

In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

**F A I R**  
**Ramadan 2001**  
**Publicity Resource Kit**

**FORUM AGAINST ISLAMOPHOBIA AND RACISM (FAIR)**

16 Peninsular Court, 121 East Ferry Road, London E14 3LH

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# FAIR

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### Dear Brother/Sister:

*As-Salaamu 'Alaikum.* Peace be with you.

This resource kit has been developed to assist your community to publicise its Ramadan events and activities. It is designed to provide you with the raw materials with which you can contact the media and, through them, people of other faiths in your area.

### HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE KIT:

1. Read the "Ramadan Publicity Campaign Summary and Tips" provided in this kit. You will probably not achieve all these objectives, but the list will give you an idea of what is possible. Also study the "Talking Points" at the bottom of that page. These are the key points you will want to pass on to people of other faiths.
2. Photocopy pages such as "Ramadan Q&A" and "Islam in Britain - The Facts." These pages can be distributed in the materials you send to the media and hand out at open days. The announcement for Ramadan will be sent to national and regional media by FAIR, but the local communities should make contact with local media.
3. Re-type the "Media Advisory" and the "Public Service Announcement" on your group's letterhead. If this is too difficult, you may just fill in the blanks on the originals and send them that way. This is not the best approach, but it is better than nothing. The text can, *Insha-Allah*, also be downloaded from [www.fairuk.org](http://www.fairuk.org)
4. Re-format and print copies of the Mosque Open Day brochure for distribution at your Islamic centre's event.
5. Distribute your announcements to the media no later than **TWO WEEKS** before any event.
6. Make phone calls to follow up with editors, producers, talk show hosts, etc.
7. Call FAIR if you have any questions, or if you do not understand any part of the Resource Kit.
8. Clip news articles and record TV items. Send **originals** of newspaper clips (please include the front page of the paper for our files) and clear video copies to FAIR. Your organisation/centre may appear in FAIR's future publications.

# RAMADAN PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN

## *Summary & Tips*

### OBJECTIVES

#### Newspapers

1. Feature article on Muslim community - Contact "Feature Editor" and "Religion Editor"
2. Food section article on Ramadan recipes - Contact "Food Editor"
3. List items on open day and Eid prayers - Contact "Events Editor" and "Religion Editor"
4. Letters to the editor about true image of British Muslims - Contact "Letters Editor"
5. Opinion articles about stereotyping of Muslims - Contact "Editorial Page Editor"
6. Photograph of Eid prayers and/or Eid bazaar - Contact "Society Editor" and "Photo Editor"

#### Television

1. News package (approx. 1.5 minutes in length) about local Muslim community and Ramadan - Contact "News Assignment Editor"
2. 30 second video item on Eid prayers/open evening/bazaar - Contact "News Assignment Editor"
3. Announcements at beginning of Ramadan and time of sunset each day - Contact "Weather Editors".
4. Daily "Ramadan" announcements - Contact "Programme Director"

#### Radio

1. Talk show appearances by community leaders discussing Ramadan - Contact "Show Producer"
2. Public Announcements (free announcements by radio station) of Ramadan activities - Contact "Programme Director"

**NB: Every editor in each of the sections above needs to be contacted individually by phone and fax or mail**

#### Schools

1. Talks/exhibitions open to all faiths during school lunch hours, assemblies and religious studies lessons.
2. Eid treats for co-workers and classmates of Muslim students
3. Muslim students to be allowed to take Eid day off and to adjust homework load

## **Libraries**

1. Reserve display cases and install a Ramadan display (also reserve for next year). Include Islamic artefacts (Quran, textiles, cultural items), books, leaflets, handouts and posters on Islam, etc. General Islamic exhibition posters are also available from WAMY on Tel: 020 7636 7010, Fax: 020 7636 7080, Email: [wamy@wamy.co.uk](mailto:wamy@wamy.co.uk), Web: [www.wamy.co.uk](http://www.wamy.co.uk)
2. Children's librarian to display Ramadan and Eid books during the month
3. Submit a Book Purchase Request at your local library for children's books on Islam.

## **Hospitals**

1. Visit sick Muslims
2. Discuss Ramadan needs of Muslim patients with administrators.

## **Other**

1. Deliver *Iftar* meals to the homeless and Mosques

## **"TALKING POINTS"**

### **Messages to be used when communicating with people of other faiths**

1. Muslims are a growing segment of British society.
2. Muslims are productive members of the society who contribute much to the general welfare.
3. Islam is a belief system that has much to offer in terms of providing solutions to problems such as crime, drug abuse and family disintegration.
4. Muslims are reaching out to people of other faiths to help them better understand the Islamic community in Britain.
5. Muslims come from all over the world, and do not belong to particular cultural groups, such as 'Arab', or 'Pakistani'. It is a religion for all humanity, and welcomes people from all cultural backgrounds. British converts are among a great number of people reverting to Islam in the West, such as Yusuf Islam and Jemima Khan, to name but a few.

## **STEPS TO TAKE**

1. Form a local committee to handle publicity for Ramadan activities. Make sure the committee has representatives from all local groups. Do not waste time and energy setting up a formal structure. Just choose a co-ordinator and include people who are willing to do

the work. Decide who will do what, and make sure that you are sticking to realistic targets within the budget of your community.

2. This committee should have a name such as London Ramadan Information Committee, etc.
3. Decide which activities your community will undertake. The main suggestions are:
  - Moon-sighting event
  - Ramadan “Taste of Islam” open day at the Islamic Centre
  - Eid Bazaar
  - Public lectures on Ramadan and Islamic solutions for societal problems
  - School presentations by students, parents and visitors from local Muslim organisations
  - *Iftars* for the homeless
  - Eid treats for non-Muslim classmates
4. To publicise these events, modify the attached materials for your own organisation’s use. Use these materials when contacting the people listed in the “objectives” section. To find the phone and fax numbers for these people, just call the media outlet in question and ask. Also refer to the Muslim Directory for further information about national and Muslim news agencies. Use your “talking points” whenever communicating with the media.
5. **TIMING** – Call/fax/email the media now! Events editors need at least two weeks lead time to publish an item. Feature editors and others need at least that long to develop and schedule stories. Public announcements also need time to be approved and scheduled. Make initial contact as soon as you can and then follow up with phone calls to the same people a couple of days before each activity. When you make calls close to the day of any event, focus on the television news assignment editors and newspaper society and photo editors.
6. **IMPORTANT** – Make sure you send a copy of all your announcements and news releases to the ASSOCIATED PRESS “DAYBOOK” EDITOR at the Associated Press office in your area or in the nearest large city.
7. Give us feedback on what your centre has taken part in, and any additional ideas you may have. Clip copies of any news articles and tape any broadcast reports, and send copies to FAIR.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## MUSLIM FAST OF RAMADAN BEGINS NOVEMBER 16

Fast offers opportunity to learn more about Islam and Muslims

On **November 16, 2001**,\* the Muslim community in Britain and around the world will begin the month-long fast of Ramadan (rum-a-daan). Ramadan is the month on the Islamic lunar calendar during which Muslims abstain from food, drink and other sensual pleasures from break of dawn to sunset. (To download FAIR's "RAMADAN 2001 MEDIA KIT," go to [www.fairuk.org](http://www.fairuk.org). The kit includes "Ramadan Facts," "Ramadan Q&A" and "Q&A About Islam and British Muslims").

The fast is performed to learn discipline, self-restraint and generosity, while obeying God's commandments. Fasting (along with the declaration of faith, daily prayers, charity and pilgrimage to Mecca) is one of the "five pillars" of Islam. Because the Islamic calendar is based on the lunar system, Ramadan begins about eleven days earlier each year. The end of Ramadan will be marked by communal prayers and "Eid ul-Fitr," or Feast of the Fast-Breaking, on December 16, 2001.\*

"Ramadan is a time to ponder more on the virtues of tolerance, patience and sincerity. Given the current circumstances, it is also a great opportunity for people of other faiths to learn more about the Islamic way of life, and it is up to us as Muslims to correct the distorted image of Islam by setting good examples," said Nadia Hawa, from the Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism (FAIR).

The Holy Qur'an, which Muslims believe is revealed from God, states: "O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint ... Ramadan is the (month) in which was sent down the Quran, as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgment (between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting ..." (Chapter 2, verses 183 and 185).

Demographers say Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in this country and around the world. There are an estimated 2 million Muslims in Britain and some 1.2 billion worldwide.

**CONTACT:** Nadia Hawa – Tel: 020 7531 1516; Mobile: 0785 5036593;

Email: [nadahawa2001@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:nadahawa2001@yahoo.co.uk).

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\* The beginning of Islamic lunar months depend on the actual sighting of the new moon, and therefore, the start and end dates for Ramadan may vary.

# RAMADAN FACTS

## WHO MUST FAST?

Fasting is compulsory for those who are mentally and physically fit, past the age of puberty, in a settled situation (not travelling), and are sure fasting is unlikely to cause real physical or mental injury.

## EXEMPTIONS FROM FASTING

- Children under the age of puberty (Young children are encouraged to fast as much as they are able to)
- People who are mentally incapacitated or not responsible for their actions
- The elderly
- The sick
- Travellers who are on journeys of more than about fifty miles
- Pregnant women and nursing mothers
- Women who are menstruating
- Those who are temporarily unable to fast must make up the missed days at another time or feed the poor

NB: Some of the above exemptions are optional

## SPECIAL ACTIVITIES & EVENTS IN RAMADAN

- Special prayers, called *Taraweeh*, are performed after the daily night time prayer.
- *Lailat ul-Qadr* ("Night of Power" or "Night of Destiny") marks the anniversary of the night on which the Prophet Muhammad first began receiving revelations from God, through the angel Gabriel. Muslims believe *Lailat ul-Qadr* is one of the last odd-numbered nights of Ramadan.

## TRADITIONAL PRACTICES

- Breaking the daily fast with dates and milk or water.
- Reading the entire Quran during Ramadan
- Social visits, communal and festive *iftars* (breaking of fast meals) are encouraged.

## EID UL-FITR ("FESTIVAL OF FAST-BREAKING") AT THE END OF RAMADAN

- Eid begins with special morning prayers on the first day of Shawwal, the month following Ramadan on the Islamic lunar calendar.
- It is forbidden to perform an optional fast during Eid because it is a time for relaxation.
- During Eid Muslims greet each other with the phrase "Eid Mubarak" (eed-moo-bar-ak), meaning "Blessed Eid".

# RAMADAN Q&A

## **Q: How did the fast during Ramadan become obligatory for Muslims?**

**A:** The revelations from God to the Prophet Muhammad that would eventually be compiled as the Qur'an began during Ramadan in the year 610, but the fast of Ramadan did not become a religious obligation for Muslims until the year 624. The obligation to fast is explained in the second chapter of the Quran: *"O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint ... Ramadan is the (month) in which was sent down the Quran, as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgment (between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting ..."* (Chapter 2, verses 183 and 185).

## **Q: What are the benefits of fasting?**

**A:** Muslims abstain from worldly comforts during Ramadan, and this increases compassion for those in need of the necessities of life. The purpose of this is to show gratitude and appreciation to The Creator, pursue reflection and self-purification and find time for renewed focus on spirituality. Muslims also appreciate the feeling of togetherness shared by family and friends throughout the month. Perhaps the greatest practical benefit is the yearly lesson in self-restraint and discipline that can carry forward to other aspects of a Muslim's life such as work and education. Ramadan is seen as a blessing as it is an opportunity for forgiveness of past sins. Fasting also has many health benefits – our stomachs work 24 hours a day all year, so Ramadan is a time to give not only the soul, but the body also, a rest – and to 're-charge' the human battery for the rest of the year.

## **Q: Why does Ramadan begin on a different day each year?**

**A:** The Islamic calendar is based on lunar months, and therefore, Ramadan begins about eleven days earlier each year. Throughout a Muslim's lifetime, Ramadan will fall both during winter months, when the days are short, and summer months, when the days are long and the fast is more difficult. In this way, the difficulty of the fast is evenly distributed between Muslims living in the northern and southern hemispheres.

## **Q: What is *Lailat ul-Qadr*?**

**A:** *Lailat ul-Qadr* ("Night of Power") marks the anniversary of the night on which the Prophet Muhammad first began receiving revelations from God, through the angel Gabriel. An entire chapter in the Quran deals with this night: *"We have indeed revealed this (Message) in the Night of Power: and what will explain to thee what the Night of Power is? The Night of Power is better than a thousand months. Therein come down the angels and the Spirit by God's permission, on every errand. Peace! ... This until the rise of morn."* (Chapter 97). Muslims believe *Lailat ul-Qadr* is one of the last odd-numbered nights of Ramadan.

**Q: Is it difficult to perform the fast in Britain?**

**A:** In many ways, fasting in British society is easier than fasting in areas where the climate is extremely hot. This year at least, the number of daylight hours will be less than when Ramadan occurs during the spring or summer. In Muslim countries, most people are observing the fast, so there are fewer temptations such as luncheon meetings, daytime celebrations and offers of food from friends. Many British Muslims would prefer a daytime work shift during Ramadan so that they may break the fast with their families and attend evening prayers.

**Q: How can non-Muslim co-workers and friends help someone who is fasting?**

**A:** Employers, co-workers and teachers can help by understanding the significance of Ramadan and by showing a willingness to make minor allowances for its physical demands. Special consideration can be given to such things as requests for vacation time, the need for flexible early morning or evening work schedules and lighter homework assignments. It is also very important that Muslim workers and students be given time to attend Eid prayers at the end of Ramadan. Eid is as important to Muslims as Christmas and Yom Kippur are to Christians and Jews. A small token such as a card (there are Eid cards available from Muslim bookstores) or baked goods given to a Muslim co-worker during *Eid ul-Fitr* would also be greatly appreciated. Hospital workers should be aware that injections and oral medications might break the fast. Patients should be given the opportunity to decide whether or not their condition exempts them from fasting.

**Q: Do people normally lose weight during Ramadan?**

**A:** Some people do lose weight, but others may not. It is recommended that meals eaten during Ramadan be light, but most people can't resist sampling special sweets and foods associated with Ramadan.

**Q: What is the significance of Eid al Fitr, and how do Muslims celebrate it?**

**A:** Eid marks the completion of Ramadan, when it is compulsory on all Muslims to eat and break their fasts. It is a day of reward, and Muslims offer Eid prayers and money (*Zakat al Fitr*) to the poor in their locality, to ensure that everyone eats and celebrates at least on this day. Eid is a happy, joyous occasion and Muslims enjoy great festivities on this day. The day begins when Muslims beautify themselves by wearing new/clean clothes and perfume and go to the Mosque early in the morning for traditional Eid prayers. After this, family and friends pay visits to each other, exchanging gifts and warm wishes. It is an opportunity for a new beginning.

# Q&A ABOUT ISLAM AND BRITISH MUSLIMS

## **Q: What is Islam?**

**A:** Islam is not a new religion. It is the same religion that God revealed to all His prophets (Adam, Noah, Moses, Jesus, etc.) throughout history. Islam is both a religion and a complete way of life. Muslims follow a religion of peace, mercy and forgiveness.

## **Q: Who are Muslims and what do they believe?**

**A:** Muslims believe in One, Unique, and Incomparable God, creator of the universe. They believe in the Day of Judgement and individual accountability for actions. Muslims believe in a chain of prophets beginning with Adam and including Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Moses, David, Solomon and Jesus (peace be on them all). God's eternal message was reaffirmed and finalized by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). One becomes a Muslim by saying, "There is no deity but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God". By this declaration, the person announces faith in all of God's messengers. There are an estimated 1.2 billion Muslims worldwide. No more than 20 percent of Muslims live in the Arabic-speaking world. The country with the largest Muslim population is Indonesia.

## **Q: What is the Qur'an?**

**A:** The Qur'an is the record of the exact words revealed by God through the angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad in Arabic. It was memorised by Muhammad and then dictated to his Companions. The text of the Qur'an was cross-checked during the life of the Prophet. The 114 chapters of the Qur'an have remained unchanged through the centuries. Translations of the meaning of the Quran exist in almost all languages.

## **Q: What are the "Five Pillars" of Islam?**

**A:** The five pillars of Islam are as follows:

1. The Declaration of Faith - This consists of the two part declaration described above.
2. Prayer - Muslims perform five obligatory prayers each day. Islamic prayers are a direct link between the worshiper and God. Islam has no hierarchical authority or priesthood. A learned Muslim chosen by each congregation leads the prayers.
3. Fasting - Every year, in the Islamic lunar month of Ramadan, Muslims fast from first light until sunset. The fast is a method of self-purification.
4. Zakat - One of the most important principles of Islam is that all things belong to God and that wealth is held in trust by human beings. Zakat, or charitable giving, also "purifies" wealth by setting aside a portion for those in need. This payment is usually two and a half percent of one's capital.
5. Pilgrimage - A pilgrimage to Mecca, or Hajj, is an obligation for those who are physically or financially able.

**Q: What about the British Muslim community?**

**A:** There are an estimated 2 million Muslims in the UK. The Muslim community in Britain is made up of people from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds and national origins, including many new Muslims and Muslims of European origin. Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in this country and around the world.

**Q: What about Muslim women?**

**A:** Under Islamic law, women have always had the right to own property, receive an education and take part in community life. Men and women are to be respected equally. The Islamic rules for modest dress apply to both women and men equally – men also must fulfil minimum requirements in dressing. If a particular society oppresses women, it does so in spite of Islam, not because of it. Islam is in fact against any forms of oppression. Muslim women understand freedom in terms of inner freedom. By covering up more, a Muslim woman feels that she will not be judged by her external appearance, but her inner qualities and beauty.

**Q: What is *Jihad*?**

**A:** “Jihad” does not mean “holy war”. Literally, *jihad* means to strive, struggle and exert effort. It is a central and broad Islamic concept that includes struggle against evil inclinations within oneself, struggle to improve the quality of life in society, struggle in self-defence for the protection of oneself or country and fighting against tyranny or oppression. When it refers to war, it refers to self-defence in the context of a Muslim being prevented from practicing their religious freedoms or driven out of their homes, and this warfare is only used as a last resort.

**Q: Is suicide allowed in Islam?**

**A:** Suicide is a major sin in Islam, and those who commit it take away the beautiful gift of life that God has given us all. This is also the case in many other religions. Those who commit suicide as ‘jihad’, do so for personal or political reasons, and not for Islam – it contradicts with the Islamic faith.

**ISLAM IN BRITAIN – THE FACTS**

**Fact 1:** There are an estimated 2 million Muslims in Britain. The Muslim community in Britain is made up of people from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds and national origins.

**Fact 2:** The worldwide population of Muslims is 1.2 billion.

**Fact 3:** Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in this country and around the world.

**Fact 4:** Demographers also say that by the year 2025, one in four people on earth will be a Muslim.

# TERMS AND CONCEPTS

- Allah** Allah is the Arabic word for “God”. It is the same word Arabic-speaking Christians use when referring to God. Allah is not the “Muslim God”, but is the same God worshipped by Christians and Jews. Linguistically, the word ‘Allah’ in Arabic, cannot be pluralized, hence is preferred by Muslims to express the oneness of God.
- Fundamentalist** Muslims view the label “fundamentalist” as stereotypical and ill founded. Muslims also object to the use of terms such as “radical” and “extremist” in association to their religion. These terms lack definition and are seen as pejorative. A more neutral and objective term is “Islamic activist”. If the person in question is involved in a criminal act, name that act, not the faith of the person who commits the crime. Islam should be judged by what is in the Qur’an and Prophetic sayings, rather than extreme political activists. Being referred to as a ‘moderate’ Muslim is also incorrect, as it implies that there is also an ‘extreme’ version of Islam, where there is no place for extremism within Islam.
- Jihad** “*Jihad*” does not mean “holy war”. Literally, *jihad* means to strive, struggle and exert effort. It is a central and broad Islamic concept that includes struggle against evil inclinations within oneself, struggle to improve the quality of life in society, struggle in self-defence for the protection of oneself or country and fighting against tyranny or oppression. Another everyday example is the Islamic understanding of fighting ones whims and desires, such as excessive eating, addictions or minor but persistent wrong-doings. Hence *jihad* is more to do with establishing a well balanced and healthy life style. The equivalent of the term “holy war” in Arabic is “*harb muqaddasah*”, a term that cannot be found in the Qur’an or the Hadith, the Prophet’s sayings. There is no such thing as “holy war” in Islam, as some careless translators may imply. It is rather a loaded medieval concept that did not arise from within the Muslim community. However, because of this myth’s frequent repetition, most people in the West accept it as if it were a fact.
- Arab/Muslim** Not all Muslims are Arab, just as not all Arabs are Muslim. In fact, Arabs are a minority within the Islamic world. According to modern usage, “Arab” is a linguistic, not an ethnic, designation. An Arab can be Christian or Jewish.
- Women’s Rights** Under Islamic law, women have always had the right to own property, receive an education and take part in community life. The Islamic rules for modest dress apply to women and men equally. If a particular society oppresses women, it does so in spite of Islam, not because of it.

**Arabic Names**

Compound Muslim names, such as “Abd Al-Rahman”, which often refer to attributes of God, should be used in full on second reference. The shorter second reference, in this case, ‘Al-Rahman’ (The Beneficent) is objectionable to Muslims, as a person cannot be referred to by a divine attribute of God.

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### ----- MEDIA ADVISORY ----- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## BRITISH MUSLIMS CELEBRATE END OF RAMADAN WITH COMMUNAL PRAYERS

On **16 December 2001**,<sup>1</sup> the Muslim community in Britain will celebrate the end of the month-long fast of Ramadan with communal prayers in locations all around the country. Ramadan is the month on the Islamic lunar calendar during which Muslims abstain from food, drink and other sensual pleasures from break of dawn to sunset.

The prayers mark the beginning of the *Eid ul-Fitr*<sup>2</sup> (eed-al-fitter), or “Feast of Fast Breaking” holiday, in which Muslims exchange social visits and seek to strengthen bonds of brotherhood in the community. During this holiday, Muslims greet each other with “Eid mubarak” (eed-moo-bar-ak), meaning “Blessed Eid”. Many Muslim communities hold festive gatherings and bazaars following the prayers.

Eid prayers are held early in the morning, either in local mosques or at public venues designed to accommodate large gatherings. The exact date, time and venue for local Eid prayers can be ascertained from community representatives.

Each year, Muslims from Britain and many different countries come to the prayers in colourful dress. The prayers themselves are quite visual, with worshipers arranged in neat rows and bowing in prayer in unison. Participants exchange embraces at the conclusion of the prayers. The prayers are a wonderful opportunity for photo-journalists interested in Islam and the Muslim community.<sup>3</sup>

**Contact:** For more information on Eid celebrations, contact your local mosque or Islamic centre. If there are no known contacts in your local area, call **FAIR** on **020 7531 1516**.

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<sup>1</sup> The beginning of Islamic calendar months depend on the actual sighting of the new moon, and therefore, the start and end dates for Ramadan and the dates for Eid may vary.

<sup>2</sup> *Eid ul-Fitr* is the first of the two major Muslim holidays. The second holiday comes at the end of the *Hajj*, or pilgrimage to Mecca. Demographers say Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in this country and around the world. There are an estimated 2 million Muslims in Britain and some 1.2 billion worldwide.

<sup>3</sup> Eid prayers are a religious service, and therefore, reporters and photographers of both sexes should dress modestly. That means no shorts for men and short skirts for women. Some communities may ask female reporters and photographers to put a scarf over their hair while in the actual prayer area. Photographers should arrive early to get into position for the best shots. Photographers are also advised not to step directly in front of worshipers and to seek permission for close-up shots. Shots of shoes removed for prayer, and rear-angle shots of prostrating worshippers are considered inappropriate.

(Insert Your Local Organisation's Name and Address Here)

----- **MEDIA ADVISORY** -----  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**LOCAL MUSLIMS CELEBRATE END OF MONTH-LONG FAST  
WITH PRAYERS AND MULTICULTURAL BAZAAR**

On 16 December 2001,<sup>1</sup> the Muslim community in \_\_\_\_\_ will celebrate the end of the month-long fast of Ramadan with communal prayers and a multicultural bazaar. Ramadan is the month on the Islamic lunar calendar during which Muslims abstain from food, drink and other sensual pleasures from break of dawn to sunset.

The prayers mark the beginning of the three-day *Eid ul-Fitr* (eed-al-fitter) holiday, in which Muslims exchange social visits and seek to strengthen bonds of brotherhood in the community. During this holiday, Muslims greet each other with "Eid Mubarak" (eed-moo-bar-ak), meaning "Blessed Eid".

The multicultural bazaar will feature games for children, Islamic books and clothing, and foods from around the Muslim world.<sup>2</sup> The bazaar is free and open to the public. People of all faiths are encouraged to attend and sample the diversity of Islamic culture.

**Details:** 16 December 2001 (date may vary)  
Community to gather at \_\_\_\_ am  
Prayers to begin at \_\_\_\_ am  
Bazaar to open at \_\_\_\_ am, and will be open until \_\_\_\_ pm

Address for Prayers:

Address for Bazaar:

Each year, Muslims from Britain and many different countries come to the prayers in colourful dress. The prayers themselves are quite visual, with worshipers arranged in neat rows and bowing in prayer in unison. Participants exchange embraces at the conclusion of the prayers. The prayers are a wonderful opportunity for photo-journalists interested in Islam and the Muslim community.<sup>3</sup>

**Contact:** For more information, call \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ (not for publication), or call \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ (for publication).

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(Insert Your Local Organisation's Name and Address Here)

----- **PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT** -----  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**LOCAL MUSLIM COMMUNITY HOLDS MOSQUE OPEN EVENING**  
**"A Taste of Islam" organisers seek to increase understanding between faiths**

On \_\_\_\_\_ day \_\_\_\_ November/December 2001, the Muslim community in \_\_\_\_\_ will hold an open day/evening offering people of other faiths an introduction to Islamic culture. The free event, called "**A TASTE OF ISLAM**", will feature displays of Islamic handicrafts, books and clothing, as well as samples of foods from around the Muslim world. The open day/evening is designed to help people of all faiths gain a better understanding of the positive role that Islam can play in British society.<sup>1</sup>

**Details:** \_\_\_\_\_ day \_\_\_\_ November/December 2001  
6-9 pm

Venue:  
Address:  
Directions:

**Contact:** For more information, call \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ (not for publication), or call \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ (for publication).

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<sup>1</sup> Demographers say Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in this country and around the world. There are an estimated 2 million Muslims in Britain and some 1.2 billion worldwide.

# SAMPLE SCRIPT FOR PHONE CONVERSATIONS WITH THE MEDIA

## Speaking to a newspaper office:

**You:** "Hello ... could I have the name and direct phone number of the Food Editor (or Religion Editor, News Editor, etc.) please?"

**Operator:** "Yes the Food Editor's name is Mary Smith ... Her direct line is 7543 1234 ... Would you like me to put you through?"

**You:** "Yes, please"

**Food Editor:** "... This is Mary Smith ..."

**You:** "Yes ... My name is Anisa Abdullah ... I am a member of the London Ramadan Information Committee ... Our committee thought you might be interested in doing a story about the special foods Muslims enjoy during the Month of Ramadan ... Are you aware of what Ramadan is?"

**Food Editor:** "Yes ... I know a little about the Fast of Ramadan and might be interested in doing something on it ... Can you send me some information?"

**You:** "Yes ... I have fact sheets and background material dealing with Ramadan ... I can also put you in touch with members of the community who could provide recipes for Ramadan specialities from around the Muslim world."

**Food Editor:** "That's great ... Send me the material and I'll see what I can do."

**You:** "I'll send it out today ... or I could fax it to you if you would prefer ... I'll also call back in about a week to see what you think of the materials ..."

# STEPS NECESSARY TO HOLD A MOSQUE OPEN DAY

1. **PREPARE** the members of your local community by explaining the necessity of building a positive image of the mosque in the surrounding area. Let them know that experience of other communities has shown that a positive neighbourhood image offers many benefits. Ask for input concerning the details of when and at what time the open day/evening should be held. There are no hard and fast rules for such things.
2. **INVITE** local community leaders, clergy, law enforcement officials, activists, and government officials. Remember to invite the mayor, the local MP, the local chief police officer and members of the local authority. These people should all receive written invitations. Follow up with a personal phone call. Letters are not enough.
3. **PUBLICISE** the event by sending a well-written news release (see sample) to the local media. You may also place paid advertisements in the local newspaper. Send the news release to the religion editor, the society editor and the feature editor at the newspaper. Send a release to the news editor at the local television stations. Also send copies to news directors at the local radio stations. Send announcements to local churches.
4. **INFORM** your guests of mosque etiquette before they arrive (see "Welcome to Our Mosque" brochure). This will make them feel at ease and avoid embarrassment. Be ready to answer questions about prayer, separation of men and women and other common issues.
5. **CLEAN** the mosque. The first impression is one that will last. Make sure bathrooms are spotless. Have a mosque clean up day prior to the open day. Consider touching up areas that need painting.
6. **SET UP** a reception area where guests can be received, told about mosque etiquette and served refreshments. Have people at the door to greet and direct arriving guests. Have knowledgeable people conduct tours of the mosque. Do not leave guests alone to wander about the mosque. Make sure sisters are available to make female guests feel welcome.
7. **PROVIDE** snacks and drinks to make your guests feel welcome. Serving a variety of ethnic dishes is an excellent introduction to the diversity of our community.
8. **SELECT** literature to be given to the guests. Avoid material with a strong political message. Do not push materials on guests. Let them select what they wish to read.
9. **POST** signs at appropriate locations in the mosque to help guests find their way around. Many of them have never been to a mosque before.
10. **PRAY** that your efforts will open the hearts of your guests.

# WELCOME TO OUR MOSQUE

*We hope you enjoy your visit*

## Q: WHAT IS A MOSQUE?

**A:** A mosque is a place of worship used by Muslims. The English word “mosque” is derived from its Arabic equivalent, *masjid*, which means “place of prostration”. It is in the mosque that Muslims perform their prayers, a part of which includes placing the forehead on the floor.

## Q: HOW IS A MOSQUE USED?

**A:** Mosques play a vital role in the lives of Muslims in Britain. The primary function of the mosque is to provide a place where Muslims may perform Islam’s obligatory five daily prayers in congregation. A mosque also provides sufficient space in which to hold prayers on Fridays, the Muslim day of communal prayer, and on the two Muslim holidays, called *Eids*, or “festivals”.

## Q: IS A MOSQUE A HOLY PLACE?

**A:** A mosque is a place that is specifically dedicated as a place of prayer. However, there is nothing sacred about the building or the place itself. There is no equivalent of an altar in a mosque. A Muslim may pray on any clean surface. Muslims often pray in public places.

## Q: HOW BIG ARE MOSQUES?

**A:** In Britain, mosques vary in size from homes converted into mosques, serving small communities of worshippers, to large Islamic centres that can accommodate thousands. The London Islamic Cultural Centre near Regents Park is the largest mosque in the UK.

## Q: DO MOSQUES WELCOME VISITORS?

**A:** Mosques in Britain welcome visitors. Tours can be arranged at most mosques. It is always best to call mosque administrators before arrival. They will want to make sure your visit is enjoyable.

## Q: WHAT ARE THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF A MOSQUE?

**A:** The *musalla*, or prayer hall, in each mosque is oriented in the direction of Mecca, towards which Muslims face during prayers. In Britain, Muslim worshippers face South-East. Prayer halls are open and uncluttered to accommodate lines of worshippers who stand and bow in unison. There are no pews or chairs. Members of the congregation sit on the floor.

Because Muslim men and women form separate lines when they stand in prayers, some mosques will have a balcony reserved for the use of women. Other mosques will accommodate men and women in the same *musalla*, or they may have two separate areas for men and women.

**Q: WHAT ELSE IS IN THE PRAYER AREA?**

**A:** All mosques have some sort of *mihrab*, or niche, that indicates which wall of the mosque faces Mecca. The *mihrab* is often decorated with Arabic calligraphy. Its curved shape helps reflect the voice of the *imam*, or prayer leader, back toward the congregation. Many mosques also have a *minbar*, or pulpit, to the right of the *mihrab*. During the Friday prayer service, the *Imam* delivers a sermon from the *minbar*.

**Q: WHAT ABOUT CHILDREN IN THE PRAYER AREA?**

**A:** Children will often be present during prayers, whether participating, watching or imitating the movements of their elders. Their presence continues the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad, who loved children. The Prophet sometimes carried one of his grandchildren on his shoulder while leading the prayer and was also known to shorten the prayer if he heard a baby cry.

**Q: WHAT MIGHT I HEAR DURING MY VISIT?**

**A:** You might hear Muslims exchanging the Islamic greeting, the Arabic phrase, “*As-Salaamu ‘Alaikum*” (“peace be with you”). Muslims return this greeting by saying, “*Wa ‘Alaikum as-Salaam*” (“and with you be peace too”).

You might also hear the call to prayer. The call, or *adhan*, contains the following phrases (in Arabic):

*God is most great, God is most great. God is most great, God is most great.*

*I bear witness that there is no god but God. I bear witness that there is no god but God.*

*I bear witness that Muhammad is a messenger of God. I bear witness that Muhammad is a messenger of God.*

*Hasten to prayer, Hasten to prayer. Hasten to success, Hasten to success.*

*God is most great, God is most great. There is no god but [the One] God.*

All Muslim prayers begin with the recitation of *Al-Fatihah*, the opening chapter of the Qur’an:

*In the name of God, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful.*

*Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds.*

*The Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.*

*Ruler of the Day of Judgment.*

*Only You do we worship, Only from You do we ask for help.*

*Show us the straight path.*

*The path of those whom You have favoured, not that of those who earn Your anger, nor of those who go astray.*

## **Q: WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF THE BUILDING?**

**A:** Many mosques have a minaret, the large tower used to issue the call to prayer five times each day. In Britain, the minaret is largely decorative. Facilities to perform *wudu*, or ablutions, can be found in all mosques. Muslims wash their hands, faces and feet before prayers as a way of purifying and preparing themselves to stand before God. *Wudu* facilities range from wash basins to specially designed areas with built-in benches, floor drains and faucets.

Bookshelves are found in most mosques. They contain works of Islamic philosophy, theology and law, as well as collections of the traditions and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. Copies of the *Qur'an*, Islam's revealed text, are always available to worshippers.

Calligraphy is used to decorate nearly every mosque. Arabic quotations from the *Qur'an* invite contemplation of the revealed Word of God. Other common features found in the mosque are clocks or schedules displaying the times of the five daily prayers and large rugs or carpets covering the *musalla* floor. Many British mosques also have administrative offices.

## **Q: IS A MOSQUE USED EXCLUSIVELY FOR PRAYER?**

**A:** Though its main function is as a place of prayer, the mosque plays a variety of roles, especially in Britain. Many mosques are associated with Islamic schools and day care centres. Mosques also provide diverse services such as weekend schools, Arabic classes, Qur'anic instruction, and youth activities.

Marriages and funerals, dinners during the fasting month of *Ramadan*, and *Eid* prayers and festivities are all to be found in British mosques. They are also sites for interfaith dialogues and community activism.

Many mosques serve as recreational centres for the Muslim community and may have a games room, as well as a library and classrooms.

## **Q: DO MOSQUES HAVE SPECIAL RULES?**

**A:** Men and women should always dress conservatively when visiting a mosque, covering their arms and legs. Examples of inappropriate clothing would be shorts for men and short skirts for women.

Shoes are always left at the entrance to the prayer area so as not to soil the rugs or carpets. Shelves are usually provided to hold shoes. Women may be asked to cover their hair when visiting a mosque. Many mosques have scarves on hand for visitors to borrow, but it is better to bring a head covering in case none are available.

Visitors to mosques should behave as they would when visiting any religious institution, but they should feel free to ask questions about the mosque, its architecture, furnishings, and activities. Muslims are happy to answer questions about their religion.

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