here and welcome all those who come here, we do hope that those who live in Pakistan can live in peace and harmony with the respect of their neighbours.

Good evening. Assalamo alaikum. Your Holiness, Mr President, it is a great pleasure to be back again here for another great event.

I am very conscious that over the course of the last year the Ahmadiyya community has been doing a lot of work through its local outreach in promoting exactly that. It's been a pleasure to be present at some events that you have had in my constituency, which have provided that very environment for people to meet and grow in understanding of each other, and grow in understanding of Islam, as in the way that you have been going out to do this.

Now, when trying to make a contribution to this evening's discussion, I am always rather conscious that there is a slight danger when one starts talking about peace and understanding that it all starts to slip into motherhood and apple pie. Because the reality I suggest to you – and the reason why we're able to meet here tonight – and indeed I think that the great strength of our country, where we need to promote peace first, particularly if we wish to export our ideas throughout the world, is that the achievements that we have had in enabling people to grow in understanding of each other come very much because of the climate of tolerance which is created by debate. Actually that is often a very difficult process and fortunately this country has a long history of people growing in tolerance, although often their passions that have been vented in that process have been quite alarming.

If I may disagree very gently with Tom Brake this evening, I'm sure that the coming weeks of the general election may actually be in some ways rather unedifying. Actually, they are the tolerance in action because of our ability to engage in discourse - often of a rather painful kind – and yet still



**Dominic Grieve QC**  
MP for Beaconsfield and has held a number of senior positions in the Shadow Cabinet including Shadow Home Secretary and Shadow Justice Secretary

doing it within boundaries of respect for each other. That I think is an important message, because what so impressed me about the Ahmadiyyan community is not just your willingness to talk about these issues but your willingness to go out and practice them.

I suspect, we all have, as somebody said earlier, inherent flaws. I have no doubt about that, but we certainly share a common humanity. It is our ability to engage in discourse and to be self-confident about ourselves, which gives us the tolerance and understanding of others who disagree with us. I have always felt that this is one of the things we have to promote, and which I am so proud my country – your country – has been so good at promoting - often by accident but quite consistently over the centuries. It gives us so much to celebrate, it also gives us so much to go and sell elsewhere. We must be careful to protect that delicate flower, not to start imposing new orthodoxies on each other. The great temptation in this society, which becomes increasingly secular, and can sometimes in fact start to become intolerant of difference as a result. To make sure that the diversity of debate is preserved, because through that we will get the peace we all seek.

Your Holiness, Mr President, distinguished guests. It is a great honour to be invited to speak here again so soon after speaking at your Jalsa Salana last year. The size of that event demonstrated the scope and extent of your religion, and the strength of your community - not just here but around the world. It is also an honour to be invited to speak at your peace symposium today.

There is no doubt that your message of peace and the universal values you espouse need to be heard around the world. Too often that message of peace is one that is lost in the noise between different religions and with no religion: the noise that drowns out the message which I think we all want to hear from your community, we all want to hear from our respected communities, faith, communities and indeed a secular society.

I think we need to remember that peace is something that can be found often in places that are where you least expect to find it. I organised a few years ago a peace symposium not on this scale of course but involving Palestinian Parliamentarians and Israeli Parliamentarians. I think that the lesson I learnt from that was, having initially panicked about whether they were going to be physically able to sit in the same room together, that in fact very often when you



**Tom Brake**  
MP for Carshalton and Wallington. Has also served as Shadow Spokesperson for Transport, International Development and the Home Office

put people together and you start, you encourage them to discuss concerns that, very similar concerns that they may have, that actually with some people you can actually find peace - perhaps in a territory which is not particularly fertile.

Your message of peace is certainly one that perhaps we as politicians could benefit from. I think that one thing that you can be certain of, and your community can be certain of, that all of the political parties that are represented here tonight will ensure that we all do our utmost to make you able to practice your faith here openly and without any constraint. But equally that we will campaign and do our utmost to ensure that you are able to practice your faith wherever you choose to practice in the wider world.

## *The 2009 International Peace Prize*

**At the Peace Conference 2010, the inaugural Ahmadiyya Peace Prize was presented to Lord Eric Avebury in recognition for his lifetime devotion to the issue of human rights. The award, along with a cheque for £10,000, was presented by Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad. Below is a brief introduction given by the National Amir, Rafiq Hayat at the Peace Conference about this prestigious award and its first recipient.**

### **INTRODUCTION BY RAFIQ HAYAT TO THE MUSLIM PEACE PRIZE**

Now, I have to perform another pleasant duty that I feel privileged to perform. As you all know, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has crossed another milestone of one hundred years of the noble guidance of Khilafat in our community. On this memorable occasion, his Holiness, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad], our beloved Fifth Khalifa kindly approved the launch of a new peace prize that will be awarded in recognition of an individual or an organisation's contribution to the advancement of the cause of peace. Anyone can be nominated for the prize. When assessing the nomination, consideration is given to how the individual or organisation's work has had a direct impact, or led to direct change, and how the impact or change has advanced the cause of peace. I am very pleased that our inaugural award, with the blessing of his Holiness, is going to be awarded to Lord Eric Avebury in recognition of his long-standing service to the cause of peace, with particular focus on human rights. With Hudhur's permission, I will very briefly touch on Lord Avebury's immense contribution to the cause of peace. His full title is Eric Reginald Lubbock, the Fourth Baron Avebury, and he is affectionately known as Eric by all. I can personally say that I consider him as a very close friend, and he has been a friend of the community for a very long time. He founded the UK Parliament Human Rights Group in 1976, and was chair for twenty-one years. He is still active as vice-chair of the group, and he is active in protecting the rights of religious and ethnic minorities throughout the world. It is his passionate belief that true peace in the world is not possible until and unless everyone, irrespective of his colour, creed or ethnicity, is granted full



Award and Certificate presented by Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V to Lord Eric Avebury

and equal rights to live and achieve his aspirations. Wherever in the world he encounters injustice, persecution and inequality, he usually is the first to speak out. Here I will just mention a couple of the type of work he has been involved with. In the Bangladesh campaign of war crimes tribunal, he advised the lawmakers on how to proceed with legitimate trials. He has been co-chair of the Chittagong Hill Trades Commission, promoting an implementation of the peace accords in 1997 with the Bangladesh government. In the Burmese campaign, he encouraged the association of south eastern Asian nations to speak out and express strong concern about the treatment of Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel Prize winner, noted Burmese prisoner of conscience, and advocate of non-violent resistance. For the campaign for the Abolition of Blasphemy in 2009, he was awarded the joint secularist of the year with Evan Harrid for campaigning for the abolition of blasphemy worldwide, and the Liberal International Freedom Prize. He has made vast contributions in highlighting the persecutions of various Ahmadi issues around the world, and especially in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia. Eric is a principled supporter of religious freedom for all. In 2007, he organised a delegation to Pakistan then cumulated in the report of the Parliament Human Rights Group called the Martyrs of Rabwah. Here he highlighted the persecutions of Ahmadiyya in the state of

Pakistan. Very recently, as you heard, Tom Cox again mentioned a second Human Rights Parliamentary Group was organised by Eric to go to Pakistan to look at the issues relating to the blasphemy laws there. Eric has travelled extensively to remind the rulers of suffering of the poor, the persecuted and the down-trodden about their plight and their rights. His achievements are too many to cover in this brief introduction, but the blessings of such efforts are no doubt many fold. Lord Eric Avebury, we are delighted to announce your success in being awarded the first Ahmadiyya Muslim Peace Prize and I will request His Holiness to kindly present the prize to Eric. The prize also has a ten thousand pound cheque that is awarded with the prize.



## PEACE PRIZE ACCEPTANCE SPEECH BY LORD ERIC AVEBURY

Your Holiness, Mr President, distinguished guests and colleagues, Assalamo Alaikum. This is really an overwhelming honour to be conferred on me, and particularly so when it is presented by his Holiness in person and following such a hugely kind introduction by Rafiq Hayat.

This conference of loyalty, freedom and peace, I have had the privilege of working on human rights for the last forty-eight years. Before I was chair of the Parliamentary Human Rights group, I was chair of the Parliamentary Civil Liberties group concerned with domestic human rights which, although I take Dominic's point, have not always been perfect. There have been violations of human rights within this country and at the time when I came into politics first in 1962 there was particular concern about the situation in Northern Ireland where the Catholics had a raw deal for a long time. We put that right again, but it took some time.

You all encourage me to keep the promise that I made on my eightieth birthday two years ago never to retire. I am thinking that if the world was lived by the Ahmadiyya principle of 'Love for All, Hatred for None', then human rights workers, peace activists, and the many fine NGOs working on conflict resolution would all be redundant and could go home. You set a fantastic example in the Ahmadiyya community to the rest of the us, not only in publishing that slogan but putting it into practice in your own lives. My grandfather wrote a book which was entitled 'On Peace and Happiness', just over a hundred years ago, in which he quotes a line from Shakespeare: "Love all, trust a few, do wrong to none." I was struck by the similarity between Shakespeare's words and the slogan of the Ahmadiyya community.

We see from every speech that has been made this evening that there is a degree of consensus amongst us which we echo from the great philosophers and writers and religious leaders through the ages on how we ought to live our lives. But then there is a sad paradox that we have to confront. That is that whilst the standards are agreed and the international community makes enormous efforts to end human rights abuse, poverty, disease and hunger, that task is being made harder all the time by another set of people who are equally committed to genocide, persecution, conflict and terrorism.

All the words that have been spoken so far today concentrate on that theme, and on what the Ahmadiyya community has been doing to promote love and peace among mankind.

We heard from Tom Cox, and I'd like to thank him very much for the enormous effort he made in the mission to Pakistan from which he just returned. It will be producing an important report, not only on the persecution of Ahmadiyyas in Pakistan, but also the other minority religions. ...I do think that it is going to make an enormous impact.

I would also like to say how grateful I am to the Ahmadiyya community for giving me the opportunity of working on the human rights problems, as you heard from Rafiq, not only in Pakistan but also in Bangladesh, Indonesia and the other countries. I read in the Bangladesh *Daily Star* this morning of a vicious attack on the Ahmadiyyas in Brahmanbaria in the region of Chittagong, and this is not the first time it has happened in that region. Their principal mosque in the town was forcibly annexed in the eighties; they lost three other mosques to fundamentalists; and although they have made many peaceful efforts to get their property back they are still denied them. I wrote to the rapporteur on religious freedom this afternoon asking her to look into this case, and do something about it.



We have, as I say, all these mechanisms in the UN Council for Human Rights, the special rapporteurs not only on religious freedom but on freedom of expression, indigenous peoples and so on, and we need to put more effort behind making the work of the United Nations a reality on the ground. They produce these fantastic reports, and then we need governments to get on to the States concerned and say you have got to implement what the United Nations has told you to do, what you are signed up to do by documents such as Universal Convention on Civil Liberties and Rights.

So, I have been very proud to do this work over the last forty-eight years and intend to carry on for as long as my legs will carry me! I want to do that in full collaboration with the Ahmadiyya community, because I believe that their ideals are the same as those that we have heard expressed by every one of our colleagues this evening: that if we can join forces together and we can work in harmony as we do, then - in the end - we will have a world in which peace reigns supreme.

So, thank you very much for this wonderful award of which I am very, very proud to receive. I will long remember this evening as a landmark in my life but one which is leading on to other things, but not to a conclusion, because human rights is a cause which probably never will end as long as the human race exists. So we will all have to join that task and to complete it if we can, but we should not despair if we find that sometimes the going is rough and we need more help from the community at large. So let's get together if we can, under the slogan 'Love for All, Hatred for None', and do everything we can to promote that slogan not only as a form of words but as something that has been said by several of my colleagues, by which we live our lives and persuade others to do the same. Thank you so much.

**Loyalty**

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**Freedom**

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**Equality**

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**Respect**

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**Peace**

**[www.LoveForAllHatredForNone.org](http://www.LoveForAllHatredForNone.org)**

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