



23 October 2003

Press Release

Forward Planning

FASTING TO REMEMBER

In the month when Muslims fast from dawn to sunset they are inviting people of different faiths and no faith to join them in a national day of FASTING TO REMEMBER, on November 6th. Together people from all kinds of backgrounds will make a shared effort to understand each other better and pool their efforts to support those in need.

This is the second national day of FASTING TO REMEMBER organised as part of Islam Awareness Week. This year the day will be supported by an information pack for schools that includes lesson plans and games. University students and community groups will be organising special events to mark the end of the fast and share the joy and blessings of the Holy Month of Ramadan with their neighbours.

During Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, Muslims go without food and drink from dawn to sunset. It's a religious obligation and a spiritual discipline meant to make them more aware of the hardships of those in need, foster concern for the well being of other people, community spirit and social harmony. By tradition in Muslim society it is a time for giving in charity.

FASTING TO REMEMBER is a way to share the experience with non-

Muslims. It emphasises the values Muslims share with their neighbours of different faiths and no faith.

"Last year we commissioned a survey by YouGov on public attitudes to Muslims. We found that most people did not associate Islam with charitable concern. To Muslims that's just extraordinary since it's the most fundamental thing we are taught as the meaning of our religion, it's what Ramadan is specifically about," says Sher Khan, National Organiser of Islam Awareness Week. "We hope this national day of fasting will make people more aware, not only of what Muslims do but of the meaning it has and lessons they learn by fasting," he added.

Funds raised by FASTING TO REMEMBER go to international, national and local charities. Everyone who is fit and able who wishes can participate in the fast and this year schools, businesses, universities, community groups and individuals all across Britain will be finding their own way to support the fast and through sponsorship and donations contribute to the charities.

Full details of the FASTING TO REMEMBER leaflet, School Pack and location of break-fast events will be available from the Press Office.

The Islam Awareness Week team will be happy to help put you in contact with local groups in your area who will be holding special events.

They can also advise on coverage of Ramadan, from what it means, how it is observed to favourite recipes for the pre fast and ending fast meals Muslims take that are a particular feature of the Holy Month.

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Notes to Editors:

1. For Media enquiries please contact the Press Officer on 07005 947 199, email: admin@iaw.org.uk . (Alternative contact number: 07092359611).
2. A list of organisations and locations arranging events for Fasting to Remember will be available from IAW. The IAW co-ordinators will also assist in putting you in contact with groups and individuals participating in the day.

3. Funds raised by Fasting to Remember will be divided between local, national and international charities. Each participating organisation will select its own local charity. The remaining money will be apportioned between the Prince's Trust, Cancer Research UK and Target 2015 projects (the Department of International Development's Initiative to half world poverty by 2015).
4. The event is co-ordinated by The Islamic Society of Britain (ISB), which is affiliated to the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB).
5. Islam Awareness Week runs from 3rd - 9th November this year.
6. This year's launch will be in the House of Commons at 10am-12pm on Monday 3rd November 2003. Invited Guest speakers include
 - Rt Hon Charles Clarke (Secretary of State for Education and Skills)
 - Damian Green (Shadow Secretary of State for Education and Skills, Cons)
 - Phil Willis (Shadow Secretary of State for Education and Skills, Lib Dem)
 - Trevor Philips (Chair, Commission for Racial Equality)
 - Representative of HRH The Prince of Wales
 - Iqbal Sacranie (Secretary General, Muslim Council of Britain)

For further details please visit the IAW website: www.iaw.org.uk