



Monday 7th January, 2008

FAIR Deeply Disappointed By Rt Rev Dr. Michael Nazir-Ali's Damaging Remarks

FAIR is deeply disappointed by the recent remarks made by the Rt Reverend Dr. Michael Nazir-Ali on Muslim communities living in the UK^o. His views undermine the hard work of both Muslim and Christian groups who are working successfully to foster a climate of understanding and peaceful coexistence, and furthermore have the potential to amplify a climate of hatred and intolerance and weaken community relations.

Furthermore, Bishop Nazir-Ali's political opinions do not reflect the views of the vast majority of prominent Christian leaders or indeed many church going Christians of this country, and stand diametrically opposed to those of the Archbishop of Canterbury, a man of wisdom, intelligence, and exceptional scholarship. Indeed His Grace, the Rt Reverend, Dr. Rowan Williams, has called for people to treat each other with "reverence"¹. This echoes the great message of Christianity, and of Jesus Christ, a prophet beloved by both faiths, to show mercy and kindness to all humanity, a message which Bishop Nazir-Ali seems to be ignoring.

To suggest that socially excluded minorities, particularly Muslim communities, are 'no-go' areas, suggests a scenario in mainland Britain similar to that experienced in Northern Ireland and this is simply untrue. Moreover, to suggest that the religious 'other' is responsible for the erosion of Christianity echoes outmoded phobias formerly expressed when Irish Catholics and Eastern

European Jews settled in the UK many years ago. The British national character, like the teachings of Christianity, is extremely durable and far more accepting of change than some would believe.

Surprisingly the Bishop fails to list these alleged 'no-go' areas or any specific incidents there.

FAIR also urges the Editor of the Sunday Telegraph to clarify the inaccurate statement² made in the editorial that the majority opinions of the Church of England General Synod worry that large-scale immigration is "diluting the Christian nature of Britain" which is in fact a stark contrast of the survey results³ published by the newspaper.

[Ends]

Notes:

⁰ Extremism flourished as UK lost Christianity by Michael Nazir-Ali Bishop of Rochester
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2008/01/06/nislam206.xml>

¹ The world is not a warehouse to serve our greed, Archbishop tells worshippers
<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/faith/article3095435.ece?openComment=true>

² Leader Editorial of 6th January 2008: Britain has changed but its values must endure
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/main.jhtml?xml=/opinion/2008/01/06/dl0601.xml>

³ Religious membership in Britain. Melting Point - A Survey Conducted by Religious Intelligence (www.religiousintelligence.com) for The Church of England
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/graphics/2008/01/06/nislam106big.gif>

Bishop warns of no-go zones for non-Muslims
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2008/01/06/nislam106.xml>