25th ANNIVERSARY BOOK

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Islam in the western society

12th – 14th October 2001

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ANNIVERSARY BOOK

International conference

12th – 14th October 2001

on

ISLAM IN THE WESTERN SOCIETY

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam (Lahore) Nederland

The Hague, December 2001
“And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. And these are they who are successful.” (HQ3:103)

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Preface

On behalf of the board and the anniversary committee I would like to congratulate you on the 25th anniversary of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam (Lahore) Nederland.

In 1976 some determined Surinam Ahmadiyya immigrants took up their responsibility as a Muslim and Ahmadi. Their devotion and sense of duty drove them to make great sacrifices to be able to found the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam (Lahore) Nederland and an own mosque. They expended considerable money and efforts on giving shape to their mission: the propagation of Islam and especially of the Ahmadiyyat.

In 1976 their primary challenge was to form a foundation for the Ahmadies here in Holland. Now, 25 years later, we stand before new challenges. The Islam has now a negative image in the West. Our Muslim brothers and sisters also have doubts sometimes; they balance between two worlds and are often in discussion with each other and with the rest of their surroundings. Thus, today, we have to participate in a dialogue on three fronts. On the one hand we have to discuss our views, position and responsibilities with our Ahmadiyya brothers and sisters. On the other hand we have to discuss with other Muslim brothers and sisters about the meaning and image of Islam. And finally we have to discuss with the rest of society about Islam and culture and the image society has of Muslims.

We took the opportunity on this 25th anniversary to adress this challenge. We did so by organizing an international conference on the 12th, 13th and 14th of October 2001 and its theme was *Islam in western society*.

The aim of this conference was to search together for possibilities to enhance integration in western society without losing our own identity. We have done this by introductions on six issues, each followed by a discussion and with a dialogue with politicians and media.

The celebration of our anniversary was a great success judging by the reactions of the national as well as the international guests. It was a success thanks to the participation of all our members and Ahmadiyya brothers and sisters in Holland and abroad and of course thanks to the great efforts of the volunteers.

We also appreciate those who have contributed to the contents of the program, especially the lecturers, members of the panels, press, politicians, Mayor Deetman, Governor Fransen, chairmen of the day, hall coordinators, imams and naib-imams, the nazam group, the actors, and the team chefs and team members. We would like to thank especially Mr. Pieter de Greef, manager of Concordia. This location appeared to be perfect for our conference.

The board and the anniversary committee would like to thank everyone very much for their efforts before, during and after the celebration of our anniversary.

We now contently look back upon the celebration of our anniversary and with this anniversary book we want to close this joyful event and look forward.

We would like to thank the external sponsors, the participants in this conference, members and sympathizers of AAI(N) and everyone who has contributed to the organization of the conference in any way. A special thank you goes out to the Anniversary committee, team chefs and all the team members.

May ALLAH bless you and your family richly

On behalf of the board of the AAI(N),

M.H. Mahawat Khan MSc MBA
President

# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam (Lahore) Nederland</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with Hadji A.M. Hassenmahomed</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with Hadja A. Ilahibaks, wife of the late president Hadji S. Ilahibaks</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with Mr. N. Sardar</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with Mrs. B.N. Abdoolrazak</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anniversary programme</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report of the Anniversary celebration</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nazamgroup</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of awarded people</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djoemah Khoetbah by Maulana K. Hydal</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening speech by M.H. Mahawat Khan MSc. MBA, president of AAIILilyn</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech from Hazrat Ameer, dr. A. Hameed</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech by the Mayor of The Hague, W.J. Deetman MA</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Session introductions</strong></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session I : Islam in a multicultural society, by A.S. Santoe</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session II : Islam, Religion and Culture, by prof. dr. H.M. Vroom</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session III : Women in Islam, by dr. W. Ahmadi</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session IV : The youth and their experience with Islam, by Maulana K. Hydal</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session V : Tolerance in Islam, by dr. N. Malik</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session VI : De essence of being a Muslim, by H. Badloe</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing speech by the Governor of the Province of South Holland,</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. J. Franssen.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam on the internet</strong></td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>List of foreign guests</strong></td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

On October 14th 2001 the Islamic organisation Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam (Lahore) Nederland celebrated its 25th anniversary. On the occasion of this event an international conference was organized on the 12th, 13th, and 14th of October. Its theme was Islam in western society.

This theme was highlighted by introductions on the following six topics:

1. Islam in a multicultural society by Mr. A. Santoe, representative of the Central Anjuman Lahore in Europe.
2. Religion and culture by professor dr. H.M. Vroom Prof. Dr. H.M. Vroom, professor in Religious Philosophy at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam and Chairman of the Council of Religions and Ideologies.
3. Women in Islam by dr. Wiratni Ahmadie, senior lecturer at the University in Bandung Indonesia. Also member of the think tank of the Ahmadiyaa Anjuman in Indonesia.
4. Youth and Islam by Maulana Kermal Hydal, missionary in Trinidad & Tobago.
5. Tolerance in Islam by dr. Noman Malik, treasurer of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam (Lahore) USA.
6. The essence of being a Muslim by Mr. H. Badloe, chairman of the Education and Information committee of Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam (Lahore) Nederland.

Besides these introductions, there was also a dialogue on Saturday morning the 13th of October. Participants in this dialogue were representatives of political parties/government, the press, and Muslims. At the conference, in which Dutch and foreign speakers participated, issues were dealt with from a global point of view as well as from a Dutch one. You will find the introductions in this book. After each introduction the audience was given the opportunity to ask questions to the lecturers and the members of the panel. All the Dutch speeches were simultaneously translated into English so the foreign guests could understand what was being said.

The celebration of the anniversary commenced on Friday with the FadjrNamaaz. After the Jumah Namaaz the names of the mosque and the hall were revealed. From the pictures you can see that the name of the mosque was revealed by Mr. Hadji A. Hassenmahomed, one of the founders and later Imam of our djamaat. The name of the hall was revealed by Mrs. Hadjia A. Ilahibaks, wife of the late Mr. Hadji S. Ilahibaks, co-founder and until his passing president of our djamaat.

On the festive Saturday evening those who had followed a course received a diploma the brothers and sisters who had made an extraordinary contribution to the Ahmadiyyah and especially to our jamaat were awarded. The latter ones were the first to receive the decoration of AAII(L)N, the Noor-e-Qiblah. At future anniversaries we again want to award brothers and sisters who have contributed to the Ahmadiyyah in an extraordinary way. The nazam group and the play brought some variety in the program. The actors have shown daily issues in a very professional manner. We continued the evening with musical accompaniment by Ronny and Friends.

On Sunday afternoon and evening the representatives of the foreign and national djamaats were given the opportunity to address the audience. The spirit and message they carried out were very heart warming and moving. This gives us extra motivation to proceed the industrious work of the Ahmadiyya movement, to propagate Islam in its pure form.

On Saturday- and Sunday morning there were business meetings in which the representatives of the foreign and national organizations participated. Agreements were entered into to join forces in the future and take some definite actions so we can propagate Islam and make clear what the Ahmadiyya movement stands for.

We have chosen the theme of Islam in western society to enhance a peaceful relation between Muslims and the western world. At the same time we wanted to start a constructive dialogue with our surroundings, especially with policy makers and the media. The results are encouraging and now we have the task and obligation to proceed with more energy. However, we are not able to do that by ourselves. We will have to co-operate with national and international djamaats and of course we also need your help and input.
History of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam (Lahore) Nederland

The AAIILN is connected with the worldwide organisation Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam Lahore, which has its centre in Lahore, Pakistan. The primary goal of this organisation is to present to the people the true meaning of Islam according to the Holy Quran and as done by our prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

In the seventies a stream of people migrated from Surinam to Holland and there was need for an Ahmadiyya Jamaat as in Surinam and some people who already had been active in Ahmadiyya jamaats in Surinam joined forces together.

On May 2nd 1976 the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam Nederland was formed in The Hague by Mr. N. Sardar, Mr. A. Hoeseni, Mr. Hadji A.M. Hassenmahomed and Mr. S. Ilahibaks. In October 1976 this was officially ratified in the presence of the notary-public. The first board members were Mr. N. Sardar, Mr. S. Ilahibaks, Mr. M.S. Dostmohamed, Mr. R. Garib, Mr. F.M.R. Abдоelrazak, Mr. A.M. Hassenmahomed, Mr. A. Hoeseni, Mr. A.G. Hassanmohamed and Mr. S. Badoella.

In January 1977, relatively short after the formation of the Jamaat, the board was able to purchase a three-storied building on the Paul Krugerlaan in The Hague. The following people guaranteed for the payment of the building by giving their houses as collateral: Mr. N. Sardar, Mr. A. Hoeseni, Mr. Hadji A.M. Hassenmohamed, Mr. S. Ilahibaks (the initiators), Mrs. B. Abdoelrazak, Mr. J. Abdoelrazak, Mr. L. Gulzar and Mr. Hadji R. Garib.

It took nine months to convert the first floor into a mosque and the members did this themselves.

The highlight came on November 12th 1977 when finally, after months of hard work, the mosque was officially used. The opening was done by Hazrat dr. Saeed Ahmad Khan, vice-president of A.AIILN and President of Foreign Missions, in the presence of members and other domestic and foreign guests. On this occasion, an amount of 44,000 Dutch guilders was raised, after a gesture by the vice president of AAIILN, so the debt could be partly paid off.

In 1978 the jamaat purchased another building and this one is situated on the Loosduinenkade 200, also in The Hague. Later a piece of the neighbour’s garden was bought so the two buildings could be linked together in an L-form. Here the Al Qiblatain hall and kitchen are housed and here lectures, discussion evenings and other religious meetings are held.

The first period is characterised by very hard work of the board members and other members of the Jamaat. Imams as Maulana Dr. G.A. Bashir, Maulana F. Ramdjan and Hadji A.M. Hassenmahomed have helped the jamaat enormously in propagating the Islam.

The jamaat has organised many trips to places in Holland as well as abroad. Trips to other countries were always linked to meeting fellow Muslim brothers and sisters. Throughout the years many foreign guests have also visited our jamaat and they have often contributed to the major success of the jamaat. Some of these guests were Hazrat Dr. Saeed Ahmad Khan, L. Choudry and other Ahmadies from England and other countries. Some of them have visited us more than once in the past 25 years.

Highlights of these international meetings were the Salana Jalsas held in the centre of Lahore. In the 66th meeting (25th – 28th of December 1980), whereby also the beginning of the 15th century A.H. was celebrated, even 10 members of AAIILN took part. Recently, however, the meetings have no been attended anymore.

To participate more in social, cultural and (inter) religious activities the board sought co-operation with Foundation Confederation “Eekta”. In the first years there was very close co-operation. However, it has narrowed down partly because of the changed government policy where migrant organisations are concerned and partly because of the mature participation of members in the Dutch society.

To be able to manage the Ahmadiyya affairs throughout the country in a better way, a Federation was formed by the Ahmadiyya jamaats from The Hague, Utrecht, Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Arnhem. This federation is called “Federation Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam in the Netherlands”.

In June 1980 a new board took office in the AAIILN and the jamaat went through a period of positive developments. The number of members grew to over 1,200, where as there were only 40 members when the jamaat was formed.
Not only were there sacrifices made to the own mosque and jamaat, but also to other jamaats as we can see from the contributions to Lahore, London, Berlin, Surinam (for example the orphanage of SIV). Many members also took part in courses of Islam and in women and youth activities. There was also much Tableik work done: the publication of the monthly magazine Isha’at Ul Islam. The celebration of the 5th anniversary in June 1981 was a success in which many national and international guests took part.

At the General Meeting for Members on April 10th 1983 a new board was appointed and Mr. S. Ilahibaks became president. In this period much work was done. Some details: the reconstruction of the building, the purchase of extra equipment for the printer office and the success of the courses. There were courses given for children three times a week. Trips were organised to amusement parks and to Luxembourg. Donations were made to the jamaats in London, Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Surinam. The number of members increased and there was active participation in school and library activities and in Qurbani. There were also publications in magazines from Surinam welfare organisations. The jamaat kept close contact with foreign jamaats as can be shown by the many visits from London, Indonesia, Pakistan (Dr. Saeed Ahmad Khan visited us in 1982), Kashmir, Fiji (the visit of Maulana Sher Mohamed in 1984), Surinam. In 1983 four members of AAIIN participated in the Salana Jalsa. For a short period of time Zohar and Isha namaaz were read in the mosque.

Differences of opinion led in 1985 to a division in the once thriving jamaat. A new jamaat was formed which is now known as Stichting Ahmadiyya Isha’at-I-Islam.

In June 1987 a new board was appointed and Mr. S. Ilahibaks became president. The other board members were: A.B.A. Albux, K. Becham, M.R. Nurmohamed, M.R. Nasrullah, Z. Rodjan, M. Mohamedhoesain, A.D. Hassenmohamed, J. Muradin, O. Albux and M. Gariib. Hadji S. Ramdjan was Imam in that period, assisted by Hadji Hassanmahomed. For health reasons Hadji Ramdjan withdrew and Hadji Hassanmahomed became Imam. All the work continued, however, the division had left its marks and there was less spirit and commitment.

1988 was a year of reflection. Some prominent members, like Imam S. Ramdjan, pass away. The national and international co-operation continued; our jamaat contributed much to the re-building of the mosques in Berlin, Amsterdam and Utrecht, members participated in the conferences of Ohio (USA) in 1987 and Berlin in 1991, and guests from Pakistan and USA visited us.

At the General Meeting for Members on November 18th 1990 it was decided to change the name of the jamaat into Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam (Lahore) Nederland.

At the General Meeting for Members of May 1991 a new board was appointed, presided by Mr. S. Ilahibaks. During this session Mr. Ilahibaks became seriously ill and passed away. From October 1992 the board consisted of K. Bechan (president), A.B.A. Albux (secretary and temporarily treasurer), J. Muradin, R.N. Hasil, M. Becham, M.R. Nurmohamed and M.R. Nasrullah. The board did the necessary work but travelled slowly. The number of registered members fell down to 265 from which only a small part fulfilled its financial obligations. This led to a huge arrears in financial contribution. There was also the duwa issue: whether to read duwa after salaat with your hands raised or not.

After the General Meeting for Members of February 1996 an election had to be held while there were two lists with candidates. The list of Mr. K. Bechan was approved. Other board members were A.B.A. Albux, R.M. Ilahibaks, J. Muradin, A.R. Boedhoe, H. Muradin and I. Nohar. During this period the jamaat also left the Federation of the Ahmadiyya Anjumans Isha’at Islam (FAAI) because of disagreements.

The prior situation did not change and the jamaat eventually found itself in a crisis situation. There was not much contact anymore with other national and international jamaats.

At the General Meeting for Members on June 27th 1999 a new board was appointed and Mr. H. Mahawat Khan became president. The other board members were R. Mohammedamin (secretary), S. Mohamedhoesain (treasurer), M.A. Mahawat Khan (2nd secretary), N. Mohamedhoesain (vice-president), F. Rodjan (2nd treasurer) and H. Muradin. In 2000 some changes took place. Mr. N. Mohamedhoesain stepped down because his study and other activities took much time. Mr. R.M. Ilahibaks and Mr. A.R. Boedhoe became board members. Mr. R.M. Ilahibaks took the job of treasurer from Mr. S. Mohamedhoesain because his study also took much of his time. For personal reasons Mr. R. Mohammedamin requests to switch places with Mr. M.A. Mahawat Khan and the latter thus became secretary.

Priorities of the new board were to restore the faith of the members of the jamaat and to enhance active participation. The objectives were: maximum involvement, participation and openness. This also changed the way of managing the jamaat. Furthermore, co-operation with other national and international jamaats
was sought and the jamaat joined the Federation again. The enthusiasm for the latter point declined unfortunately because of the conduct and policy of the executive committee of the Federation. We are now seeking co-operation with other willing jamaats. The relations with international jamaats have much improved which was confirmed at the conference in Ohio (USA) in August 2001 and at our own conference. Meanwhile there has been an increase of liquid assets. The interior of the mosque has been entirely renovated and an extra prayer room has been created on the second floor. The debt for renovating the mosque on the outside has been paid off. Involvement of members has increased as can be seen from the participation in jalsas, lectures, classes, trips and jumah salaat. The number of members has increased to 330 and there is now more willingness to pay financial contribution. The highlight of this period has been the international conference on the occasion of our 25th anniversary.

Mohamed Mahawat Khan MA
Hadji Hassenmahomed was born on the 12th of December 1915 in Saramacca, Surinam. His father, Deedar Ali Hassenmahomed, better known as Sain Baba, was the founder of Qamrul Islam on the Leysweg in the district Suriname. He went to people’s homes to teach them about Islam. Hadji followed his father's footsteps and became president of the jamaat his father had founded and stayed president for 15 years. According to him no one has ever been president of a jamaat that long. Mr. Samsoedien Ilahibaks then became president and Hadji became Imam until 1974 when he migrated to Holland. Together they were responsible for the thriving of Qamrul Islam.

In Holland Hadji stayed with his daughter and found a job as a janitor. There was no fixed address here to read the salaat. Djumah Salaat was read in the home of Maulana Bashir Ahmad Minto and later in the home of Mr. Sies Ramdhan. Meanwhile more Muslims had settled in Holland and among them also Mr. S. Ilahibaks. He, Hadji and a few others decided to buy a premises that would serve as praying room. The building on the Paul Krugerlaan was bought for fl. 72,000. To be able to purchase this building Mr. S. Ilahibaks, Hadji Hassenmahomed, Mr. N. Sardar, Mrs. B. Abdoolrazak, Mr. L. Gulzar, Mrs. S. Gulzar and Mr. J. Abdoolrazak gave their houses as collateral. Some time later the building on the Loosduinsekeade was purchased. Hadji went back to Surinam to collect money so the mortgage could be paid off as soon as possible. He collected 3000 guilders, which was a big amount in those days. Within a couple of years the mortgage was paid off and everyone got their title deed back. So here in Holland Hadji has also won his spurs. He was Imam for many years. Now he enjoys his well-earned rest and looks back with content. Much has changed, in a positive as well as in a negative way. The division from years ago still hurts but he also sees progress and has high hopes that the jamaat will be alright. Let us not forget what our objective is: spreading the Islam. Finally, he hopes that if Allah is willing this jamaat will someday have a premises that is big enough for everybody to read the Idul Fitr Salaaat together. May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon all Muslims.

Tuwieb Hassenmahomed

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Interview with Hadja Annie Ilahibaks, wife of the late president Hadji Samsoedien Ilahibaks

Hadji S. Ilahibaks joined his uncles in jamaat activities in Paranam, Surinam at the young age of 18. He was also member of the board and after he got married in 1955 he remained active. I had my hands full on taking care of the family and therefore was not an active member of the jamaat yet. In 1967 we moved to Uitvlucht. There Hadji Hassenmahomed approached my husband to contribute in jamaat work, because Qamrul Islam needed to be renovated. There was need for money and spare time had to be sacrificed. Without hesitating my husband joined Hadji Hassenmahomed in this rather difficult task. They went to people’s houses to collect money and it was not easy to convince people that the mosque needed to be renovated and ask them for a donation. It sometimes happened that at the end of a day they came home with only five guilders. However, nothing and no one could stop these two men from their mission. The renovation took three years. My husband spent all his spare time on that task. In the meantime I took care of the household and the children. My mother lived with us and she helped me with the housekeeping. The children were aware that their father was away most of the time. Everyone accepted that because we knew he did something important. In 1974 we migrated to Holland. In Holland my husband, Hadji Hassenmahomed, Mr. Hoeseni and Mr. Sardar joined forces in founding a jamaat while there was no place where the salaat could...
be read. Here he again went to people’s homes to collect money for building a mosque. Our goals were the same. There were no misunderstandings about why he spent so much time on jamaat work.

In the late 80’s he became ill and couldn’t do as much work anymore for the jamaat. This was very difficult for him to accept. After his death in 1993 I visited the mosque for which my husband had done so much with pain in my heart. After coming to terms with my sorrows as much as possible, my enthusiasm grew again. I am also proud of everything in the jamaat that reminds me of my husband. In short, I am proud of my husband. He could not have done this without the help of the other board members and their families.

They have all done a great job.

Farzia Iahibaks

**Interview with Mr. Noor Sardar:**

Mr. Noor Sardar is vice-president of Stichting AII on the Kepplerstraat. He has been active in jamaat work for a long time now. In 1967 he was an active board member of Imadad Islam, a division of SIV (Surinam) and he became board member of SIV in 1969. After that he migrated to Holland. Here he again actively participated in our Islamic community and in 1974 he joined the Islamische Genootschap Nederland (IGN).

This organization was at that time the only Lahore Ahmadiyya jamaat in The Hague. In 1975 a minority within IGN did not want to use the name Ahmadiyya. A meeting was called because Mr. Sardar was opposed to this. Many meetings were held, unfortunately without any results.

Finally an election was called and the majority of the voters chose for a board that was opposed to using the name Ahmadiyya. On May 2nd 1976 the Ahmadiyya Isha’at Islam Nederland (AAIIN) was founded by Mr. N. Sardar, Mr. A. Hoeseni, Hadji A.M. Hassenmahomed and Mr. S. Iahibaks. The first board members were Mr. N. Sardar (voorzitter), Mr. S. Iahibaks, Hadji A.M. Hassenmahomed, Mr. M.S. Dostmohammed, Mr. R. Garib, Mr. F.M.R. Abdelrazak, Mr. A. Hoeseni, Mr. A.G. Hassenmahomed, Mr. S. Badoella.

In January of 1977 a building was purchased on the Paul Krugerlaan. The building needed to be renovated and on November 12th 1977 the mosque was officially opened by Hazrat Dr. Saeed Ahmad Khan, vice president AAIIN, President Foreign Missions. In 1978 the jamaat purchased another building on the Loosduinse kade and linked that to the building on the Paul Krugerlaan so the mosque became larger. The number of members had meanwhile increased from 40 to 1200. In 1979 a library was opened where there were also classes given by a group of very active youngsters. Two years after the opening it was possible give classes over 65 students. There were also classes given on “Religion of Islam” and this jamaat was the first to grant diplomas. We also had a very active women committee. Until 1980 we had achieved many things: the mortgage on the mosque was paid off, we had purchased another building (on the Loosduinse kade), we had started courses on Islam, we had a library (thanks to the Central Anjuman in Lahore who donated books to us), we had an active women- and youth committee, we had our own cemetery and even our own printing and publishing division.

In 1980 Mr. Sardar went to Pakistan to ask the Central Anjuman permission to organize a conference on the occasion of the jamaat’s 5th anniversary. He was granted permission and in June 1981 a conference was held.

Meanwhile the jamaats in Holland founded a federation: Federatie Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam Nederland.

During the conference some dissensions occurred and for the sake of peace in the jamaat Mr. Sardar decided to step down. There was an election called and Mr. S. Iahibaks was elected as president. A period of disagreements started which eventually led to a separation in the jamaat. Part of the separated group is now known as Stichting Ahmadiyya Isha’at Islam (SAII) which is located on the Kepplerstraat in The Hague.
Mr. Sardar says it was a very difficult period for him as he was one of the founders of AAIJ(L)N. He helped in making the jamaat a thriving organization but unfortunately there were too many dissensions. He is very happy that the AAIJ(L)N is now managed by a hard working board which will make sure it will thrive again. He also indicates that he would never have left if there had not been any disagreements. He will never forget the good times he had with our jamaat. At last he says Stichting will always lend assistance to the AAIJ(L)N.

Nancy Rahman

Mrs. Basiroen Nisha Abdoelrazak was born on the 7th of January 1931 in Saramacca, Surinam. She comes from a family of seven children. Because the mosque in Saramacca was too far from her house, she could not participate in its activities. She got married when she was 21 years old and had 5 children. Her family was not well off and that was also a limitation to visit the mosque. After her divorce she started to spend much time with her sister Annie Ilahibaks- Abdoelrazak and her now late husband Samsoedin Ilahibaks. That is how she became involved in the activities of Qamrul Islam on the Leysweg. She was a qualified seamstress and worked as a housekeeper. That is how she raised her five children. In 1973 she migrated to Holland with four of her children because of the bad situation in Surinam. She left her son with her sister and brother in law because he had to graduate.

It was very difficult for her to find a house here in Holland. Thanks to her younger brother, who already lived here, she was able to find an apartment. After she found a job she bought her own house. When her sister’s husband S. Ilahibaks, Hadjii A. M. Hassenmahomed and Mr. N. Sardar came up with the idea of founding a jamaat, she was one of the people who gave their house as collateral so a premises could be purchased. She never thought about what the consequences would be for her and her children if the mortgage could not be paid off. “The most important thing to me was that a mosque was going to be built where all of us could read the salaat together. I worked day and night to be able to pay of my own mortgage and that of the mosque. And don’t forget I had 5 children to raise”.

The mortgage of the mosque was paid off and everyone got their title deeds back. Some time later the building on the Loosduinse kade was bought. Not everyone agreed initially but finally it went through. We also bought a piece of garden and eventually we had a big mosque with two extra storeys. She proudly looks back and she is glad she was able to help. Look what you can achieve if you are sincere and there is unity among everyone. We may be proud of our mosque: we have a space for woezoe, a hall and upstairs also a space for reading salaat and a library. Despite many setbacks this mosque remained blessed. Just look at the number of people that visit the mosque. What she would like the most is for more young people to contribute to the maintenance of the mosque and the continued existence of this Anjuman.

Tzalieh Hassenmahomed

## FRIDAY 12th OCTOBER 2001

### MORNING PROGRAMME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>06:30 – 07:00 hr.</td>
<td>Salaat Fadjr / Recitation of the Holy Quran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07:30 hr.</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(rest of the morning off)</td>
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### NOON PROGRAMME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12:30 – 13:45 hr.</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:45 – 14:00 hr.</td>
<td>Opening speech by Mr. M.H. Mahawat Khan MSc MBA, president of AAII(L)N</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:00 – 15:00 hr.</td>
<td>Salaat Jumah</td>
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<tr>
<td>15:00 – 15:30 hr.</td>
<td>Unveiling of the plaques with the names of the Mosque and the Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:30 – 16:30 hr.</td>
<td>Informal meeting with the foreign guest members and other jamaats</td>
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### EVENING PROGRAMME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17:30 – 19:00 hr.</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19:00 – 19:15 hr.</td>
<td>Salaat Magrib</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19:30 – 20:10 hr.</td>
<td>Official opening of the conference by Mr. M.H. Mahawat Khan MSc MBA, president of AAII(L)N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20:10 – 20:30 hr.</td>
<td>Message from dr. Hazrat Ashgar Hameed through Mr. A.S. Santoe</td>
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<tr>
<td>20:30 – 20:45 hr.</td>
<td>Speech by the Mayor of The Hague, Mr. W.J. Deetman, MA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20:45 – 21:45 hr.</td>
<td>Session 1: Islam in a multicultural society by Mr. A.S. Santoe, European Representative of Central Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21:45 – 22:15 hr.</td>
<td>Break / Salaat Isha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22:15 – 23:15 hr.</td>
<td>Session 2: Religion and Culture by Prof. Dr. H.M. Vroom, professor in Religious Philosophy at the Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam and Chairman of the Council of Religions and Ideologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23:15 – 23:30 hr.</td>
<td>Closing / duwa</td>
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## SATURDAY 13th of OCTOBER 2001

### MORNING PROGRAMME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>06:30 hr.</td>
<td>Salaat Fadjr / Recitation of the Holy Quran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07:30 hr.</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09:00 – 10:30 hr.</td>
<td>Business meeting 1: Board officials and delegation leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 – 12:30 hr.</td>
<td>A dialogue between policymakers, media and Muslims</td>
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Participants in the discussion: Members of Parliament of several political parties, the alderman for Finance and Culture of The Hague, high officials, representatives from the media.

### NOON PROGRAMME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12:30 – 13:30 hr.</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:45 – 14:00 hr.</td>
<td>Salaat Zohar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:10 – 14:20 hr.</td>
<td>Opening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:20 – 14:30 hr.</td>
<td>Nazam</td>
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</table>
14:30 – 15:30 hr.  Session 3: Women in Islam  
Dr. W. Ahmadi from Indonesia, member of the think tank of AAI Indonesia

15:30 – 15:45 hr.  Break

15:45 – 16:45 hr.  Session 4: The youth and their experience with Islam  
Maulana K. Hydal from Trinidad, Missionary

16:45 – 16:55 hr.  Summary / duwa

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**EVENING PROGRAMME**  
*Location: Concordia Conference Hall*

19:00 – 19:15 hr.  Salaat Magrieb

19:30 – 20:15 hr.  Graduation ceremonies

20:15 – 20:45 hr.  Decoration ceremony

20:45 – 21:00 hr.  Break / Salaat Isha

21:00 – 24:00 hr.  Dinner / Informal gathering with Qawali music and theatrical performance

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**SUNDAY 14th of OCTOBER 2001**

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**MORNING PROGRAMME**  
*Location: Concordia Conference Hall*

06:30 hr.  Salaat Fajr / Recitation of the Holy Quran

08:00 hr.  Breakfast

10:00 – 12:00 hr.  Business meeting 2: Board officials and delegation leaders

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**NOON PROGRAMME**  
*Location: Concordia Conference Hall*

12:00 – 13:30 hr.  Lunch

13:45 – 14:00 hr.  Salaat Zohar

14:10 – 14:20 hr.  Opening

14:20 – 14:30 hr.  Nazam

14:30 – 15:30 hr.  Session 5: Islam, a tolerant religion  
Dr. N. Malik from Columbus, USA, Treasurer AAI USA

15:30 – 15:45 hr.  Break

15:45 – 16:45 hr.  Session 6: The essence of being Muslim  
Mr. H.F. Badloe, chairman of the Education and Information Committee of AAI(L)N

16:45 – 17:00 hr.  Closing speech by the Governor of the Province of South-Holland,  
Mr. J. Franssen

17:00 – 17:15 hr.  Break

17:15 – 18:45 hr.  Speeches by foreign delegation leaders

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**EVENING PROGRAMME (Reception)**  
*Location: Concordia Conference Hall*

18:50 – 19:05 hr.  Salaat Magrib

19:05 – 20:00 hr.  Dinner

20:00 – 21:00 hr.  Short speeches by jamaats from Holland

21:00 – 21:30 hr.  Final remark and closing by the president of AAI(L)N

21:30 – 21:45 hr.  Break / Salaat Isha

21:45 – 22:30 hr.  Informal gathering
Preparations
To support the board of the djamaat, an anniversary committee was established with as its task to make all the necessary preparations for a smooth proceeding of the conference. This committee was assisted by a number of subcommittees. During nine months all the members were in close consultation with each other. At one point the subcommittees were dissolved and a small group went on with the complete board and completed the work. These efforts finally resulted in an international conference; one which had never been organized before by members of the Ahmadiyya movement. The theme of the conference appeared to be a world issue after the events of the 11th of September.

Friday 12th October 2001
On Friday at 06.30 am the Fadjr salah, lead by the imam of AAII(L)N, Hadij N.L.A. Nanhaykhan, was read together in the mosque at the Paul Krugerlaan. Then a short recitation from the Quran followed. This was the beginning of the celebration of our anniversary and this short ceremony was round off with breakfast. The guests had the rest of the morning off, while the hosts went on with further preparations. At 12.30 pm lunch was served and after that the president of AAII(L)N Mr. Hikmat Mahawat Khan MSc MBA held a welcoming speech. Then the Djoemah salah was read together and Maulana Kemal Hydal gave an excellent khutbah.

Years ago, the jamaat chose a name for the mosque and hall, namely Al Qiblatain. However, the name was never officially revealed. The current board feels obligated to complete the work that was initiated by our predecessors as an expression of gratitude for their hard work. That is why on this occasion the name of the mosque at the Paul Krugerlaan and the name of the hall at the Loosduinsekade were revealed. Mr. Hadij A. Hassenrahmed, one of the founders of the jamaat and until recently imam, was asked to reveal the name of the mosque.

Hadij A.M. Hassenmahomed reveals de name of the mosque

Mrs. Hadija A. Ilahibaks, wife of the late Mr. Hadij S. Ilahibaks, who was also one of the founders and president of the jamaat until his passing away, had the honour of revealing the name of the hall.
Before the revealing of the names, the president held a short speech about the merits of these two gentlemen. May Allah bless them both handsomely.

The evening program started at 5.30 pm with dinner, followed by the Maghrib salaat. At 7.30 pm the conference was officially opened by the president of AAI(1)N.

Sinds the Pakistan delegation had not been able to attend the conference because of the situation in the world, Mr. A.S. Santoe, representative of Lahore...
in Europe, read out the message of the Ameer Dr. Hazrat Ashgar Hameed. The nazam group brought some variety during the evening with two nazams. One would not think the group consisted of amateurs; the four members were trained by ustad Haroen Badloe to be true professionals.

The nazam group: Zulaina Mohamed Hoesein, Ria Dhaurie, Nazreen Ilabak-Ghaubrali and Fariza Badloe

One of the highlights of this evening was certainly the speech held by the Mayor of The Hague, Mr. W. Deetman. Because of what he said and his spontaneity we should be proud to be living in the Hague.

Speech by the Mayor of The Hague, Mr. W. Deetman
The first session, Islam in a multicultural society, was introduced by Mr. A.S. Santoe in a very clear and captivating manner.

After his introduction a discussion followed and the way how the chairman of the evening, Mr. F. Nasrullah MSc, as well as the members of the panel further went into this discussion only showed how much we are daily confronted with this issue. The same can be said about the second session Religion and Culture, introduced by prof. dr. H.M.Vroom. We could not have asked for a better person to talk about this issue. The result of this session was the recognition to what extent religion and culture are interwoven and how great the risk is of cultural influences getting the upper hand.

Saturday 13th October 2001
On the second day we also started with the Fadjr salat and a Quran recitation followed by breakfast. At nine o’clock there was a business meeting, in which the representatives of the djamaats took part, lead by the host Mr. Hikmat Mahawat Khan. During this meeting it again became very clear how necessary it is that we join forces and how intensive communication can prevent misunderstandings. The needs of the
Ahmadiyya Movement and how to deal with those were listed. The absence of the Lahore delegation was much regretted.

Representatives of the jamaats, participating in the business meeting lead by the host Mr. Hikmat Mahawat Khan

The dialogue about image, perception and policy, in which took part representatives of the press and of political parties, the alderman for Culture and Finance of the Hague, and Muslims, was a striking highlight of this conference. This discussion, in which propositions were put forward by the discussion leaders and on which the participants had to comment, was lead by Mr. Hikmat Mahawat Khan and Mr. Naushad Boedhoe MA. Both gentlemen performed their task well and the result was a continuous dialogue.

The dialogue about image and policy with Muslims, representatives of the press and the political parties and the alderman for Culture and Finance of The Hague
After lunch and Zohar salaat we continued the afternoon with a performance by our now famous nazamgroup. Then the third session followed: Women in Islam, introduced by Mrs. Dr. W. Ahmadi from Indonesia. This is an item in Islam of which there are many misunderstandings.

Dr. Ahmadi showed us that the Holy Quran is very clear about the position of women in Islam and that if we interpret the Quran rightly, there will be no misunderstandings.

From the discussion that followed afterwards it became clear that misunderstandings are usually caused by cultural influences.

Mrs. Dr. W. Ahmadi introduces the third session

The fourth session, Youth in Islam, introduced by Maulana Kemal Hydal, appeared to be a bull's-eye. From the way he discussed this issue it became clear that he is very competent in the topic of youth and Islam. The youth got much inspired by his words and many of them made a note of the Maulana's e-mail address so they can have further discussions with him. Mr. Mohamed Mahawat Khan MA presided the afternoon sessions in a professional manner. The evening was one of festivities with musical accompaniment by a Qawali band.

An impression of the audience during the sessions
Mr. Mohamed Mahawat Khan (left) presided the afternoon sessions. Next to him the panel: Mrs. F. Moenne and Mrs. S. Malik.

Maulana K. Hydal introduces the fourth session.

There were also certificates presented to those who had passed the exams of the courses given by Mr. H. Badloe and Mr. Hadji M.H. Toerab. After both gentlemen spoke some words to their students the president presented them their awards.

Mr. H. Badloe and his students.

Hadj M. H. Toerab (middle) with his students.
The highlight of the evening was the awarding of nine people. The board decided to award those who have made an extraordinary contribution to the jamaat with a medal and an award. The name of the decoration is, appropriately, **Noor-e-Qiblah**.

After careful consideration the board decided to award the following people: Mr. Hadji A.Hassanmahomed, Mr. Hadji S.Ilahibaks (posthumous), Mr. Z.Rodjan, Mr. Hadji Ataollah (posthumous), Mrs. B. Abdoolrazak, Mr. Hadji B.Jaggoe, Mrs. S. Malik, Mr. R.Pierkhan and Mr. A.S.Santoe. May Allah bless them richly for the work they do and have done for the Ahmadiyyat and especially for the jamaat.

The cream of the crop was the play directed by the ladies Maureen Mahawat Khan-Ilahibaks and Farzia Ilahibaks. It was unique that through sketches issues from every day life of a Muslim were highlighted. The first act was about how non-Muslims react to Muslims who vast. The second act was about the well known generation gap in a family. It became clear that we have many talented people in our jamaat.
Sunday 14th October 2001

Like the two days before we started with the Fadir salaat and Quran recitation at 06.30 am, followed by breakfast. At nine o'clock there was another business meeting. After listing the needs of the Ahmadiyyat and possible solutions, attention was paid to priorities. You will find the resolutions in a document that will be send to all jamaat. Important to mention is that Mr. Hikmat Mahawat Khan and Mr. Mohamed Mahawat Khan have been appointed by the participants of the meeting to manage the already started projects.
After lunch and the Zohar salaat we continued the program with session number five, Tolerance in Islam, introduced by dr. Noman Malik from Ohio (USA). When we compiled the program we did not know how appropriate this topic would appear to be. We did know that Mr. Malik was the right person to discuss this topic and that became again clear after hearing the many reactions during the discussion.

The last session, The essence of being a Muslim, was introduced by Mr. Haroen Badloe. He summarized the previous five sessions in his usual captivating manner and his introduction also triggered many reactions during the discussion.
After the sessions the conference was officially closed by the Governor of the Province of South Holland Mr. J. Franssen. He accepted our invitation with pleasure because he says understanding each other begins with being together. He also emphasized the importance of having a dialogue with your surroundings. The afternoon was presided by Mr. Khan Jahier LL.M. MA, who performed his task very well.

The Governor of the Province of South Holland Mr. J. Franssen officially closed the conference.

Mr. Khan Jahier LL.M. MA (left) presided the afternoon sessions with next to him the members of the panel: Maulana K. Hydal and Dr. Muhammad Ahmad.

After the Magrieb salaat, followed by diner, the representatives of all jamaats had the opportunity to say some words to those present. Everyone spoke highly of the organization of the conference, the topics which were discussed and the hospitality. Never before had there been such a conference.
Sister Sameena Malik took this opportunity to tell us about the projects of the jamaat of Ohio and called upon everyone to financially support the missionary- and translating work. To conclude, the president of AAIILN thanked everyone who contributed in any way to the success of the conference. A special thank you went to his fellow board members, members of the anniversary committee, the team chefs and team workers. Together we have organized something that was very much appreciated by our national as well as our international guests.

Alhamdolillah!

Haroen A. Ghauharali
Chairman of the anniversary committee

Supported by the board members I decided to coach this group. As usual there were many enthusiastic candidates of which only eight turned up for the rehearsals. After a short period of practice, the group was asked to perform at the Eid gathering at the beginning of the year. It wasn’t a success. The group wasn’t ready and did not blend enough. This didn’t prevent us to continue. We had to work hard and had about nine months up to the conference. A long the way only four members remained in the group. These four ladies were determined to perform well and do their utmost in the way of Allah.

They are: Ria Dhauri, Fatiza Badloe, Suleima Mohammed Hoesein, Nazreen Ilahibaks – Ghauharali. Of course there were ups and downs, but with Allah’s help we were ready for the conference.

The first performance proved that the ladies did their best. The audience praised them and enjoyed the nazams. During the conference the nazams were a delight for our ears. Their Moslima way of dressing was also appreciated. In an impulse I decided to name them "The Ahmadootjes". Although I said this in a jest, many picked it up and the group became popular under this name.

The nazams were carefully chosen and all of them contributed to the high level of the conference. The names of the Nazams:
1. Tareef us Goda kee djiesni djahan benaja.
2. Ahارد moersal faghri do aalam.
3. Har dard kee dawah hai salli Allah Mohammad.
4. Jo ghaak me milay usse miltay hay aashna.
5. Islaam se na bhaago raahi hoda yeehe hai.
6. Lab pe aati hai doowah banki tamanna merce.

We do hope that they will carry on so we can keep on enjoying their nazams for a long time. Alhamdo lillah, who has made this possible.

Haroen Badloe.
As it seems once a year our non-Muslim co-workers pay some interest to Islam. Most of the time this happens when you tell them that you are fasting. Then you get many questions. Many Muslim people recognize this and find it rather irritating. In this play the writer deals with this issue from a light-hearted, comic but also cynical point of view.

The 3 non-Muslim colleagues (played by Rashaad, Twalieb and Farzia) of Fatima (played by Maureen) asks her many questions about the Islam and Fatima tries to eliminate the prejudices and misunderstandings. The play is a good example of how to behave and what to say without having to defend yourself. During the play the word “prejudice” is used very often to stress the fact that non-Muslims are prejudiced against Muslims and vice versa.

This is a story about a family. Father and mother Shaik (Twalieb and Maureen) are trying to raise their children according to the Islam. Their daughter and son (played by Farzia and Rashaad) are both adolescents and thus opposed to everything their parents say. This is an issue everyone can identify with (and this was clearly shown from the reaction of the audience). The play is also written from a light-hearted, comic and cynical point of view.

After every discussion between the parents and their children, the writer has consciously shown a compromise between them. The father is more strict where as the mother tries to compromise. Taking good care of the environment is something to which Muslims do not pay much attention. This is also stressed in this play; a verse from the Quran is recited to show that it is not just a western fancy.

Again, the word “prejudice” is often used.

Aim of awarding

The AAII(L)N would like to express her appreciation and gratitude to those Ahmady brothers and sisters who have made an extraordinary contribution to the Islam, the Ahmadiyyat and to the jamaat. This will be done by awarding them with the:

Noer – e – Qiblah.

Some of the criteria people have to meet are:

- They have to have made outstanding efforts to propagate the Islam and the Ahmadiyyat: tableikh, imam, writer, translator, national or international manager.
- They have to have made outstanding efforts for the well-being of the jamaat: founding, managing, donation, general support, extraordinary commitment.
- They have to have put up extraordinary performances for the Ahmadiyyat in general.

They also have to be:
- Ahmady MuslimMember of the AAII(L)N or of another national or international sister jamaat which has had a special influence on the AAII(L)N.
The decorations will be presented every five years and consist of a medal and an award on which the date and the name of the person is written. Each time a maximum of five people will be awarded. Because of our 25th anniversary we will award maximum 10 people this time.
A committee was established to select and nominate candidates.

On October 13th 2001 the following people were awarded:

**Hadji A.M. Hassenmahomed**

Hadji Hassenmahomed is one of the founders of the AAII(L)N. Thanks to his great devotion a foundation was laid for the blooming of AAII(L)N. he is very committed to the jamaat. Despite his advanced age and bad health he is still concerned about the well-being of this jamaat. He has always supported it morally as well as financially.

**Hadji S. Ilahibaks**

Hadji S. Ilahibaks was awarded posthumous. Together with Hadji Hassenmahomed and two other Ahmady brothers he founded the AAII(L)N and until his death he has always been a member of the board. The development and blooming of AAII(L)N was one of his life mission. Thanks to his great leadership and devotion to the jamaat, AAII(L)N became an important factor in the Ahmadiyya movement in Holland in a short period of time.

**Mr. Z. Rodjan**

Mr. Z. Rodjan is one of the pillars of the jamaat. He has been member of the board and is actively involved with projects of the jamaat. He is very devoted and his energy is inspiring to fellow members of the jamaat.

**Mr. A.A.S. Santoe**

Mr. A. Santoe is a moving force behind the Ahmadiyyat in general and especially in Holland. With the efforts he has made for years now as representative of the Central Anjuman in Lahore and with his initiative to form a Federation of the Ahmady jamaats he has embedded the Ahmadiyyat in Holland. His devotion is a great gift to every jamaat in Holland and in the rest of Europe.

**Maulana Al Hadj B. Jaggoe**

Maulana Jaggoe is the Nestor of all Ahmadis in Holland. His knowledge of Islam and the Ahmadiyyat is very inspiring to the generations after him. He is one of these strong pillars on which the knowledge of Ahmadiyyat in Holland is based.

**Hadji A. Ataollah**

Hadji Ataollah was awarded posthumous. He was also one of the initiators to embed the Ahmadiyyat in Holland and to join forces through the founding of a federation. He also gave the Ahmadiyyat a strong impetus by founding a jamaat in Amsterdam of which he was president until his death. His knowledge and qualities within the Ahmadiyyat have been important pillars on which the Ahmadiyyat was based for a long time and of which we are making great use of.

**Mrs. S. Malik**

Mrs Malik comes from Columbus (USA) and is a board member of the jamaat in Ohio. Her devotion and efforts for the main goal of our movement, the propagation of Islam, are extraordinary great. She travels all over the world to provide everyone with literature on Islam. With the same enthusiasm and devotion she attempts to have valuable publications from our movement translated in many languages so they can be distributed. The Ahmadiyyat has internationally been given a new impetus thanks to her.

**Mr. M.R. Pierkhan**

Mr. Pierkhan is president of the Surinaamse Islamitische Vereniging (SIV AAII) and thus has actually been president of almost all Ahmadis in Holland. The solid foundation that SIV has given us has contributed to our knowledge and abilities. The strong ties we have with the SIV and the positive boost it has given us have been very beneficial to the development of the Ahmadiyyat in Holland.

**Mrs. B.M. Abdoolrazak**

Mrs. Abdoolrazak was one of the seven people who gave their house as collateral so the building of the mosque could be purchased. What these seven did is very commendable. Mrs. Abdoolrazak has become the model of uniqueness and unlimited devotion to the jamaat. She was a single mother of five children in a society she just had come into and yet she consciously decided to give her house as security. Such sacrifices are scarce but necessary to achieve important things. Despite all developments her commitments to the jamaat remained great for the past 25 years.
I bear witness first of all that there is one supreme God, Allah, I also bear testimony that Muhammad (pbuh) is the last Messenger of Allah after whom no prophet old nor new will come. And I begin in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. I have read to you perhaps two well known verses of the Holy Quran, taken first of all from chapter 61:14. Which says: Oh you who believe, be helpers (in the cause) of Allah, as Jesus, son of Mary, said to disciples: "Who are my helpers in the cause of Allah?" The disciples said: "We are helpers (in the cause) of Allah." So a party of the children believed and another group disbelieved; then we aided those who believed against their enemy, and they became predominant. The second verse: (5:2) And let not hatred of a people - because they hindered you from the sacred mosque - incite you to transgress, And help one another in righteousness and piety and not one another in sin and aggression, and keep your duty to Allah. Surely Allah is severe in requiting (evil).

Brothers and sisters, We are Ahmadies, We belong to an organization that has a very important history, and a very important mission, particularly in the world of today. We have a duty and a responsibility to the world. Especially in today's times and the events of recent times particularly. We would note that in the world today, not only in the United States of America, but indeed perhaps in countries of NATO and other countries of the world, have the support and the military means to destroy any country in the world. We are also aware of the fact that a man in a cave in Afghanistan is believed to possess the power to strike at any target in the US, even the pentagon or the White House. Each one believes in a cause. One in the name of democracy, the other in the name of Islam. But the democracy, appear not to tolerate any other system which it considers opposing to it. And to destroy its opponents with terrorism if that is what's required. The followers of Islam unfortunately are prepared to behave like wise. Each side has the resources to destroy each other and to employ the human beings in war and terror. The question we have to ask ourselves; the question the world has to ask itself today: who has the resources to make peace and to bring human beings to a peaceful living? Are the resources of the world primarily to be used to encourage antagonism, hatred and terrorism? Or are there resources within the human beings to bring the world peace; to bring the world to harmony. The world has to look at the Messiahs who will come to answer the problems of the world. And indeed in the west and in the east there are those who are still awaiting the Messiah. For one side the Messiah is a symbol of a victim of terrorism, but the teaching of forgiveness, and its philosophy doesn't seem practical now. Indeed in the world in which we live today the two major religions and their philosophy are at challenge. On the one hand the philosophy of "Father forgive them for they know not what they do", seems to be irrelevant and impractical. On the other hand the religion that promotes peace in the world is unfortunately having to defend itself against the stigma of terrorism. On the other side, for the Muslims in particular the Messiah is expected he who is supposed to be terrorist who will break the cross and kill the swine, all in the name of Islam. As there are unions in the laboring classes - because in unity there is strength - also in religion we find this system. Even the Prophets of God required this system. That is why the Koran tells us that Jesus Christ asked the Disciples: "who are the helpers of Allah; who will help me in the way of Allah. (61:14) If we want to promote Islam as a religion of peace we have to come out and help in the way of Allah. This is why the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam is the only Muslim religious organization in the world that is international. People are coming together regardless of language, regardless of location, to help in the cause of Islam. That is our primary purpose. Unfortunately being a member of The Ahmadiyya Anjuman is like undertaking a suicide mission. We are religiously assassinated through excommunication, a principal and concept of TAKFEER against the teaching of the Holy Koran. We are called heritage and KAFEERS, and are considered not to be Muslims. We are also physically assassinated, through terrorism. Our Missionaries have been killed, our conferences have been bombed. I myself - as you know - was a victim of terrorism in Pakistan in 1974. Yet we are the only Muslim organization based on the principle that JIHAD meaning "holy war" is incorrect. It is not there, it is not a teaching of the Holy Koran. The strength of any religion lies in the character of its people. Not in the grandeur of its holy places and not in the sizes of their Mosques and Churches, but in the behavior of its people. The conduct of the Ahmadies is based on the fact of living peacefully together with respect, acceptance and tolerance. We should help each other in virtuousness and piety; and never shall we support sin and aggression (5:2).

Amen.

Summarized by Haroon Badloe
Opening speech by M. H. Mahawat Khan, MSc MBA, president of the AAII(L)N

Distinguished guests, dear brothers and sisters, ladies and gentlemen

Assalamo alaikum we Rahmatoeellah we barakatehoe

Welcome
I warmly welcome you, on behalf of the board and the jubilee committee of Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam (Lahore) Nederland, on this international conference.
The Islamic organisation Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam (Lahore) Nederland is celebrating its 25th anniversary. For this occasion the board and members of this organisation have decided to organize the conference with the theme: Islam in the western society.

On behalf of the board and the Jubilee committee I would like to congratulate everyone with this 25th anniversary of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam (Lahore) Nederland.
Congratulations also to the brothers and sisters of the first hours. A very special thanks to the seven families who gave their properties as collateral to buy the mosque 25 years ago.
It is because of them we are today where we are. We promise you that we the new generation will do our utmost to continue the good work you have started. We are obliged to our religion, to our children and to our society.

The theme of the conference was chosen 9 months ago and now, very macabre, it shows that we made the right choice and set the right priorities as organisation.
At this 25th anniversary and with this conference we want to fulfil our obligations and commitment to our mission, the propagation of Islam. We are facing new challenges in our mission in the western society unlike 20-30 years ago where we had to discuss that we Ahmadies are Muslims too.
The theme of the conference is a hot topic right now and it is a concern of the whole nation. For Muslims it is important since it influences the freedom of practising their religion. The policymakers and politicians create the amount of space to exercise the religion. The press and media contribute in the perception of Islam at Muslims and non-Muslims. Discussing about Islam in the western society is very important for the integration of Muslims in Holland. We, as an Islamic organisation, want to take up our responsibility and want to contribute to the integration. Therefore this conference will not remain as an isolated event but we will address this issue on a regular basis.

History
In 1976 some determined Surinam Ahmadian immigrants tried to fulfil their obligations as Muslim and as Ahmadies. Their devotion and sense of responsibility lead to great sacrifices to establish the Jamaat, Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam (Lahore) Nederland, and the first Ahmadiyya mosque. With every possibility and a lot of sacrifices they tried to fulfil their obligation to the mission, the propagation of Islam and the Ahmadiyyat.

In 1976 their primary challenge was to form a home base for the Ahmadies here in Holland. Today, 25 years later we stand for new challenges. Islam is perceived as very negative, it stands in a negative light.
Our own Muslim brothers and sisters and children are sometimes in doubt. They have to balance and “fight” between two worlds, they often discuss with each other.
Today we have to face discussions in 3 fronts:
With our own Ahmadian brothers and sisters to enlighten and to create awareness of our obligations.
With other Muslim brothers and sisters about the real Islam and our contribution to the perception of Islam at non-Muslims.
With the society about the real Islam purified from culture and traditional influences and acts.

Goal
The goal of the conference is to explore the opportunities to enhance the integration and acceptance of Islam and the Muslims with preservation of their own religion and culture in the western society. Integration and acceptance can be enhanced by constructive dialogue. Dialogue with each other to really understand what Islam is. To understand where religion ends and where cultures start. If we have good discussions and understand our religion better then we can and are able to explain it properly to our environment. If our environment, thus the society, understands us better and has the proper knowledge about us, then we have made the first step into a good and solid community with acceptance for each other. Thus the main task lies in our own hands but we need key players in the society such as the policymakers and the media.
Policymakers play an important role in this since they have to create the situation in which all parties can equally participate and contribute in a healthy community.
The press and media play a crucial role. Their contribution can enhance with meteoric speed or can harm as a volcanic force the good work the Muslims and the policy makers do.

It is for this reason that we want to have a triangle dialogue between Muslims, policymakers and the press about integration and its enhancement.

We want this triangle discussion because we believe that we can boost up the integration. One thing is for sure. We should not talk in terms of we and they or they and we. The Muslims are going the stay here in Holland and the non-Muslims. This is a beautiful country, it is nice for all of us. I have the same reason as all other 15 million fellow citizens to keep it as nice and beautiful as it is. It takes two to tango...or co-operation is a two way street...we are ready and open for good dialogue.

Century ago the Ahmadiyya movement was active in propagating of Islam on a peaceful way. The movement translated the Koran in various languages. Books with an authority on Islam were published, also in Dutch. All this was done at the beginning of the 20th century in Europe and in Holland.

Now in this 21st century it is the Ahmadiyya movement that plays a crucial role. We Ahmadies are recognised by the Dutch National Security service as being one of the most tolerant and open group of Muslims in Holland with whom an open dialogue can be set up.
The Surinam people are also pretty much open to the western society. The combination of Ahmadies and Surinam people guarantee a potential group of Muslims that can help bridge the gap between Islam and the western society.

With the participation of the Mayor of The Hague, the Governor of the Province of Zuid Holland and members of parliament we believe that we are on the right track and we have faith in a good dialogue.
The press will be here as well, which assures a good and balanced image building of Islam and the movement.
Our set up differs from the regular format of conferences held until now. Our aim is to trigger the community, Muslims and non-Muslims, to understand what it is to be a Muslim in the western society. It is therefore that we have chosen Dutch to be the language spoken at the conference. We will translate the conference simultaneously to English for our foreign brothers and sisters.
The theme will be covered by 6 topics in 6 sessions with speeches and discussions. Beside these sessions we have a special programme in which we have a triangle discussion with policymakers, press and Muslims.
We hope to have open and constructive discussions with each other. We are going to be here for 3 days together. Let us demonstrate the spirit of the Ahmadiyyat and have a brotherly and open communication and learn from each other.

On behalf of the Jamaat, the Board and the Jubilee committee I would like to thank everyone, sponsors, members, sympathisers of AAl(L)N, who contributed in organising this conference. Special words of thank go to the City Council of The Hague for their generous and enthusiastic help and contribution.

I wish you all a pleasant and good conference.
Wassalaam
Message from Dr Hazrat Ashgar Hameed Ameer-E-Jamaat and President of Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore – Pakistan

A'ouz Billahi Minnash-shaitanir-rajiim Bismi'Allahir-Rahmanir-Rahim.

And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. And these are they who are successful. (H. Quran 3:103)

Dear brothers and sisters,
Assalamo-alaikum Wa Rahmatullahi Wa Barakatuhu.

On behalf of the Central Anjuman Lahore I take great pleasure in extending to you, Mr. President, your executives and all the members of your jamaat my hearty congratulations on this indeed very happy occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam – Nederland. As I have been informed your jamaat was the first Association which was founded 25 years ago by Surinam Ahmadis who in the course of time have established themselves in Netherlands.

By convening an international conference where all Ahmadiyya Lahore organizations worldwide have been invited, you have proven the sense of solidarity and brotherhood within our worldwide movement. On the other hand the central theme of this conference – Islam in the western society – is also a prove of your considerable involvement with the multicultural society you live in. The mass migration of non-westerners to this part of the world and to the U.S.A. has led to a blend of different cultures and religions often leading to confusion and misunderstanding.

I therefore welcome the purpose of this conference to achieve better understanding between Muslims and Western societies as well as the integration of Muslims in these societies. I am also impressed with the aim to start a meaningful dialogue with policy makers and the media in speech sessions and discussion programs where intellectuals from the Netherlands as well as from abroad will elaborate on different topics. Moreover I am very proud and appreciative that high dignitaries such as the Minister of Urban development, the Mayor of The Hague and the Queens Governor of the province of South Holland have been invited to participate in this conference.

Western societies need to be informed on the real essence of the peaceful principles of Islam and the multicultural nature of it’s philosophy. I am also aware of the confusion appearing in societies where different groups of Muslims live each bringing its own cultural and traditional practice of Islam. It is the duty of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam (Lahore) to preach the pristine Religion of Islam according to the holy Scripture to the West and also to exert in practicing the way our beloved Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) would want us to do. He (pbuh) not only welded a multicultural society consisting of Polytheists, Jews, Christians and Muslims but he also created the conditions for a peaceful existence between Muslims and non-Muslims. In this respect I would like to refer to the holy Quran Ch. 49 verse 13: 0, Mankind, surely We have created you from a male and a female and made you tribes and families (nations) that you may know each other. .

Let this heavenly message directed not only to Muslims but to all of mankind (Jaa Ajjohannaasu) inspire and guide you all with the actual theme you have chosen for this conference.

The Jihad we are preaching is not the one with the sword but the greater Jihad striving a hard and meaningful exertion with the “pen” resulting in a flow of publications depicting the true and tolerant Islam to the West. The Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore has furthermore an impressive history of establishing the first Islamic missionary posts in Europe. We not only founded a Mission Centre in the UK as early as at the start of the previous century but soon after the first world war we established and erected one of the most beautiful and characteristic Mosques in the very heart of the European continent in Berlin.
Ladies and Gentlemen, in the course of this conference you will be hearing assessments of problems facing Muslims living in the West. In order to attain meaningful attitude in these circumstances we should take guidance from the holy Prophet (pbuh). A famous Hadith relates the story of Mu'adh who on being appointed Governor of Yaman was asked by the holy Prophet (pbuh) as to the rule by which he would abide. He replied: “By the law of the Quran” “But if you do not find any direction therein?” asked the Prophet. “Then I will act according to the Sunnah of the Prophet,” was the reply “But if you do not find any direction in the Sunnah” he was again asked. “Then I will exercise my judgment and act on that,” came the reply. The Prophet (pbuh) raised his hands and said: “Praise be to Allah who guides the messenger of His Messenger as He pleases. (AD 23:11)

Notwithstanding the fact that the Holy Quran is a perfect and most complete guidance supplemented by the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet we may find situations particularly in this age of advanced science and technology where we indeed need to exercise judgment in the spirit of the holy Scripture and the way of the Prophet (pbuh).

Further I would like to draw your attention to the verse of the Holy Quran quoted in the beginning of my speech. Commenting on this verse on page 251 of the famous commentary “Bayanul Quran” Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Ali writes “The Mujaddid of the century Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani received revelation from Allah Almighty that he should prepare a Jamaat for this purpose (invitation to Islam)”. Obviously this revelation was in accordance with the directives given in the verse of the Holy Quran already quoted. We are fortunate that this task of inviting others to Islam has been assigned to us. Therefore, it is our duty to exert ourselves to the utmost and find solution to the problems facing us.

Ladies and gentlemen due to health reasons I will not be in the position to attend to this celebration and unfortunately the delegation from Pakistan already geared up to leave for Holland will also not be able to arrive. The situation in the world after 11 September and particularly in Pakistan regrettabley did not allow permission to travel to your country.

We finally pray to the ALMIGHTY ALLAH to bless you all for the noble purpose to create better understanding between one another within the Lahore Ahmadiyya Community as well as better relations within the multicultural community in the Netherlands. May HE grant your conference necessary blessings and barakaats, Ameen.

Dr. Asghar Hameed
Ameer and President.
Message from the Mayor of The Hague,
Mr. W. Deetman MA

No prejudices but respect and room for each other

The Islam becomes more and more important in our society, also in The Hague, amidst many other religions. That is why we speak of The Hague as a multi-cultural city and a multi-cultural society. Muslims have to be able to find their niche peacefully in the western world. That is why we should encourage a constructive dialogue.

The horrific events that took place in the United States in September are by some people wildly connected with the Islam. The commiters and their commissioners justify their actions by saying they did this in the name of Islam. The same has happened, wrongly, in the history of Christianity. This means that all of us should be watchful always. When large groups are called upon to take actions in the name of their religion, we have to ask ourselves what this really means. Everyone may take this call seriously, Muslims and non-Muslims, Christians and non-Christians.

After the events in the USA the media paid much attention to those who supported this terrible action. Conversely, there was also much attention for other sorts of discrimination. We pbuh this here in The Hague with slogans and the harassing of women and girls wearing headscarves. We should not concentrate too much on that since it blows up now.

Principles

The leaders of different religious movements, also of the Islam, almost immediately condemned the attacks on the United States. However, at the same time they pointed out to us that our country is a free democratic and constitutional state and that this is about principles we all think highly of. When the constitutional state is attacked, everywhere in the multicultural society occurs large resistance. We may not generalize all expressions. We want to be a Dutch multicultural society on three solid pillars: freedom, democracy and constitutional state.

When I was confronted with slogans on buildings which affected mostly the Muslims in our city I thought to myself: we should not only go to mosques, rooms of prayer and Muslim organizations. Maybe we should also focus on the natives and say to them that in a multicultural society we have to give each other space and respect that. Where that is not the case we have to react firmly, make clear that this is not what we want. A democratic constitutional state guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of religion. Despite the safety measures that are now necessary, those fundamental rights are inviolable. These rights guarantee everyone, also Muslims, an unrestricted confession of faith.

Limits

The same constitutional state also prescribes the limits of freedom of speech and religion. No one is allowed to justify insulting or racist remarks on account of their religion. Those bounds are about respect. Respect is not only about: “Okay, you have your belief and views and I have mine. As long as you don’t bother us.” Respect has to be more than that. You don’t live next to each other but with each other. That means you are interested in each other, that you help to find solutions to problems. That is why I am glad that here in The Hague we not just have a Council of Churches, but a Council in which all religions take part and which talks about what good things can be done in The Hague by these different religions together. We must not confuse respect and integration with assimilation. In a multicultural society it is also important that everyone can keep their religious and cultural individuality. We have to offer room for that. Here in Holland we talk much about women wearing headscarves. In London, male and female police officers also cover their head! There, it is not about authority. There is room and respect for others. It is about giving attention and giving important matters a place in the multicultural society.

Ignorance

Intolerance is based on prejudices and prejudices often originate from ignorance. Ignorance can cause distorted images. We often do not know much about each other. That is why in school we have to provide the youth with insight of what others mean, why there are certain religious festivities and why others do certain things and others do not. To have knowledge, that is important. Providing insight needs
to be done carefully so there is no distortion. To know about each other, to inform each other in a right way, that is also building bridges towards each other. You have to start with your children. It can prevent prejudices.

We live here in a multicultural city and society. In politics we deal with the issues of the day. Yet it is important that we focus on long term issues and invest in that. When I look at the major conflicts in this world and I think of the damage it does to our children and what the results will be in the long run, I sincerely worry. Here in The Hague we can not solve those worldly problems. However, what we can do is make sure together that this city is multicultural in its true meaning, without prejudices, rather with respect and room for each other.

It was a commendable initiative of you to celebrate your 25th anniversary by organising a conference with such a topical theme. My congratulations and I wish you a lot of success.
Session introductions

Session I   Islam in a multicultural society, by A.S. Santoe

Mr. Chairman, dear Muslim brothers and sisters, ladies and gentlemen: Assalaam Alaikum WRWB.

First of all – also on behalf of Central Headquarters in Lahore Pakistan of our Ahmadiyya worldwide community - I would like to congratulate the AAIL-Netherlands with its 25th anniversary. May ALLAH SWT grant your board, the members and all sympathisants barkats and blessings to continue with this noble task....Ameen.

Months ago I was been asked to speak to you today about the topic: “Islam in a multicultural society”. About six weeks ago I sent my speech to the Jubilee Committee but events in the world as well as in the Netherlands have changed so dramatically on the 11th of September that I was compelled to adapt this speech on several points. I must admit, however, that my principal points of view and conclusions have remained unchanged.

In recent years much has been written and published about the multicultural society in the Netherlands and the role of Islam therein. On the one hand, Islam, being the last of the world religions in the history of mankind, is most often depicted to be cruel, intolerant or even very aggressive. On the other hand we may have observed that until lately, researches and opinions have shown the evolution of a more friendly and peaceful image of the Islam. Furthermore, the more educated Islamic youth appear to show an intellectual approach of the multicultural society.

In all the discussions about Islam in the Netherlands I most often fail to find the factual opinion of Islam itself. What do the holy Quran and the shariah say about a multicultural society ?

Although the term “culture” in its most broadest sense also includes religion, I would like to make a distinction between these two words within this framework. Let me then point out beforehand that Islam acknowledges no specific culture or would favour any culture even to the slightest degree. The only cultural aspect that to my opinion could be ascribed to the holy Quran is the classical Arabian language of 14 centuries ago, the language in which the Holy Book appeared. As to the holy cities of Mecca and Madina as well as the holy Mosque in Jerusalem, there is indeed also a geographical commitment.

Otherwise Islam is completely open for all cultures, countries and nations. Yes, it is even open towards all those extraterrestrial bodies out there in the infinite universe. Let the holy Scripture speak for itself and let us now see how the word of God in Islam is to a very high degree multicultural, yes even in a universal sense.

Ch. 2:62 reads: Surely, those who believe, and those who are Jews and the Christians and the Sabians, whoever believes in God and the last Day and does good, they have their reward from their Lord.....

With this verse from the holy Quran we see the official recognition of other religions by Islam. All the great preceding religions consider themselves as the only one capable of bringing salvation to man. The tolerance of Islam in the holy Quran continues in Ch 35:24 which reads: .......and there is not a people but a warner has gone among them.

Also from this verse one can discern the pluralistic concept in Islam. Not only Muslims, Jews and Christians are children of the same Divinity but each nation, irrespective of race, religion or geographical origin, belongs to the Kingdom of the one and the only God in the Holy Quran mentioned as ALLAH SWT.

Islam enhances this pluralistic concept even further: In the Holy Quran there is an important article of faith commanding the Muslims also to believe in Divine revelations appeared to prophets of other nations: I quote Ch. 2:4: “......And who believe in that which has been revealed to thee (the holy Prophet) and that which was revealed before thee........”

Finally I would like to close my citations from the holy Quran with Ch 49:13: “O mankind, surely We have created you from a male and a female and made you tribes and families (nations), that you may know each other......” The holy Quran addresses itself here not only to Muslims but to mankind in general in that they shall know,
honour and respect each other. Where else do we find such a call for human solidarity and brotherhood? When visiting New York in 1995, I was not surprised to see this verse in golden letters written on the wall of one of the stately halls of the premises of the United Nations building (regrettably only in Arabic without any translation). Furthermore, reference can be made to the multicultural nature of the first founded communion in the city of Madina by the holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) fourteen centuries ago: Converted polytheists, Jews, Christians and Arabs were forged into one firm community being the first core of the Islamic Ummah growing within a few generations into a world community.

The evil deed on the 11th of September in the U.S. when more than 5 thousand human beings were sent into death and destruction, is being referred to by terrorists as Jihad with the addition “holy war”. War in the Arabic language is being translated as AL HARB and the word holy is AL MUQADDA. A concept of AL HARBUN AL MUQADDAHSUN is totally unknown in the holy Quran. JIHAD does appear in the holy Book in about ten verses:

1. to exert oneself for doing good to oneself (Nafs) and to his fellow humans
2. to exert oneself for spreading and preaching of religion
3. to avoid violence

In Ch.2:190 and next verses the believer is indeed being commanded to take up the weapon to protect the community against “.....those who fight against you but be not aggressive...... And kill them wherever you find them, and drive them out from where they drove you out...” Nowhere in these verses is the word Jihad to be found.

Every community or nation has the right and the duty for self protection but the act of terror as appeared a month ago in the U.S. can never be mentioned as Jihad and even less be accounted on the name of Islam.

The founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement more than a century ago proclaimed the Jihad not with the sword but with the pen. Unlike the situation 14 centuries ago when that first small community of the holy Prophet was threatened with complete annihilation, the founder had already seen a century ago that the circumstances of the Muslims did not lend itself anymore to “protect one’s own community against annihilation”. The danger existed then more in the missionary onslaught against Islam from the rich colonial rulers in Asia and Africa. These assaults had to be met with similar means: with the pen (Al Qalam). The founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement therefore established an organization with the purpose not only to exculpate the religion but also to propagate the true and peaceful Islam to the West. The result was and still is that the western world is being battered with...literature. When Maulana Muhammad Ali translated the holy Quran in English at the beginning of the previous century, this was soon branded as an act of apostasy by the own traditional clergy. But the real onset upon the western front was set in that same period with the establishment of a missionary post in England at Woking where in a later stage the famous Lord Headley had taken up the preaching of Islam intensively.

Also in Berlin a missionary post was set up in 1922 and two years later the construction started of a beautiful Mosque completed in 1927 with its imposing dome and towering minarets. In a way this mosque has become a public attraction in Berlin and the municipal authority there decided some 12 years ago to include this object in the monumental care of the city. The result is that the government is guiding the renovation intensively for some years now and subsidizing considerable part of the costs. This mosque in Berlin fulfills also an educational purpose: a daily flow of students, teachers and others are being provided with necessary information on the religion of Islam by our Imam Saeed Chaudhry. This Ahmadiyya mosque has therefore become part and parcel of the image of the city of Berlin.

The first Mosque in the Netherlands was built in the thirties of the previous century by the Ahmadiyya community. However, a split of the Movement at the beginning of that century occurred: the Qadiani group considers Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as a prophet and our own group of Lahori Ahmadies believe in the finality of prophet hood of the holy prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as last Messenger of God. It was in fact Mirza Wali Beg from our Lahore line who came here in 1939 to preach the peaceful and tolerant Islam. As a missionary in Indonesia he had instigated Prof. Soedewo to translate the Holy Quran in Dutch in 1934. Mirza Wali Beg’s mission in the Netherlands would not last long. As the second world war broke out – being a British subject – he was captured by the German occupation force and confined into a concentration camp and only after the war he would return, seriously ill and emaciated, to his native country the then British India where he at long last died. (As far as I personally know there was never mention of an indemnification to his relatives for the suffering caused to this Muslim, nor of any repentance).
In 1950 Mr. Al Mahdi Koppe took charge of the mission of the Ahmadiyya Lahore and in 1952 a Mission Centre was established with a prayer room in The Hague on the Ruychrocklaan no. 54. Mr. Koppe has also made several translations into the Dutch language. With the founding of the Institute for Islamic Studies in Europe the Mission began also to spread its wings outside Holland.

The fact that mainly after the war many Dutch people – particularly among the intellectuals – converted to Islam is evident that our interpretation of the Islam has taken roots in this country. Personalities such as Dr. Louis Hoyack, Dr. Abdullah van Onck, Mr. Mahmud Khan, Mr. Habibullah Kral, Mrs. Fatima Katergi, Mrs. Rouqia Mathijsen, Dr. And Mrs. Bashir, Prof. Omar Ehrenfels, Dr. Reza Mellami all were Ahmadies who lectured Islam in the Netherlands and participated in multireligious convents as well. They also published the first Islamic monthly journal in Dutch language. The elder amongst us may certainly recall that green journal titled “Al Fatiq” which was also widely distributed in Surinam.

An exponent of this old pioneering group bringing Islam to this country is till alive and with ceaseless clan this 87 year old Hajji Yahya Keeskamp still publishes his HIM-bulletin in Dutch.

Amongst part of its population migrating to the Netherlands when Surinam independent in 1975, there were also thousands of Ahmadies. It lasted not too long before Ahmadiyya Centres annex prayer rooms were erected in the cities of The Hague, Utrecht, Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Arnhem. Noteworthy is the fact that these centres were set up entirely with financial sacrifices from the displaced who had yet to acclimatize in this country. Without any support from government nor from any foreign donor.

And it was this Ahmadiyya Centre at the Paul Krugerlaan that opened its doors for its members a quarter of a century ago, immediately followed by other Ahmadiyya centres in above mentioned cities. In this respect it is noteworthy to mention the pater spiritualis of our Ahmadiyya community in the Netherlands, the also 87 years old Maulana Al Haj Abdul Rahim Jaggoe. Due to his enormous efforts for the community he received the decorations of the royal knighthood in the order of Orange Nassau.

In contemplating the development of the Dutch civic spirit we may most certainly state that the Ahmadiyya community in this country may boast on at least six generations – as from the first immigration in Surinam in 1873, under the Dutch flag and regime – overcoming weal and woe to conquer a worthy place in this society.

Although the use of the Dutch language is still increasing even among the older generations, we may freely state that the Islamic identity has remained in its original philosophy and vision. In several Ahmadiyya mosques the Friday sermon or khutba is now being conducted in Dutch. Most lectures, discussion programs and meetings are also being held in the Dutch language. We may also observe today that even Islamic marriage ceremonies – except for the Quranic rituals – are being solemnized in Dutch.

A possible development towards a “Dutch Islam” is completely out of the question. Islam as religion and philosophy of life is being practised all over the world in nearly every language.

The Ahmadiyya Lahore organization, as a world missionary movement, has produced considerable literature in the past century and distribution has taken place mainly in the western world. As I have mentioned before translations into Dutch have been vigorously undertaken since the thirties of the previous century. This literature is now available in many libraries and documentary institutions.

When we speak about civic spirit in this country we then also take the position of women into consideration. It is a well known fact that a woman’s place in the Ahmadiyya community is very strong. This results particularly in her rather active participation in Mosque activities. She not only takes active part in ritual exercises but also in organizational matters we see even more and more Ahmadiyya women advancing ahead. The president of one of our branches in Zoetermeer is a woman. Mrs. Jamila Khan has also more than 25 years been at the helm of our London Mission. Furthermore, we welcome the presence in this conference of Mrs. Samina Malik who as Vice President of our organization in the United States also takes lead in many international activities of our Movement.

Ladies and gentlemen, after overseeing all this, one could easily come to the conclusion that the Ahmadiyya Movement is a modern and liberal form of Islam and this is most often seen as such. On the contrary. Ahmadiyyat wants to go back to that example of the very first community founded by our Holy Prophet (pbuh) some 14 centuries ago in the holy city of Madina, where the status of a woman was judicially elevated from a possession to a possessor. The right to possess was for the first time in the history of the great cultures and religions granted to the woman. In that small and primitive community she not only played an important role in domestique affairs but she also took active part in the governing and even in the defence of the community. Only after the demise of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) all kinds of restrictions were gradually imported again. "Modernism" had taken roots then and what do we see today? In certain Muslim communities women who were once at the top of the social and intellectual ladder were
put behind the pardah. Women scientists, medical doctors, lawyers and teachers were put into oblivion overnight. And this is being termed as Islamic orthodoxy. I would rather call it post-modernism.

Ahmadiyyat wants to go back to the source of Islam when the Holy Prophet (pbuh) not only welded a multicultural community of Arabs, Jews, Christians and polytheists into one firm Islamic society but he also went into treaties of mutual protection and good relations with those who preferred to maintain their own religions. This is the example, the Sunnah of a pluralistic concept: On the one hand unity in the internal diversity and on the other tolerance and acceptance of others. “There is no compulsion in Religion” H.Q. 2.256 (Laa Iqrab Fiddle‘n). It is often said that Islam has been spread with the sword. Aside from the impossibility to forcefully impose an ideological and spiritual concept to others, history tells us that the moghul hordes under the command of Genghis Khan more than once slaughtered and looted Islamic nations in South Asia. But against the end of his life this cruel tiran and conqueror "fell" for the beauty of Islam even to the extent that his descendants, being sincere Muslims, have founded and governed great Islamic empires in Asia under the guidance of the Holy Quran. The great Muslim emperor Akbar could even compose a multicultural court and governance consisting of Muslims, Hindus and Christians to govern that gigantic Islamic empire. Muslims are even being inducted in the H.Q. 22:40 not only to protect their own mosques but also convents, churches and synagogues all places where the word of God is being used. This is the true Islam being preached for more than 65 years now in the Netherlands.

Ladies and gentlemen. Overseeing all this and also taking into consideration the events in today’s world and also in this country, we could ask ourselves what is to become of the multicultural society in the Netherlands. The term natives needs to be reflected again. Our children and grandchildren - truly with different appearances - are not aware of a different pattern than that of this society we live in. Differences between natives and foreigners should ultimately disappear and all of us should be able to continue to exist in this country in complete freedom maintaining the way of life we choose for ourselves. A freedom being guaranteed by the social order this country. In this respect I would like to quote a letter written by the Rabbi Soetendorp to the Muslim community: "No Muslim should feel threatened here for the crime committed against humanity in the U.S. As citizens of the Netherlands we should form a coalition of joint-responsibility against all forms of discrimination and racial prejudice as well as for humanity".

Interreligious communication should therefore have a bigger stake in the dialogue. Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindu and all those other faiths should intercommunicate with one another possibly within complex networks. Under the creed of "preaching in other's parish" such programme is already being carried out in Rotterdam, the city being termed as the European cultural capital 2001", but please let it not remain mere preaches. notwithstanding the onslaught against the set-back in the multicultural existence in the Netherlands, we from the Lahore Ahmadiyyah do not only continue to believe in social harmony in this country but we are indeed also prepared to contribute actively to it with our vision and philosophy.

Finally, I am now presenting here 7 conclusions and recommendations to this conference.

1. Considering the universal character of Islam as contained in the Holy Quran and in the traditions of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) Muslims must be able to live in peace with followers of other faiths and creeds in a multicultural context.

2. Despite the fact that Islam incorporates enough room and opportunity for a broad pluralistic attitude, each and every individual and personal direction in the Faith must be rejected. This can only lead to a much wider degree of splintering.

3. The concept of forming a Dutch Islam or an Islam "made in Holland" must also be forcefully dismissed. The Islam which came into being some 14 centuries ago offers - with due interpretations - enough room and opportunity for individual development and human rights particularly the rights of women.

4. Introduction of the Dutch language into Islamic religious life in this country must be enhanced vigorously. For the daily needs of faith the Dutch language has become essential particularly for the youth who is already alienated from the cultures of their homelands.

5. The big bottleneck for the harmony with the original population is not so much Islam itself but to a higher degree the different cultures from the homelands tending to influence religious life out of true Islamic context.
6. As the different cultural groups are performing Islam according to their own traditions, considerable contradictions appear among Muslims living in this country even to the extent that one group does not shrink from charging others with heresy.

7. In developing formal structures for Muslims in the Netherlands, governments should take more initiatives if only to warrant an adequate representation of the different groups.

I would finally like to end my speech with a short prayer for peace. A prayer badly needed for the turmoil we face nowadays.

(Prayer)

May ALLAH SWT grant this conference considerable success and barkaat,

Ameen.

Question: Why does the word Fundamentalism have such a negative sound? Are the words Muslim fundamentalism wrongly used?

Answer: Used in the pure linguistically sense of the word there is nothing wrong with it. It indicates that one tries to live accurately according to ones own conviction; according to the fundamentals of ones own principles of live. In this sense it is correct. However, extremist groups abuse these basic principles for other causes; like political and social purposes. In addition to this they interpret these basic laws or principles to suit their own purposes. Nowadays, not the linguistically but the effective meaning of the word is put in an adverse light. We Ahmadies can be seen as fundamentalists, but in the real sense of the word, because we return to the basic of Islam, which was founded 15 centuries ago. At that time the Holy Prophet (p.b.u.h) founded a progressive multi-cultural society.

Question: If Islam offers room to every one to practice their religion according to their own needs, doesn't this apply to the terrorists as well? Don't they practice Islam in their own way?

Answer: Terrorists try to reach their goals with means from the religion through wrong interpretations. Islam is abused for their political needs. It is therefore our duty to preach the pure Islam, which we were taught fifteen hundred years ago and of which we think is the true Islam. Brother Feroz Nasrullah (chairman of the day) wants to make clear that Islam doesn't recognize "the holy war". Only the lesser Jihad, which means protecting oneself against extermination, not exceeding the limits and not to make innocent victims. Brother Santoe agrees with this and adds that Jihad can also be explained as follows:

1. good deeds.

2. proclaim the religion.

3. take refuge against violence.

In practice this is what is meant in the Holy Quran in which believers are ordered to take up their weapons to protect themselves without exceeding the limits.
Islam, Religion and Culture

For twenty-five years now you have been able to live in peace in this country and we have to make sure that people with different beliefs will also live in peace with each other in this century. This task does not only lie upon our country, but upon the whole world. There has already been said much about that; I will now talk about the connection between religion and culture.

1. No privatisation of religion

In a speech on a dialogue-conference in Casablanca, the philosopher al-Jabri expressed a complaint, aimed particularly at France, but important to the whole European Union: we are accepted as Moroccans, but not as Muslims. As if religion does not matter. In Europe (EU) there is a strong tendency towards privatising religion: “If you keep to yourself and I keep to myself, then we are all allowed to choose ourselves what we believe.” That seems like freedom of religion and freedom of conscience: a strict division between church and state and a whole privatisation of the philosophy of life. Religion becomes like the smallest room in your house: keep the door closed and no one cares. Practicing your religion on your own, so no one is bothered.

We all know that this is not true. You don’t practice your religion all on your own-----otherwise you wouldn’t be here together and you would not have something to celebrate together. Religion means that you bow before God, you bow your head. Because the will of God concerns all life, religion can not be something private. Instead, religious abeyance (Islam) always has its consequences in our whole existence. This concerns Muslims, Jews, and Christians. If you live your life in the face of God, it will affect your life in its core. If you read the salaat five times a day and you say: “Thee do we served and Thee do we beseech for help. Guide us on the right path, the path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours, not those upon whom wrath is brought down, nor those who go astray”, then that is (a) something in your heart, (b) together with others and (c) for all life:

Religion puts a stamp on life:

(a) something in your heart

Believing primarily means knowing that you are in God’s hands. We, as limited human beings, may rely on God, knowing that he is fair and merciful. When we are doing well, that makes us modest and willing to help others. When we experience difficulties in life, it helps us to know that God is with everyone of us. Religion, therefore, is primarily something of the heart.

(b) together with others

Religion does not only connect the human being with God, but also with other human beings. If you believe that God created the world with a goal, then you also have to live your life as God wants you to. Religion puts a stamp on morality and motivates to live morally. Believers come together, in mosques, churches, synagogues to support each other in their religion, to recognize each other as fellow believers and to listen together to the explanation of the Book. Islam (religious submission) is something of the community, the ummah, the church.

(c) for all life

Islam means religious submission and religious obedience, not only behind closed doors but open and bare, honest and sincere: bringing all life under God’s Word (that is what my Reformed tradition tells me). God created human beings, flora, fauna, the whole nature. And He has given the possibility of culture and all life should form itself according to God’s goal. God says: you are my servant; do what is right.

2. Culture

Culture does not stop when we leave our home. Islam puts a stamp on the way of life; but that is exactly what culture is: our habits, our way of living, and our manners: greeting each other, helping each other, being honest, being on time, being polite, in short, all norms and values of a country, that is culture. Islam thus puts a stamp on the culture of Muslims: how you raise your children, how you treat strangers, how you do business, how you treat your co-workers, the man-woman relationship. Every philosophy of life puts a stamp on the life of people and is therefore not private, but rather public. Islamic, Christian and humanist values are everywhere and are decisive to what people think is worthwhile to realize: solidarity (zakat), justice and mercifulness. Different religions do place different accents. Religion and culture are interwoven.
At the same time there is a distinction between religion and culture. Religion puts a stamp on the values of a culture, but not on practical political decisions, let alone techniques and all the practical work. For example, religion does not tell us there is going to be a housing estate built in the sea but it does tell us how people should live together. Islam means that you are obedient to God throughout your whole life; you honour Him, you are honest, you help others, and you give support to the poor. And at the end of your life, God will judge you, God who knows all, who is fair and merciful. Thus, the mosque and the church do not tell the government what to do but do deliver the values that Muslims, and Christians and others bring into politics.

Proposition 3:
Islam and culture are interwoven but at the same time different. Because religion is about the values of life, religion is the heart and soul of the culture. This means that religion and state are separate from each other but they come together where moral values are concerned.

3. Pluralism
The problem is of course that there are more ideologies than religions. After the French Revolution, the separation of church and state was slowly established in Western Europe. There are some Islamic states whose legislations are based on the shari'ah. It speaks for itself that countries whose majorities of people are Muslims base their legislation for a great part on the Islam. I have two comments on that.
(1) Freedom of religion should be given to everyone all over the world. This means freedom to form a movement, whose members can come together and take upon things. Islamic countries should also allow that to people who adhere to other religions.
(2) One should realize that the Quran does not have a political theory. Clergy in the Islam should not have worldly power and the Islam should accept democracy. Like Benabdallaoui Mokhtar from Casablanca puts it: that the Prophet was the leader of the people does not automatically imply that his successor, a caliph, was also a prophet. A caliph is not an imam, and an imam is not a caliph.

Proposition 4:
Freedom of religion demands the separation of church and state but that does not mean that the religion cannot keep contact with the government.
Many non-religious natives in Holland are strongly opposed to religious interference in public life, let alone in politics. They are all for privatizing religion: you may believe what you want, as long as no one notices. This ideal of privatizing religion in fact means that the liberal moral is going to prescribe the legislation. We see this happen already in other cases. The secularized liberal group is now in charge. In my opinion, what liberalism lacks is that in a society you cannot leave everything to the individual. People should know how they fit in the large entirety. Mr. Bolkestein recognized that society needs community values: we should all learn to be part of a society in which no one lives for her- or himself. A perception of life and living together is an ideology. This is why a culture is inseparable from ideology and religion. Religion binds people with God, with each other and therefore with the large entirety in which we have a place.
According to the politician Mr. Bolkestein, the heart of the European culture lies in humanism and Christianity with its Jewish roots. He says in the Islam there is not much separation of state and church, freedom of speech, tolerance and non-discrimination. Some years ago he raised the question whether Turkey should be allowed membership to the European Union. Not your religion but "the Christian and humanist tradition" is the binding factor in our society, thus the foundation of the European culture. As a Christian, could be very content with the fact that Christianity and humanism form the basis of the European culture. However, I'm not because of the following:
(1) seen from a worldwide perspective I don't think this is a sensible policy: there should be freedom of religion in every country.
(2) it is not fair to Muslims to say that there is no place for the Islam in Europe.

1 The Council of Europe says the following to be recognized: The Parties undertake to recognize that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to manifest his or her religion or belief and to establish religious institutions, organizations and associations, Council of Europe: Framework Conference for the Protection of National Minorities (1995), art. 8; Opened for signature by the Council of Europe on 1.2.1995; European Treaty Series No. 157; aidus in: Natan Lerner, Religion, Beliefs, and International Human Rights (Maryknoll NY: Orbis 2000) 145.


Because the Islam was present in Andalusia for six centuries and even longer in the Balkan, there are nowadays tens of millions of Muslims in the EU, from different countries, with each their own mixtures of religion and culture. The Islam has more than one form. The Moroccan Islam is different from the Turkish and the Indonesian Islam, and from the Islam in India and in Surinam. Religion is not like a piece of concrete, which can be flown from one country to another without changing. Every religious community experiences historical developments with other traditions and cultures. Those who want to maintain the values of humanism and Christianity as the foundation of the European culture will have to explain and pass it on to those who come to live here. And those who have come to live here, from Surinam and other countries will want to have their share in this. The process of searching for a new social consensus demands, in my opinion, much more attention than it gets in politics.

(Proposition 6:) We have to search for the right combination of:
- freedom of religion
- separation of religion and state
- public discussion on the basic values of society and its application to moral questions

4. Religion and culture
Because religion is about standards and values but not about the further forming of life, religion always forms an ally with culture. The Islam is always allied to a specific culture. This has an advantage and a disadvantage (good news and bad news). The good news is that in this way, the Islam can have a concrete meaning in different societies. After all, obedience to God should become definite in everyday life. The bad news is that people will start to think that their form of Islam is the pure form (or their form of Christianity is the only true form of Christianity). Because religion and culture go hand in hand, there is great risk that religion will coagulate in a specific form. You always have to extract your religion from the coagulum to give it form in the culture and time you live in. To be able to do that you will have to go back to the central importance of your religion. This means that the Islamic communities in Holland can search for what is really essential in Islam, submission and obedience to God, and how to give that a definite form in everyday life, individually and collectively. To the rest of the Dutch society this means that one may not approach Muslims in this country on the basis of prejudices. Rather, one has to listen to what they have to say in this country from an Islamic point of view. One should also be aware that the Islam has many movements.

(Proposition 7)
5. Meeting, dialogue and co-operation between religions is necessary
What a peaceful and fair society needs is for religious traditions to respect each other, to understand each others points of view (even though they do not agree on many matters) and thus also be able to ask each other critical questions. Newcomers in this country are allowed to ask critical questions about how to deal with life and death, sexual morality and tolerating forbidden merchandise. Conversely, people who were born here may ask newcomers questions about women emancipation and education of daughters, guidance of boys growing up, opinions on homosexuality, and so on. The risk of privatizing ideology and religion is that there is no conversation about such matters, which leads to the development of groups who do not understand each other. In public domain such matters should be talked about. I hope your organisation and other Islamic organisation will join the Council of Religions and Ideologies soon, because we will deal with this issue. In such meetings you learn to present each other’s religion correctly and understand each other’s motives better. For example, you will see why wearing a headscarf is important to one Muslim woman and not to the other and what is and what is not essential in Islam (or Christianity or Hinduism). Understanding each other requires knowing and understanding the differences. Christians, Muslims, Hindus and Humanists share many mutual interests in society. Together we will have to give our own contribution to the political debate. The only way to prevent the battle between cultures and religions is by meeting and dialogue.

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4 More elaborate in my Religie als ziel van cultuur (Zoetermeer: Meinema 1996).
Question: If religion and culture are two aspects, which cannot be seen separate from each other, how can this be explained to others or to the Dutch people?

Answer: By talking about it to people in your environment. Explain matters from within your faith and try not to distance yourself from your religion e.g. euthanasia; if you talk about it, do that according to your religion.

Question: Isn’t it the task of the government to clarify matters concerning religion?

Answer: In cooperation with the department of Education and the Media more should be done than is being undertaken nowadays.

Question: Is an interaction between politics and religion not doomed to fail and why do Islamic countries keep on doing this?

Answer: In a country where there exists only one religion it is ideal to organize the state according to this faith. The system however will be a very static one, like a block of concrete. This in no way means that the conviction and contribution of the believers cannot be implemented in political affairs.

Question: Why is it that Muslims call one another non-Muslims? How can we achieve more unity in this matter?

Answer: By explaining to them that performing Salaat, giving Zakaat, Fasting and attending the Hadj makes you a Muslim. People should try to see the light now. This phenomenon also occurs in Christianity.
“Whoever does good, whether male or female and is a believer, We shall certainly make him live a good life, and We shall certainly give them the reward for the best of what they did” (An-Nahl- 97)

Preface

Every woman who is a believer certainly wants to be a pious woman. Prophet Muhammad pbuh. (May Allah bless him and grant him peace) describes a pious woman in a Hadith as follows:

For those who believe, there is nothing better after keeping devotion to Allah than a pious wife who keeps her duty [to a husband] when asked, pleasant when looked, keeps her loyalty, and when left, certainly keep her chastity and take care of her husband wealth. (I.I. Ibn Maraj)

From many interpretations on the Hadith and on some verses of the Holy Quran, we can see that there are many living interpretations in various Muslim societies that a woman role is limited to please her husband, to bring up children, and to manage all domestic activities. Women than are put under her husband’s thumb without any freedom at all. Such interpretations have framed of people’s mind and form a culture that discriminate women and this is certainly hard to be changed. The question raised then is how could we eliminate the discrimination on the position of woman in Modem society? Islam teaches us that all human beings, men and women, fundamentally have the same rights to carry out their roles as human beings in society as they are created to serve Allah, the Creator of the universe by doing what is taught through the Messenger of Allah. This writing, however, is not intended to put forward feminism as mostly grown in western societies, which is the famously known as the Women Liberation which struggles for equality between men and women without taking into account the nature of human biology.

The Holy Quran and Hadith teach us the position of women from either a material or a spiritual point of view. Islamic teachings recognize woman’s position to be the same as man’s. Good work brings the same reward as paradise and Allah’s blessings are equal for both man and woman. The difference only lies in their nature and their roles. A woman is recognized as on a par with man. They can then create a mutual relationship, which fulfills each other. A woman does not lose any of the rights, which she possesses as an individual member of society. She is still free to carry on any work she desires as she can always keep her individuality. The Quran points out: “And women have rights similar to their obligations, in a just manner” (al- Baqarah: 228)

In order to wipe out wrong interpretations in society, empowerment of women should be carried out so that they can make activities which provide them with information on their roles as taught by the Quran. A woman can be both a warm and responsible wife who knows her position as taught by Quran and Hadith.

The Position of Women in Islam

Islam recognizes the position of the woman to be the same as that of the man. Both are created from one living entity, one of which does not exceed the other.

Before the Islamic period, women were put in a very low position. They were treated as if they were not human beings. They were regarded as objects or commodities. For example, if a man died, his wife was not left with anything. She did not inherit wealth, which should have been inherited. Violence also happened in a great number. Baby girls, for example, were buried alive as they aroused embarrassment or it was a taboo to give birth of a baby girl. In the Dark Ages, therefore, the Arabic society viewed women as degrading creatures. Islam with its supreme teachings wipes out any injustice social system and transforms the system into the one, which places women in an honourable position. In today world, however, there are still many opinions that weaken woman’s position. This happens not only in the western world but also in the eastern one. There are many unfair treatments to women and this is due to
people’s wrong information about Islam. Aisha Bewley in her book entitled Islam: The Empowering of Women pointed out:

In the West we find the Oppression of women in Islam in its various guises—more often than not harping on cultural matters (which are not specific to Islam) and accusing Islam of being responsible for them. On the Muslim side – usually as a result of reaction to the Oppression of Women is Islam – we find various reposed to this, mostly written by men, about how Islam came to Liberate women (from their inferior position in a pagan environment without preference to the modern situation). True fulfilment lies in being Housewife women aren’t Physiologically Really up to the Level of Men (which historically is not an Islamic, but a Judea – Christian view) and Woman Should be Neither seen nor Heard (justified by the dubious assertion that men are also weak and testosterone-ridden they are incapable of self rem. (Bewley, 1999:1)

The Holy Quran and Hadith provide regulations on women in more than ten chapters, such as: Al-Baqarah, An-Nisa, Al-Maidah, An-Nur, Al-Ahzab, Al-Mujadilah, Al-Mumtahanah, Al-Tahrim, Al-Thalaq, Al-Imran, Maryam, Yusuf. Some chapters even refer specifically to women and are titled with a women’s name, such as, An-Nisa (The women), Maryam, Al-Mumtahanah (The woman who is examined) and Al-Mujadilah (The pleading woman).

From the Quran verses as quoted below we can see that women are indeed placed in a honourable position. They are created with the same position as men and they are recognized as on a par with men. The reward from Allah was also the same. We can see from verses as follows:

“O mankind, surely We have created you from male and female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other. Surely the noblest of you with Allah is the most dutiful of you. Surely Allah Knowing, Aware”. (Al-Hujurat : 13)
[Vast brotherhood does not depend on nationality, wealth, and or/social class but on the careful observance of duty or moral greatness]

“He it is Who created you from a single soul, and of the same did He make his mate, that he might find comfort in her. So when he covers her she bears a light burden, than moves about with it. Then when it grows heavy they both call upon Allah their Lord: If Thou gives us a good one, we shall certainly be of the grateful” (Al Ar’af : 189)

“Was he not a small life-germ in sperm emitted. Then he was a clot; so He created (him), then made (him) perfect. Then he made of him two kinds, the male and the Female”. (Al Qiyamah :37-39)

“Whoever does good, whether male or female, and is a believer, We shall certainly make him live a good life, and We shall certainly give them their reward for the best of what they did”. (An Nahl : 97)

“So their Lord accepted their prayer, (saying): I will not suffer the work of any worker among you to be lost whether male or female, the one of you being from the other. So those who fled and were driven forth from their homes and persecuted in My way and who fought and were slain, I shall truly remove their evil and make them enter Gardens wherein flow rivers—a reward from Allah And with Allah is the best reward. (Al Imran : 194)

“And whoever does good deed, whether male or female, and he (or she) is a believer – these will enter the Garden, and they will not be dealt with a whit unjustly” (An - Nisa: 124)

There are many verses showing that the blessings of Allah are distributed to both men and women. These can be seen from the word used, such as, “ya Ayuhannas”, “yaa Bani Adam,” and “yaa Ayyuhalladzina aamunu”

In Hadith, Prophet Muhammad s.a.w (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) paid much attention to girls. He once said, for example: “the best of your children are girls” (H.L. Abu Daud and An-Nasa’I). And in other Hadith he said: “Those do not respect women except respectable man, and those do not humiliate women except contemptible man”
Islam does not differentiate men to women in their devotion to Allah SWT. There are many verses in the Holy Quran showing how men and women have the same obligation to Allah. This is shown in the following verses:

“And keep up the prayer and pay the poor-rate and obey the Messenger, so that mercy may be shown to you”. (An Nur : 56)

Islam teaches us that every man and woman should do good deeds as stated in Quran:

“O you who believe, seek assistance through patience and prayer surely Allah is with the patient”. (Al Baqarah :153)

Every man and woman should fulfill the obligations as ruled by Allah SWT. This is done so for maintaining a good relationship among human beings:

“O you who believe, fulfill the obligations. The cattle quadrupeds are allowed to you except that which is recited to you, not violating the prohibition against game when you are on the pilgrimage. Surely Allah orders what he pleases”. (Al Maidah :1)

Allah SWT. also gives punishment for the sinners:

“The adulteress and the adulterer flog each of them (with) a hundred stripes, and let not pity for them detain you from obedience to Allah, if you believe in Allah and the Last day, and let a party of believers witness their chastisement” (An-Nur: 2)

Obligation to gain knowledge should also be carried out by men and women. Aisya, for example, was not only a scholar but also a courageous leader in war.

“And we sent not before thee any but men to whom We sent revelation: so ask the followers of the Reminder if you know not”. (Al Anbiya :7)

“And remember that which is recited in your houses of the messages of Allah and the Wisdom. Surely Allah is ever Knower of subtle matters, Aware” (Al-Ahzab: 34)

Hadith also propose the same:

Searching for knowledge is an obligation for any Moslems, both men and women. (H.r. Ibn Majah from Anas r.a.)

For those who do good deeds, Allah may reward knowledge on religion (H.r. Imam Ahmad)

The Quran pays special attention to issues on women in many verses, not only on her life but also on her right and obligation. The presence of queen Sheba, Maryam and Khadijah in Islamic history provides evidence how Islam shows consideration for women.

There are some verses in Quran, showing women’s right, for example:

1. Women’s right to receive dowry
   It is man’s responsibility to give dowry to a woman before the wedding and it is a woman’s honor to accept it. Once the dowry is presented it cannot be taken back because it certainly belongs to the woman that the man weds. The man should willingly gives the dowry to his bride as a nuptial gift and it is only through the woman’s permission to give a part of it to anyone she likes, even, to her husband. Quran’s verse An Nisa : 4 shows this regulation:
   
   “And give women their dowries as a free gift but if they of themselves be pleased to give you a portion thereof, consume it with enjoyment and pleasure.

2. Women’s right to be provided with a living
A husband is obliged to provide a living for the wife after getting married, Allah states:

"And their maintenance and their clothing must has borne by the father according to usage (Al-Hujurat : 39).

"Men are maintenance of women, with what Allah has made some of them to excel others and with what they spend out of their wealth. (An Nisa :34).

Although it is the man’s obligation to make a living for the family, the wife could also have a right to work in order to meet the family’s necessity. This could be done so as Allah teaches us to help each other. This can be seen in verse:

“... And help one another in righteousness and piety, and help not one another in sin and aggression, and keep your duty to Allah. Surely Allah is severe in requiting.” (Al – Maidah :2)

3. It is woman’s right to be treated kindly

This can be seen in the following verse:

“... And treat them kindly ...” (An-Nisa : 19)

4. Women’s right to cancel the wedding and women’s right after the breaking of a marriage.

A wife can propose a break of a marriage if the husband does not provide her with necessities and kind treatment. The wife could also ask for divorce when the husband commits the adultery and is a drunk.

- After divorce the woman has the full status of a wife so long as the `iddah has not expired, she should be provided with lodging and get all the necessities.

5. Women’s right to be provided with education

There are many verses in both the Quran and Hadith that encourage women to gain knowledge.

Special honor is given to a woman who does so in order to be placed in high position.

From the above verses, we can see that Allah SWT places women in a respectable place and equal to man. Prophet Muhammad teaches his followers to respect women. When we see some Quran verses, Hadith, and high perspective, which is called Kitab Kunin (Yellow Manuscripts), however, there are indeed some different positions between men and women. This can be seen in the following:

1. The price of two female witnesses equals to one male witness. This is in accordance with the following verse:

“...And call to witness from among your men two witnesses; but if there are not two men, then one man and two women from among those whom you choose to be witnesses, so that if one of the two errs, the one may remind the other…”

(Al-Baqarah : 282).

2. In the case of inheritance, the male is equal of the portion of two females. This is stated in the Quran as follows.

“...And if there are brethren, men and women, then for the male is the like of the portion of two females…” (An-Nisa : 177).

3. In marriage, a man is allowed to have more than one wife in spite of strong requirements.

“ And if you fear that cannot do justice to orphans, marry such women as seem good to you, two, or three, or four, but if you fear that that you will not do justice, then (marry) only one or that which your right hands possess. This is more proper that you may not do injustice”

(An-Nisa : 3).

From the above discussion, we can see that women are placed in submission to men and theologically this indeed depends on men’s willingness. The question raised then is: is man of a higher creation? Islam is a
just religion that teaches equality. Therefore, Islam needs to be studied more closely in terms of Islamic law (Fiqh). This means that to set up the true women's right according to Quran, we need to re-interpret what Quran and Hadith really means by women’s right and obligation in Islam by taking into account today's reality.

Concluding Remarks
In order to eliminate wrong opinions that discriminate women in society, there should be an empowerment of women because, as a matter of fact, Islam puts women in a high position. Both the Quran and the Hadith provide evidence on this matter. This means that there should be a movement for women transformation for creating harmonious relationships not only between men and women but also between women and society, women and her family. In other words, the women image transformation should create a harmonious relationship between a woman and her environment.

There should be studies on women issues, for example, to reconstruct religious teachings on women. This is intended to end up the bias and male domination in accordance with the concept of Ijihad in Islam so that the teaching can always cope with reality. This is what Islam is really for.

Men and women are human beings created by Allah SWT. in order to serve Allah as taught by the Quran and examples of the Prophet Muhammad pbuh (may Allah bless him and grant him peace). They both have rights to enjoy higher life as stated in the Quran:

"Whoever does good, whether male or female, and is a believer, We shall certainly make him live a good life, and We shall certainly give them their reward for the best of what they did". (An Nahl : 97)

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Discussion

Question: What is mentioned in the Holy Koran about the burkah?

Answer: Islam mentions that women should cover their head and bosom, but not their face. The word burkah doesn't appear in the Holy Quran.

Question: What does Islam say about women attending Djanaza prayers and funerals?

Answer: That women don't participate in Djanaza prayers is probably a cultural aspect.

Question: Why is it that in Islam one male witness must be replaced by two females?

Answer: Not in all cases two female witnesses are required. The Holy Koran mentions special cases where two females are needed, but in all other matters one female witness is satisfactory.

Question: Women ought to wear burkah, hidjab etc. so men will not harass them. What is said about men controlling their needs?

Answer: In the Holy Quran men are also summoned to treat women with respect. They are not allowed to stare or gaze at women.
Session IV The youth and their experience with Islam by Maulana K. Hydal

The Holy Quran indicates to us that youth are a very important asset to community and society. An indication is given in the Holy Quran in chapter 12 verse 19, with reference to the young man Joseph who was abandoned by his own family and left at the bottom of a well. I am sure if you ask any young person: “position yourself at the bottom of a well where there is no one, no communication, no cellular phone, no fax, no internet. You are just there at the bottom of a well and nobody knows you are there. To whom will you turn for guidance?”

And God rescued Joseph. Many a young person finds him- or herself I the same situation. Maybe not at the bottom of a well but certainly in many problems; financial problems, social problems, problems of drugs, problems of loneliness, problems of lack of resources and many other problems. You find yourself as it were at the bottom of a well. The Holy Quran gives you hope that Allah can rescue you and take you up once again as Joseph came from the bottom of a well to become the virtual king of a nation and a community and a society. So the Quran describes young people in this way:

HQ 12:19 “O, good news! This is a youth. Make his stay honourable. Maybe he will be useful to us, or we may adopt him as a son”.

My dear sisters and brothers, this particular verse of the Holy Quran is very relevant to many of you here because Joseph grew up in an adopted society, a community and society that had standards and morality particularly from a promiscuous society and he had to face the challenges of a society and perhaps chapter 12 of the Holy Quran is something that should be deeply studied and I have given several lectures on this particular chapter. It is a wonderful chapter.

De Quran shows the strength of character of an young man being challenged by a promiscuous society, even a society that trumped up charges against him and he went to jail for the sake of righteousness and chastity. And he refused to come out of jail until and unless his name was cleared. So the Quran tell us and teaches us about the resilience of youth, the capacity of young people to stand up against what is wrong in society.

So we have to ask ourselves certain questions:

1. What are the needs of the youth?
2. Are the needs of the youth being fulfilled by the Ahmadiyya Anjuman?
3. If not, why; what are the means by which they can be fulfilled?

What are the needs of the young people? One of the important needs of the young people is to gain acceptance in society to identify with social trends e.g. hairstyles, fashion and music. The perception is there that an Islamic lifestyle does not allow them to be fashionable and accepted in society.

My dear brothers and sisters, many young people came to this conclusion because they think drinking of alcohol, use of drugs, smoking, gambling and promiscuity are all considered socially acceptable but are condemned by the religion of Islam. But I will give you the assurance I have grown up in a western society. I have travelled all over the world and I have mixed with all sorts of people; I never drank alcohol in my life, I have never smoked in my life, I have never gambled in my life. I have stood against these and I have seen people influenced by my thoughts, and my ideas and my concepts. And I feel that if I can do it each and everyone of you can do it and in no way do I consider myself to be a person not enjoying my life. Even though I am a missionary in the course of Islam. I have never regretted taking up the banner of Islam, making it a life’s mission to carry the message of Islam to the world. One of the important challenges of young people is of course what we call combating peer pressure: youths are encouraged by other youths and are pressured into behaving like them. They find difficulty in resisting this peer pressure. Problems affecting youth’s today: morality, generation gap, unemployment, lack of leaders, drug abuse, Muslim youth in the community, projection of youth in the future and pregnancy. There need to be changes; we must regulate those changes; not merely enforce stagnant moral values nor allow immoral to go unchecked. And so we find that because of this there are several problems affecting the youth of today.

The question of morality I referred to, the generation gap, communication between the elders and the young. The holy Quran deals with that. It tell us for example that Abraham who was a very old man was able to communicate and give a chance to his young son, an opportunity. There was no generation gap. It is quite possible for the youth and the old to come together, to build a house of God as was in the case of Abraham and Ismael in a society that is virtually barren. We find that youths are also very much concerned about the issue of unemployment, the subject of drug abuse, the Muslim youth integrating into
the community and society. Perhaps we should not speak about unity among people but perhaps blending of people because you can't dissolve your own identity but you can blend in. Just like a bouquet of flowers; the beauty is there even though each flower has its own identity. One may be red, one may be a rose, but they all blend as a whole and produce something of a beauty.

There is also the problem of the projection of youth in the future. What are the opportunities for them? There is the subject also of pregnancy which is so common in many societies. But one of the important problems of young people is of course lack of leadership. We must understand that in the society which we live in today especially, it is not like the society of long ago. There need to be changes; we are in a fluid and dynamic society. But we must understand that society is changing; we must be prepared for changes but what is important is that we must regulate those changes; changes must not just be imposed upon us. We have to be in control of the changes that influence us in our world, in our society. It is not merely to enforce stagnant moral values nor imposing morals of fourteen fifteen hundred years ago upon our youth. At the same time it is not for us to allow immorality in society to go unchecked. We have to be able to regulate the kind of changes that influence and affect our young people and young people should be prepared to seek the advice, to seek the knowledge, to seek the guidance that will certainly help them to adjust to these changes. Challenge of the youth today lies in the reality that there is little integration of family and society. Moral an spiritual values taught at home are often not supported by the society outside. That is why we have to create our own environment, our own society so that there can be growth of our young people. We cannot merely instil them into moral values and then put them on barren land, put them in a society that itself is barren. If you take a seed and you put it on concrete or on asphalt it will not grow. It has to be given the proper soil to develop roots and to grow and bear fruits. So we have a responsibility in the Ahmadiyya Anjuman, in our djamats, not merely to teach our youth certain values but to give them the kind of inspiration and the kind of environment and the kind of support so that they can indeed grow and develop to be men and women that we can be proud of. In fact I think I've been very much impressed in this conference. Some of you came to me and said you don't know me but you know my father and my father told me about you, which means that your parents adopted a kind of lifestyle and environment that they have passed on to the young people and I feel proud of those parents when I can see the young people, the young children following in their footsteps and I think all praise be to Allah that we do have this kind of Ahmadiyya Anjuman here in Holland. But we must not deny, my dear sisters and brothers that:

- There is a lack of communication between youth and elders in home and in the djamat.
- The reason for this is because youths perceive that elders impose strict rules and regulations for them to follow.
- On the other hand elders believe that they know what is best for the youth.
- Youths also claim that the elders are not approachable and do not fully understand the problems they face.
- This lack of communication often leads to young people turning to the wrong persons for help.
- Youths face problems which create changes in their attitudes and behaviour and which affect them mentally, physically or emotionally.
- They also do not understand or see the need for spiritual development.
- Some of the problems of youth include personality conflicts with members of the home, at school or in the workplace.
- There may also be constant discrimination or embarrassment from the society (racial and/or religious or sexual).
- This leads to fear of openness, low self esteem, withdrawal and depression sometimes leading to suicide (being unable to cope with problems).
- Unemployment: young persons do not see employment opportunities within the Anjuman and so lack willingness to serve the Anjuman.

These are some of the issues that we have to address in our society and we note that there is, particularly as I have heard from people in Holland, a scarcity of suitable educational material on Islam and Ahmadiyyat or there is a lack of persons to properly impart it (reading it on the internet is not enough). So my dear sisters and brothers I want to suggest certain proposals here for the Ahmadiyya djamats to keep the youth within Islam and to feed them, to nourish them and to fertilise them with the principles of Islam. To have that opportunity to keep the young people together there should be:
• More inter djamaat activities (international youth conference where at least one youth should be sent (financed) by their Anjuman).

• In every country there should be a core group of youths representing the main body of youths should develop plans for the development of youth. The Anjuman can approved and allocate mechanisms and resources to facilitate and implement approved projects.

• Availability of government funding for cultural projects.

• Peer counselling-training especially Islamic training.

• Special emphasis on girls and women. There should be women who are also authorities on Quran especially on issues such as marriage, divorce, polygamy, domestic violence, etc.

• And of course there should be inter-religious associations with youths from Hindus and Christians an Jews to formulate common programmes to resolve social problems and especially to explain the Ahmadiyya approach to Islam.

We have to appreciate and we have to understand that there is a lot that we can do for our youth. And I hope and pray that with this sort of encouragement and perhaps with further discussions our young people will rise up to the occasion to understand that Islam and the Ahmadiyya movement has the nurturance for your growth and development so that you can become upstanding citizens in the country in which you are growing up.

May Allah shower his choicest blessings upon each and everyone of you. May He bless you, may He reward you for your efforts and may He raise from among your young people men and women who will carry forth the banner of this noble religion, Islam.

Thank you very much.

Question: In the Netherlands we face difficulties in attracting the youth to the jamaat. If this is also the case in foreign Jamaats I would like to know how they cope with this problem?

Answer: In the U.S.A. this problem doesn’t occur. The area here is very large and the Jamaats are far apart from each other and consist of four or five families. The Islam is thought to the children by their parents. In Trinidad the Jamaat has made an inventory of the Youths after consulting them about their problems. Based upon this inventory programs are developed to impart them in the Jamaat and to let them know that the Jamaat needs them. Children from primary school going to secondary school also receive a certificate from the Jamaat, showing our appreciation.

Question: Whenever Youths go to the Masjid with questions concerning the Sharia, they are not answered. What is your advice?

Answer: The clergy leaders should be thought how to propagate Islam in these modern societies. They shouldn’t stick to the traditional explanation of the Sharia, but they should also take into account the present-day society.
Tolerance is defined as the capacity to respect the nature, beliefs and behaviour of others, and a tolerant person or system is one, who or which is inclined to tolerate the beliefs, practices and traits of others and who or which is forbearing.

In order to determine how tolerant a religion is, one would first have to see what the Holy Scripture of that religion has to say about the nature, the beliefs and behaviour of non-followers as compared to its followers, and secondly what the attitude and behaviour of the founder of the religion and his immediate followers had been towards the non-adherents of that religion.

General principles necessary for religious tolerance.
There are three General principles which are crucial in deciding whether a religion is likely to be tolerant of other religions or not:

1. **The first principle** is: how does the holy scripture of that religion view the spiritual nature of its own adherents as compared with non-followers? If it considers its own adherents as spiritually superior simply because they belong to that religion or a certain group or nation or geographical area, then this deals a deathblow to the concept of tolerance, because if it considers fellow human beings belonging to a different religion as a spiritually inferior nature, then it logically follows that their beliefs and behaviour are inferior, and therefore it will be less likely to tolerate them.

2. **The second important principle** is: how the Holy scripture of that religion regards the nature of the relationship of the Divine Being to its own followers as compared to followers of other religions. That is, does God have a special relationship which favours a group of people simply because they belong to a certain religion or tribe or nation or geographical area? If this is the case, then this will also deal a severe blow to tolerance, as the beliefs and practices of any other party will be considered inferior and will be less likely to be tolerated.

3. **The third principle** is: how does a religion view its Divine Scripture and its Prophet or Messenger or founder as compared to the Divine scriptures and founders of other religions. Does it claim that only its revealed scripture and its messenger, founder or prophet are true, and the truth has been revealed only to him? In that case it would imply that messages and messengers of all other groups are false and therefore would be less likely to be tolerated. In fact, suppressing other faiths would almost be considered a virtue in this case.

4. **The final and perhaps the most important parameter** to consider is whether tolerance was practiced by the founder of the religion and his immediate followers. In other words, can the principles of tolerance preached by that religion be put in practice. If such is not the case, then no matter how lofty the principles, they are useless, because they are not able to contribute to the good of humanity.

**Spiritual nature**
The first point to consider is how Islam views the spiritual nature of Muslims as compared to non-Muslims.
In Islam all human beings whether Muslim or non-Muslim have the same soul and therefore have the same spiritual nature. This soul is the spirit of God which is breathed into man.

15:29 "So when I have made him complete and breathed into him of My spirit, fall down making obeisance to him."
It is by this soul or spirit of God within him that man recognizes God, and it is this soul which possesses the divine qualities which we recognize as spiritual and moral such as mercy, love, kindness, justice, truthfulness, graciousness, honesty etc.

7:172 And when thy Lord brought forth the children of Adam, from their loins, their descendants and made them bear witness among themselves: "Am I not your Lord?" They said: "Yes, we bear witness." Last you should say on the day of Resurrection: "We were unaware of this."

95:4 "Certainly We created man in the best make."

30:30 "So set thy face for religion, being upright, the nature made by Allah in which He has created man. There is no altering Allah's creation. That is the right religion – but most people know not - ."

Thus all men whether non Muslim or Muslim have the same divine attributes in them and the same capacity to develop these divine spiritual and moral qualities:

91:9,10 "He is indeed successful who causes it to grow. And he indeed fails who buries it."
This principle of the equality of souls is actually due to those Prime attributes of God mentioned in the Sura Fatiha, that is, His Mercy (Rahma), and Justice (Adl).

Rahma or Mercy means to have so much love or tenderness for a thing that one must do good to it. Thus God is the Rahman (Beneficent) i.e. He does good to His creation out of His love for it, without the creation having done anything to deserve it, and He is the Raheem (Merciful) i.e. one who does abundant good to his creation through the same love when the creation does the right thing to deserve it. This attribute of love and beneficence is so important that Almighty God has made this attribute binding upon Himself:

6:12 Say: To whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth? Say: To Allah. He has ordained mercy on Himself. He will certainly gather you on the Resurrection day - there is no doubt about it. Those who have lost their souls will not believe.

The second attribute is His perfect justice (Adl) which is a component of His being the Master of the Day of Judgment (Malik-I-Yaumideen)

Thus, in Islam, God’s Mercy, Love and Justice demand that all human beings be created equal with the same divine qualities and with the same capacity to develop them.

Therefore, it becomes necessary for Muslims to love and respect all human beings as they all have the same soul which is derived from the spirit of God and which possesses divine qualities.

Thus the first condition or principle for tolerance that all men Muslim or non Muslim have the same spiritual nature is established in Islam. If any Muslim does not believe in the equality of the spiritual nature of men, then he or she is going against the principles of Islam and the Nature of God.

Relationship of God to man:

The second point to explore is whether or not Muslims have a special favoured relationship with God which makes them superior to non-Muslims simply because they are Muslims.

In the Holy Quran God Always refers to Himself as the Rabb (Lord or more properly Nourishes unto perfection) The divine attribute of Rabb is defined as the fostering of a thing so as to make it attain one stage after another till it reaches perfection. In the Holy Quran always refers to Himself as the Rabb or Lord of all men, never as the Lord of Muslims or Arabs, or any tribal or national group.

2:21 O men, serve your Lord Who created you and those before you, so that you may guard against evil.

Furthermore the principle according to which God deals with men is clearly laid down:

2:62 Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews and the Christians and the Sabians whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, they have their reward with their Lord and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve.

2:111,112 And they say: None shall enter the Garden except he who is a Jew or the Christians. These are their vain desires. Say: Bring your proof if you are truthful. Nay, whoever submits himself entirely to Allah and he is the doer of good (to others), he has his reward from his Lord, and there is no fear for such nor shall they grieve.

49:13 O mankind surely We have created you from a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other. Surely the noblest of you with Allah is the most dutiful of you. Surely Allah is Knowing, Aware.

Thus, in Islam, belonging to any particular group per se does not confer any special relationship with God, rather it is entire submission to God and the doing of good to His creatures that brings man closer to God by developing the divine qualities in his soul and which is the true source of salvation. Not only does God not favour Muslims simply because they happen to be Muslim, but, in the Holy Quran, He mentions the presence of good people among other religions with a revealed book, and also considers their houses of worship as places where God’s name is remembered much:

22:40 Those who are driven from their homes without a just cause except that they say: Our Lord is Allah. And if Allah did not reveal some people by others, cloisters, and churches, and synagogues, and mosques in which Allah’s name is much remembered, would have been pulled down. And surely Allah will help him who helps Him. Surely Allah is Strong, Mighty.

Furthermore, God in the Holy Quran strongly disapproves of ascribing purity to oneself and loves those who are humble:
Than We have given the Book as inheritance to those whom We have chosen from among Our servants: so of them is he who takes a middle course, and of them is he who is foremost in deeds of goodness by Allah’s permission. That is the great grace.

And the servant of the Beneficent are they who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say, Peace.

In fact claiming to be superior to someone simply on the basis of ones birth or origin is wrong because it is the devil who says that

He said: What hindered thee that thou didst not submit when I commanded thee? He said: I am better than be; Thou hast created me of fire, while him Thou didst create of dust.

Therefore arrogance such as this strikes a death blow to spiritual development

Furthermore God has given free will to man to choose the way because without free will spiritual progress cannot occur.

We have truly shown him the ways; he may be thankful or unthankful.

And say: The Truth is from your Lord; so let him who please believe, and let him who please disbelieve.

Surely We have prepared for the ingenuous a Fire, an enclosure of which will encompass them. And if they cry for water, they are given water like molten brass, scalding their faces. Evil the drink! And ill the resting-place!

Clear proofs have indeed come to you from your Lord; so whoever sees, it is for his own good; and whoever is blind, it is to his own harm. And I am not a keeper over you.

Compulsion in religion is totally forbidden in Islam, and this is no more clearly stated in verse 2:256 which should be considered the Magna Carta of religious tolerance.

There is no compulsion in religion – the right way is indeed clearly distinct from error. So whoever disbelieves in the devil and believes in Allah, he indeed lays hold on the firmest handle which shall never break. And Allah is Hearer, Knower.

The principle of religious tolerance has not been laid down so clearly in any other Sacred book.

Therefore Islam fulfills the second criteria for religious tolerance by teaching that God has a loving relationship with all men, that compulsion in matters of religion is totally prohibited, and relationship with God is built up by Obedience to God and service to his creatures. Because, this is the way that man perfects the divine attributes within himself and draws closer to God.

The Quranic view of other divine scriptures and Prophets or founders of other Religions.

The third point to consider is the Quranic view of the divine scriptures of other religions and their founders.

The Holy Quran states that all prophets and scriptures are from God. That God in his Infinite Love and Mercy (Rahma) has not left man in darkness after his creation but has sent his guidance through revelation to his messengers ever since the creation of man for his spiritual development to make him fit for an everlasting life in the hereafter with God:

Surely We have sent thee with the Truth as a bearer of good news and a warner. And there is not a people but a warner has gone among them.

And for every nation there is a messenger. So when their messenger comes, the matter is decided between them with justice, and they are not wronged.

Furthermore the messengers are not limited to prophets mentioned in the Quran:

And (We sent) messengers We have mentioned to thee before and messengers We have not mentioned to thee. And also to Moses Allah addressed His word, speaking (to him).

There is a hadith (saying) of the Holy Prophet which states that 144,000 prophets had been sent to mankind from the creation of Adam till the time of the Holy Prophet.

In Islam the scriptures of all other religions are considered as having a divine origin as they are the revelations sent down with the prophets. The Holy Quran when requiring belief in itself also requires Muslims to believe in the previous scriptures.

And who believe in that which has been revealed to thee and that which was revealed before thee, and of the Hereafter they are sure.

The Holy Quran emphasizes that Islam is not any radically new religion, but that it is the same message which God has sent to mankind through his messengers through the ages. The message being to serve and obey God and do good to His creatures. In fact the Holy Quran considers itself as incorporating the
best of the previous books, attesting to the truth of previous scriptures and acting as a guardian over them:

98:3 Wherein are (all) right books.

2:41 And believe in that which I have revealed, verifying that which is with you, and be not the first to deny it; neither take a mean price for My messages; and keep your duty to Me, Me alone.

5:48 And We have revealed to thee the Book with the truth, verifying that which is before it of the Book and a guardian over it, so judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and follow not their low desires (turning away) from the truth that has come to thee. For every one of you We appointed a law and a way. And if Allah had pleased He would have made you a single people, but that He might try you in what He gave you. So vie one with another in virtuous deeds. To Allah you will all return, so He will inform you of that wherein you differed.

The only difference being that the holy prophet Muhammad was the last in this long line of Prophets and was sent for all mankind and that the final message, the Holy Quran, was such that it was meant for all ages and circumstances and would never be lost or corrupted. Thus Muslims respect and love the founders of all religions as genuine prophets of God and consider their divine scriptures as revelation from the All Mighty. They are specifically forbidden to abuse the religion of others and commanded to obey the rules of civility in their propagation efforts:

6:108 And if Allah had pleased, they would not have set up others (with Him). And We have not appointed thee a keeper over them, and thou are not placed in charge of them.

16:125 Call to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and argue with them in the best manner. Surely thy Lord knows best him who strays from His path, and He knows best those who go right.

The example of the Holy Prophet and his followers:

The Holy prophet Muhammad (pbuh) gave a practical example of toleration when he housed the Christian delegation from Najran in the Prophet's mosque and when he gave them permission to perform their services in the mosque. Not a single instance of forced conversion can be cited in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. This is even more remarkable in that the last thirteen years were a period of war when under ordinary circumstances excesses of this kind are frequently committed, but no such incident can be found in the Prophet's life. This tolerant spirit was again demonstrated in the hour of victory by the Holy Prophet when no one was forcibly converted after the bloodless conquest of Makkah. Persons who had killed his closest relatives and friends, often in the most cruel manner, now stood helpless before him. Any ordinary person would have yielded to the desire for revenge. But the Holy Prophet and his companions, following his example, pardoned and forgave them. No other instance of such unparalleled forgiveness and tolerance on such a large scale can be cited in history.

The love of the Holy prophet for humanity and his concern about their fallen state was so great that, in the Holy Quran, he is depicted as almost killing himself with grief sorrowing after them.

18:6 Then maybe thou wilt kill thyself with grief, sorrowing after them, if they believe not in this announcement.

After the passing away of the Holy Prophet Muhammad the same spirit of tolerance was maintained by his followers. The friendly meeting of Hazrat Umar with the Bishop of Jerusalem after the surrender of Jerusalem to the Muslims is well known. During this meeting, when the time for prayer came, the Bishop offered the church premises for Hazrat Umar to perform his prayers. But Hazrat Umar refused, saying that if he said his prayers in the church, he feared that sometime in the future later Muslims may try to convert the church into a mosque using the excuse that Umar had once prayed in the church. Again one may turn the pages of history in vain trying to find an example of such care, concern and tolerance. This is even more remarkable in that this took place at the very time when the Muslims were locked in a life and death struggle with the adherents of that very faith!

The presence of hundreds of thousands of Christians and Hindus in areas which were and are under Muslims control attests to the tolerant nature of Islam. On a personal level, perhaps, there can be no closer and loving relationship than that between a husband and wife. Islam allows Muslims to marry women of the people of the book. This single fact alone should convince any fair-minded person of the breadth and depth of tolerance in Islam.
Thus the principles on which tolerance is based: that is the equality of the human soul, the fact that no special relationship exists between God and Muslims simply because they are Muslims, and that all religions and prophets are from God is firmly established in Islam.

Question: I was born in a Muslim family and I don't know better than that Islam is superior to all other religions. I am privileged. How is it determined there someone will be born? Do we all have equal chances?

Answer: Allah knows best. He only knows when and where someone will be born. We cannot fathom that. We all have equal chances. When we feel privileged and superior, we should do so in total humbleness.

Only Iblis says he is superior because he was made out of fire and the humans out of dust.

Question: You have argued that a Muslim may marry a woman, even though she is not a Muslim. But she is a follower of another Holy Script; must she embrace Islam?

Answer: There is no compulsion in religion. She may keep her religion.

Question: All Prophets mentioned in the Book were send to the nations with the same message. How come there are so many different religions?

Answer: Geographically viewed, the message couldn't reach all the nations. It depended on the place, the circumstances and the need. Islam is the perfection of all those religions, which were always the same. The name was never changed.
Session VI  The essence of being a Muslim by Haroen Badloe

The true Muslim believes that Allah's creation has meaning and that we, in this life, should work towards a superior goal, far above the intellectual and material needs of man(kind). If we believe, which I assume, then the goal of this life is to serve Allah. However, this is not a simple task, and does not automatically mean that we should spend our lives in total isolation and constant meditation. Unfortunately in general the Muslim has not understood this. To serve Allah is to know Him. To obey Him, to worship Him, to praise Him, to follow His path (Sirat al-mostaqim), to uphold His laws in all aspects of our lives, to do the right thing and to avoid all negative matters, to be just towards Him, towards ourselves and towards our fellow men. Now that you hear all of this it sounds familiar and relatively normal. No problem. But which of the lives of conduct as mentioned above do you observe?

In my view, to know Allah involves to enjoy this life and at the same time to take into account the fact that we have to return to Him some day. So we do not have to walk away from life with the Islam as our guideline. To glory and praise Allah means that we fill ourselves with His superior attributes. If for instance we want to feel His love, then we will all have to give love to others. If we want His forgiveness then we will also have to forgive others. I immediately admit that this is not an easy task. Nor is it an oversimplification of this matter. It is comprehensive and decisive. If this life has a certain goal and mankind has to work towards this goal, then he has to accept the responsibilities which are attached to this goal, and he cannot avoid them. Mankind cannot deny his or her existence, nor can he or she ignore the vital role which has to be fulfilled in that matter. What I assume, is that when Allah holds him responsible for certain responsibilities, Allah provides him with all the necessary help and support. He gives him the knowledge and power to make the right choices and to undertake the right actions. Mankind is strongly recommended to give an outmost effort in order to serve the goal of his existence. If mankind fails to do this, or misuses his life, or does not observe his obligations, he will be called to account.


The humankind has been called "Ashrefael-machlock" by Allah, which means that by Him he has the highest status of all His creatures. Mankind holds this unique position because he has been gifted with rational abilities, intellectual aspirations and the power to act well thought-out. But the higher in rank, the bigger our responsibilities. That is why Allah has empowered us with the power of authority and moreover He has made us dignified and honest / upright. Sounds good you probably say, but how dignified do we actually behave ourselves and how upright are we? Mankind has allocated other matters to itself. Arrogance, hatred, envy, cruelty, unfaithfulness, deceit, and many other of these traits. Even so I add that now and again mankind is sitting on the chair of the Almighty. Allah has made this life beautiful, but we are not grateful for it. We are not damned and were born without sins, clean and pure. How far are we distanced from this life and how far are we distanced from Allah. What is essentialism that we realise that we are dignified creatures who possess the capacity to always tell the difference between right and wrong. The fact that Allah has chosen all his prophet out of mankind and not out of Angels or Djinns, proves that we are reliable and capable. We pride ourselves that we follow the Soennah of our prophet (pbuh), but how many amongst us do actually know what this means?

The non-Muslim looks at us and rightly wonders what our prophet has left behind on us. Allah forgive us. Many of us call themselves Muslim but do not follow Allah and His beloved prophet (pbuh). Many amongst us read the Quran but we do not understand it. Many amongst us say that they belong to the Oemah of the prophet but are not each others brother or sister. We share life with others but many amongst us do not accept or respect these others. We are divided and many have created an other Islam. Rightly, the non-Muslims wonder if these are various kinds of Quran. Many are guided by greed and materialistic attitude. A large part of the Muslims have raised their culture to religion and have lowered our religion to a side issue. Millions of Muslims have other Gods, the pir, the maulana, the mofifi or the Ayatollah. What they prescribe is law. For example, the graves of so-called saints and martyrs have become places of pilgrimage and the citation of the Quran has been pushed aside by Maulood sharif. The Id-ul-Fitr and the Id-ul-Adha have become less important than the Milaad-un-Nabie. The ayaats of the Holy Quran have been faded and the books of the fiqh and sharia are decisive.
Ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters in Islam, if we are not even capable of knowing our religion, how can we expect that the outside world can? Taking into account the above, I can say with certainty that if we, as Muslims, are not capable of obtaining the huge treasure of goodness which Allah has given us, we are even less capable of following the perfect example of our Rasool-Allah (pbuh). According to the Quran each human being is born as a Muslim, which means that his birth is in accordance with Allah’s will. With this Allah wants to say that each human being is born equally and possesses the same mental potentials and intellectual conditions to be able to grow into a good human being. That they later will become a Jew, a Christian or a Hindu depends totally upon the environment they grow up in. However, there is absolutely no reason to not accept them and to abandon their religion. The Quran says clearly: “There is no compulsion in religion (la iqra fieddien). A Muslim is not superior to another human being or vice versa.

A Muslim has to be convinced of the necessity that religion is based on conviction and not on following blind on what he has been told. With other words, he who calls himself a Muslim by solidarity with family traditions or by marriage or by compulsion is not a complete Muslim in Allah’s eyes. A Muslim needs to base his belief on well-considered grounds and without any uncertainty. If he does not meet this, he is invited by Allah to search himself for the truth. The time that only “Moellahs” have the knowledge is no more. We have to search for the ultimate truth until we have found it, and according to the Quran we will definitely find it if we do that sincerely (The Holy Quran 2:170, 43:22-24). Because the Islam can only be complete if it is based on a strong conviction and freedom of choice, it cannot and may not be forced upon anyone. For Allah such an action is very objectionable and He only accepts the belief if it is developed by the inner of mankind. This attitude towards our belief immediately means that others are completely free in their thoughts and actions. The Islam guarantees freedom of religion of other believers and people who think differently will have to be left completely free. We are now living in a free land and are capable of practising our religion in complete freedom. No human who obliges or forces you to give up your religion (lakoem dienoekokem wa lajoed dien: for you your religion and for me mine). The above immediately entails that you have to respect the values and norms of dissenters. Even when it runs co water to your principles and conviction. This is the true face of the Islam, tolerant and peaceful shall aspects of this life.

Until today the Islamic world has not succeeded in showing the rest of the world her true face. The image which it depicts us is: intolerant and unkind. The holy war (Jihad) is frightening by many western people. This word which is often used by so-called leaders of the Islam has a whole other meaning than war. The Jihad al Kabir (the big Jihad) is all about convincing others about the truthfulness of the Islam in a peaceful way. So Jihad with in the hand the Quran and not the “sword”. The Jihad al Asghar (the small Jihad) is only admitted when there is an attack. So only as a defence.

Culture and Religion
The rules of conduct and the laws which have been established by Allah in the Quran and which have been put into practice by the holy Prophet, are irrevocable and not subject to adapt ions or changes. How does it happen that there are so many differences within our religion. In the first place we have to acknowledge that each Islamic group with its own cultural manifestation has come into the religion. It goes without saying that these cultural influences differ enormously. Throughout the centuries these influences have melted together with religion in such a way that it is hard to tell the difference between Islam and Culture. So for the western world it is very easy to ascribe every negative case within a certain Islamic group or country to the Islam. We and not the western world are responsible for the fact that our perfect religion is portrayed as malignant and intolerant. Of course the media apply double standards: if a Moroccan did something then a Muslim did it. If the Arabs suppress their wives then it is prescribed by Islam, but if a Christian lets explode a bomb in a building in Oklahoma then a sick man did it. An attack on the Twin Towers, however, was done by Muslims. The Islam has now become the most serious threat to the west. The entire Islamic world now has to pay the sick ideals of a bunch of idiots. Their acts are un-Islamic and objectionable. Their actions are only dictated by their cultural backgrounds.

Relationships
Relationships are going so much further than in the domestic sphere or the family bounds and in fact they have no bounds. In the Quran Allah says: O you who believes, fulfill all your obligations (HQ 5:1). With so
few words Allah has put forward the heart and soul of human behaviours towards his fellowman. With so few words the essence of being a Muslim has been determined. Here Allah has laid the foundation of respect and sincerity, of love, peace, rest and calmth. By serving Allah, humankind strengthens his inner and he is capable of approaching others justly. How to serve Allah has been entirely established in the Quran and in the Soennah of the Holy Prophet (pbuh).

The essence
To say the Kalma Shahadat does not makes you a Muslim. One has to do this in full conviction, so with heart and soul. To believe in the Islam is far from something nominal and not merely formal. To believe in the Islam is a condition of peacefulness, acquiesced by virtuousness, positive actions and constructive conceptions as well as exert dynamic and effective standards. What do we understand by that?

- To believe unconditionally in Allah and His Prophet (pbuh)
- To ply the holy Quran as the guidance in our lives
- To follow the Soennah of the holy Prophet
- To implement the five pillars of the Islam in our every day life
- To dispose the Islam of all impurities, traditions and habits

What do we have to do?
- Stop regarding all kinds of superficial acts and rituals as Islamic
- Abstain from absurd formalities, non-effective values and impure statements of religion
- Avoid all forms of shirk
- Respect one’s own life and that of others
- All religions are derived from Allah and need to be accepted and respected
- Practice justice in all our deeds and actions
- Always proclaim the truth
- Obey the laws and rules of the country in which one lives, if they are not against Allah’s rules
- Women should stop pointing out the position they received from Allah and his Prophet (pbuh), but actually demand that position
- Young people should be shown that the Islam is not old-fashioned but for all times. To be “modern” is a gift from Allah. They have to make sure that they (and we) will not cross the boundaries of what is admitted.

Praise to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.

**Discussion**

Question: What would the prophet (pbuh) do, with regard to the present situation in the world (attacks of 11 September 2001)?
Answer: He (pbuh) would never have approved it. It is not allowed in Islam to take your own life, nor that of others. It is absolutely inadmissible. They do this in the name of Islam, but in the true sense of the word they are not Muslims. The prophet (pbuh) would have advised them to study the Quran.

Question: Where and how do we find Allah? Can we call an Indian who thinks of a tree as his God, a heathen?
Answer: You can find Allah in your heart and soul. You can find Him in your Salaat when you pray. Anyone who submits to Allah finds him. You don’t have to be a Muslim to find him. Allah is never far away. If you implement his attributes; honestly, love, righteousness and peace in your lives, you have found him already. Allah says: I am closer to your carotid.

Question: If we look at terrorism, can we say that there are many Muslims in the world, but few believers?
Answer: Terrorism has nothing to do with Islam, it is a political problem. Terrorist say that they act according to the Quran, but perhaps they have never studied the Quran. Statements from the Quran are taken out of their context. Cultural convictions and side issues are attributed to Islamic laws. If in Arabia women are oppressed, it’s Islam that oppresses women.

Question: Is there any proof that the perpetrators of the terrorist actions in America are Muslims?
Answer: It doesn’t matter whether they were Muslims, Christians, Jews or heathens. Their action is inhuman and should be condemned.
Closing speech by Governor of the Province of South Holland, Mr. J. Franssen

Mr. president, ladies and gentlemen,

I thank you very much for inviting me to say some words to you today, at the end of this conference. I came here today because I am the Governor of a province which inhabits some three and a half million people and in which our multicultural society is most visible. I am also here today as the president of the Dutch Institute for Multicultural Development called FORUM. The government wanted some individual organisations to become one institute and so FORUM was established six years ago. It was established not only to pay attention mostly to certain groups in society but also to the Dutch multicultural society in Holland. To make sure what a multicultural society really is and what it should be to make it possible for different groups to live together in our country. To form a partnership, i.e. a group of people striving for a mutual kind of living together, is not easily done. I will come to this later.

Here in front of you, stands also regular Dutch guy from the polder. I have brought my own history and now, I am 50 years old, I see things that I, looking back to my own childhood and to the development of Holland through so many years, can place so well in the perspective of today.

I was born in a reformed family, however, the heavy kind of reformed people, the reformed Union. Its members are people who are certain views on Protestantism and the women are characterised as “women wearing hats in church and a woman’s place is in the kitchen”.

I was born in a country where not only Catholic people live next to Protestant people and Lutherans, but also a country with a very heterogeneous protestant way of living. The misunderstandings or different ways of living within these groups of people often have their origins in the different opinions on how to interpret the Bible and many times also on how the culture of a certain religion should be experienced.

What we thus have to be careful about is not translating different opinions on how to organise a society into different opinions on religion in which the culture has a dominant position.

I have been mayor of Zwolle, a city not far from the beautiful village Staphorst. Every Dutch citizen knows about Staphorst. It is the centre of orthodox Protestantism and that way of living is visible there everyday. There are no women on the council or in public offices, not even in church. And every Sunday the women go to church with their heads covered. Well, I still do not understand why that is accepted in the Dutch society while there are also different opinions on the Islamic community. I see here today women with their heads covered. I also see women with, I’m sorry I don’t know the word for it, something of a veil on their heads. And I see women who do not have their heads covered at all. Whether it has to do with religion or culture, probably the last, I do not know. But what I want to say is that this has apparently become a new issue in Dutch society but actually also has its roots in the Dutch history of Protestantism and Christianity. And than there is another aspect. Our society has always been a diverse one, it has a tradition and history of discord. It has always developed, however, in a positive way because the political leaders have always agreed with each other how and that everyone should be able to live their own lives. But now there is another difficult aspect to consider. Every society which has a positive economic development and in which more people gain knowledge, in which more people have access to material things and in which the media is always present, in that society the question is no longer whether political leaders agree with each other but whether we can have mutual respect and tolerance among one another.

And that is why meeting with each other, like you have done today, is from the utmost importance. Because you have to start in your own circle, your own community to talk to each other and think about the fundamental values you want to bring into your everyday life regardless of your religious background. I just heard the scholars say: “You don’t need to be a Muslim to be a Muslim”. And that is in fact not different from what Christianity tells us. When I heard this today I was deeply moved. Because I have heard so many things of which I wondered: I was raised with the Christian faith and I have not abandoned that faith but, is there so much difference between the fundamental values of Islam and that of Christianity? I will modestly answer that question with “no”. And thus what we see is that we have to
learn to live with each other in peace and with respect for each other no matter what colour we are, where we come from and what personal beliefs we have. It will become easier to respect one another when major differences are eliminated. Our crown prince recently said that poverty and isolation lead people to do horrible things and I think it is therefore the duty of political leaders, regardless from what society, to make sure that the society develops in such a way that horrible actions will not occur. However, even if you are poor or socially isolated, that does not give you permission to do such deeds. It does not matter who did it or where he or she comes from or what race or colour that person has. It is not about the difference between east and west or between a democratic and non-democratic state and it is not about the difference between Muslims and Christians. It is about whether civilised people in our society can do such things to each other. And now I feel more than ever committed to do my part in making sure that there is room for everybody in our society. That is why I am very happy to be here today, closing off the conference: to do my part in achieving that people talk to and live with each other respectfully.

I wish you all the best, not only to gain more confidence for yourself but also to confront others with your head held up high. After all, meeting with each other is the basis of getting to know each other. And only when we know each other we can respect each other and that will make our society wealthy.
Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam on the internet

The homepage of the Central Anjuman Lahore:

http://www.aaill.org

The homepage of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam (Lahore) Nederland:

http://www.aailln.org

The homepage of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam USA:

http://www.muslim.org

The homepage of the Stichting Ahmadiyya Isha’at-i-Islam:

http://www.moslim.org
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