

*The Aims of the Three Faiths Forum • To encourage friendship, goodwill and understanding amongst people of the three monotheistic faiths in the UK and elsewhere • To promote support for and public recognition of the importance of groups where people of the Muslim, Christian and Jewish faiths meet and share common interests and experiences • To encourage respect for religious differences between the three faiths on a basis of equality and exploring and enjoying those differences where appropriate • To promote training of ministers of religion of the three faiths in their common roots, understanding of their differences and encourage respect for each other on a basis of equality.*

## **Forum issues strong statement after London Bombings**

***As we mourn the victims of the savage assault on the people of London and pray for the recovery of those still in hospital, we, the co-founders of the Three Faiths Forum, urge our fellow citizens to reach out to each other and join us in denying any victory to the forces of darkness and evil which would split our society asunder.***

***Representing the three great Abrahamic faiths, Christianity, Islam and Judaism, we stand upon the absolute right of all men and women to live in peace without fear or threat and hold out the hand of brotherhood to all those who stand with us.***

***We salute the security forces, the public services and all those nurses and doctors who worked so valiantly, and are still working, to rescue and heal the injured. They and all the families who have suffered are in our prayers whatever our faith.***

## In brief

“We will certainly consider setting up an Interfaith Association in our country” said the Minister for External Affairs of Cameroon when he, together with the High Commissioner of Cameroon, HE Mr. Samuel Libock Mbei, met with Sir Sigmund Sternberg and Sidney Shipton OBE. After hearing a presentation on the work of the Three Faiths Forum, the Minister said he was sure that his government in Cameroon would be only too happy to welcome such an initiative.

“Questions of capacity and not only mental capacity are under discussion,” said Martin Aaron, President of the Jewish Association for the Mentally Ill, who gave a presentation on the proposed new mental health legislation to the Three Faiths Forum Medical group.

A dinner in tribute to Ethan Goldrich, First Secretary at the US Embassy, London, and Mrs Goldrich, on the eve of their departure for Libya to take up a new diplomatic post, was hosted by the Three Faiths Forum at the home of Sir Sigmund and Lady Sternberg in April. Mr Goldrich spoke of his pleasure at having been able to work with the Three Faiths Forum which had opened the door for him to the good work being done in Britain to stimulate interfaith dialogue.



**Zaki Badawi with his wife on receiving an Honorary Doctor of Laws from Glasgow Caledonian University.**

# Remembrance and hope in wake of London bombings

**Organised by the Three Faiths Forum, Central London Mosque & Islamic Cultural Centre, and the St John's Wood Churches, and sponsored by Liberal Judaism, The Liberal Jewish Synagogue hosted a multi-faith service in July in the aftermath of the terror attacks in London on 7th July.**

Jews, Christians, Muslims and members of the Diplomatic Corps joined together in a service of remembrance and hope, to reflect on the hope expressed in the three Abrahamic traditions and to commit themselves to continued dialogue in the future. After a moving service led by Rabbi Alexandra Wright, the Revd Dr Anders Bergquist, and Sheikh Salah al-Ansari, HE Mr Mohammed Belmahi, the Ambassador of Morocco, spoke about the 300 years of good relations between Muslims and Jews, which continues to this day.

Sir Sigmund Sternberg said *“The very fact that we are here together today is in itself the most telling response to the criminal bombers whose*

*sole purpose was to blow us apart.”* Rabbi David Goldberg, Emeritus Rabbi, The Liberal Jewish Synagogue said: *“Today's service brings together Jews, Christians and Muslims in shared grief and condemnation of the carnage inflicted on London.*

*We must pledge to work together to create a just society in which those of every faith, and none, can live together in peace tolerance and mutual respect.”*

Sheikh Dr Zaki Badawi concluded his speech and the service by saying that *“If everyone were filled with love, there would be no room for hate.”*

*US Ambassador, HE Mr Robert Tuttle, was present at his first public appearance.*

***“If everyone were filled with love, there would be no room for hate.”***

## Sir Ian Blair addresses Forum over terror attacks

**The Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service, Sir Ian Blair, addressed the Advisory Board of the Three Faiths Forum in Central London in July.**

Sir Ian spoke about the need for dialogue between different faith communities at this critical time and said that it was only by the Muslim community engaging with the authorities that terrorism could be tackled. He said it was vital that the *“moment was seized”* in terms of engagement by the Muslim community in helping to identify vulnerable young people who were heading towards extremism.

He was confident that if the Muslim community could move from denial to a sense of positive engagement, other communities would help them. He described the recent terrorism attacks in London as un-Islamic but done in the name of Islam, and said they were a *“perversion”* of the ideology. It was essential to identify the preachers of hate: such people could no longer be ignored in view of their clear influence on the young.

The Commissioner also stressed that it was essential for the Police to become far more representative of Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Jewish communities. He valued the contribution made by the Community Security Trust, which worked on behalf of the Jewish community, and said that working with organisations such as the Three Faiths Forum was vital. Sir Sigmund Sternberg and Sheikh Dr Zaki Badawi, welcomed the comments from the Commissioner and said that they appreciated all the hard work being carried out by the emergency services.



## More News in brief

Sidney Shipton was the only participant from Britain at the NATO Advanced Research Workshop on 'Security and Migrations in the Mediterranean', held under the auspices of the Portuguese National Institute of Defence. He will also be speaking at an interfaith conference in Sarajevo in November.

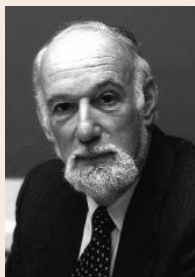
The South East London Three Faiths Forum held an evening at Lewisham Town Hall in September where the subject of 'Wedding Practices of each of the three faiths' was discussed. They also held a walk in Greenwich Park over the Summer with all three faiths well represented.

On Tuesday 9th November at 8pm at St Lawrences Church in Catford, The South East London Three Faiths Forum will be holding an evening of topical issues and discussion relevant to the three faiths. All are welcome.

Sidney Shipton has spoken recently about interfaith relations in Barnet, Woodside Park, Richmond, Cockfosters, Edgware. He also recently met with Manchester's First Muslim Lord Mayor Councillor Mohammed Afzal Khan.

## Introducing...

Neville Nagler, who as a member of the Advisory Board of the Three Faiths Forum, also remains as the Interfaith Consultant to the Board of Deputies of British Jews on his retirement as Director General.



A delegation of the Islamic Foundation for Peace and Development, a group of concerned Muslims, under the leadership of His Eminence Sheikh Yahaya Amin met with Sir Sigmund Sternberg and Sidney Shipton recently. The foundation, founded in Ghana in June 2003, were visiting London under the auspices of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the meeting followed the expressed wish of the delegation to learn something of the work of the Three Faiths Forum in promoting dialogue between faiths.

# Grand Mufti meets the Three Faiths Forum

**The Grand Mufti of Bosnia, Dr Mustafa Ceric, visited the offices of the Three Faiths Forum during his current visit to London's Muslim community.**

Dr Ceric reported that progress was being made in developing reconciliation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, although it was vital to proceed with the war crimes trials taking place in The Hague, so that the world could recognise the kind of actions that are inadmissible in today's world.

He also believed it important to review the Dayton Accord in order to create a more workable constitution for Bosnia, based on democracy and human rights. It was also necessary to settle the right of return for victims of the ethnic cleansing which took place during the war in Bosnia. In his view, the long-term future for Bosnia lay within Europe and he hoped that the day would come when Bosnia could become an integral part of the EU.

In discussing the Israel-Palestinian conflict, Dr Ceric was moderately optimistic. As one whose ancestors in Sarajevo had welcomed Jews expelled from Spain in 1492, he understood the suffering on both sides. It was a tragedy in which places sacred to the three Abrahamic faiths were desecrated. He regretted the anti-Jewish incitement that has been so widespread in the Arab media.

He also wished to see the United States administration more involved in the peace

process, but stated that progress would come about only through patience and a sense of justice. He further expressed that the West should not ignore its friends in the Muslim world; nor should Muslims ignore the efforts of those in the West who are working to secure peace.

Dr Ceric suggested that the Islamic world felt somewhat defensive in the face of the international war against terror. This tended to make it more intolerant and to accentuate differences between the faiths. He said that it was unfortunate, for example, that some sections of Britain's Muslim community had boycotted the recent national commemorations of Holocaust Memorial Day.

*"Dr Ceric is one of the most tolerant and accessible leaders of Islam," commented Sir Sigmund. "It is always a joy to listen to his wise remarks, and we have shared many platforms including the World Economic Forum in Davos, which he is a regular attendee. I have urged him to do all he can to ensure that his opinions reach the widest possible audience. I have also suggested that the Bosnian Embassy should arrange a seminar as soon as possible so that these issues can be explored more fully in the presence of a larger group of religious leaders."*

***"...one of the most tolerant and accessible leaders of Islam."***

# Unique tribute paid to Pope

In April a unique tribute took place at the West London Synagogue to commemorate the life of Pope John Paul II.

The Synagogue was filled to capacity for this interfaith tribute, reflecting the remarkable respect and admiration which people outside the Catholic Church feel for the late Pope. The tribute included participants from all sections of the Jewish community, together with leading representatives from the Muslim, Christian and Zoroastrian communities.

Prayers were led by the West London Synagogue's Senior Rabbi, Mark Winer, who observed: *"For those of us who are Jews, it is hard to imagine how any Pope or any other non-Jew might have done so much in a quarter of a century, to transform the world's view of us...Through the entirety of his blessed life, Pope John Paul II has stood out among the 'righteous of the world's peoples.'"*

Rabbi Tony Bayfield recalled the Pope's respect for Judaism and his emphasis on its sacred and valued relationship with Christianity, whilst Sheikh Dr Zaki Badawi praised his leadership in

recognising the importance of understanding and cooperation between Islam and Catholicism.

In his written tribute Sir Sigmund Sternberg, described how John Paul II was the first Pope to make reconciliation between the Church and the Jews a central feature of his Papacy. He had met the Pope on many occasions, attending his historic visit to the Great Synagogue in Rome in 1986, the first time any Pope had visited a synagogue. Sir Sigmund described

***"...a man of immense moral stature, humanity and courage..."***

the Pope as *"a man of immense moral stature, humanity and courage: all sections of the Jewish world will mourn his passing."*

The tribute included leading representatives from many religious groups and organisations. The congregation also included the Ambassador of Poland, HE Mr Zbigniew Matuszewski; the Deputy Lord Mayor of Westminster, Councillor Michael Brahams; the President of West London Synagogue, Professor Graham Zellick; and members of the Papal Knights Association.

## Belgian Ambassador hosts Three Faiths Forum seminar

*"Because I consider the activities of the Three Faiths Forum to be of great importance, I am particularly pleased to host this Interfaith Seminar at my Residence,"* said HE Baron Thierry de Gruben, Ambassador of Belgium

Sir Sigmund Sternberg outlined the recent activities of the Three Faiths Forum in bringing Muslims, Christians and Jews together, both within the UK and overseas. Dr. Badawi and Revd. Braybrooke underlined the importance of respect which people of faith should show to those of other religions. Such consideration should be fostered through better education as a basis for encouraging greater understanding and social cohesion.

The Revd. Peter Janssen of the Belgian Council of Christians and Jews spoke of the

urgent need for better dialogue in his country. He referred to the problems of secularisation and the impact of the deep-rooted disputes between the Flemish and Walloon communities in Belgium. Revd. Dick Pruiksmas of the Netherlands Council of Christians and Jews spoke about the rise of anti-Semitism and about recent faith-related murders, which were having a profound effect on interfaith work in the Netherlands. He cited the difficulties of finding Imams who spoke the language and understood the Dutch Community.

Sir Sigmund commented that this was *"an excellent event, which highlighted the significance of the work in which we are engaged. We are most grateful to the Ambassador of Belgium for hosting the Seminar and for his great support for our endeavours."*

# Interfaith initiatives in Tunisia

**An interfaith group in Tunisia is becoming a reality after a second visit by Sir Sigmund Sternberg, at the invitation of the former Tunisian Ambassador in London, Mr M Khemaies Jhinaou.**

The visit was the outcome of a conference, 'The Abrahamic faiths and a vision of peace and tolerance,' held under the auspices of the Tunisian President, Mr Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, at El Manar University, together with Ezzaitouna University.

The occupant of the Ben Ali Chair in Interreligious Dialogue, Professor Mohammed Hassine Fantar, discussed with Sir Sigmund the possibility of holding future conferences jointly with UK groups.

Addressing the annual ICCJ conference held in Chicago (to which the Three Faiths Forum is affiliated) in July, Professor Mohammed Hassine Fantar pointed out that Islam had a long history of socio-democratic and cultural progress and

development. Islam was not xenophobic, was able to co-operate with others and had recognised and even integrated others.

Everywhere in the Arab-Islamic world, he claimed there was the desire, even the will, to change. It was not acceptable *"to turn tradition into a gaol with thick walls, impenetrable darkness and clammy cold."* The way forward, as embraced by Tunisia, was *"the knowledge society: schools, universities, research centres, new technologies and communication technology everywhere and for everyone."* True knowledge, said Professor Fantar, *"leads to relativity of judgement, tolerance and – better still – acceptance for others and respect for their differences."*

## Singapore meets Forum

Mr Mohammad Alami Musa, President of the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (IRCS), together with his associates Dr Albakri bin Ahmad, Director Corporate Development and Education (IRCS) and Mr Bohari bin Jaon, Director Corporate Planning and Finance (IRCS), were guests of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in September 2005.

The purpose of the visit was to strengthen the UK's engagement with Singapore's Muslim Community, to promote interfaith dialogue and to share

successful community initiatives. The delegation discussed the situation of the Muslim Community in the UK after the events of 7 July and the issue of extremism amongst young British Muslims.

The Delegation met with the Three Faiths Forum with the intent of seeing how such work could relate to the communities in Singapore. Mr Musa express his thanks for the meeting and said he and his colleagues would actively consider the setting up a Three Faiths Forum Group in Singapore.

## Forum support for Commissioner praised

**Letter addressed to the Three Faiths Forum from Sir Ian Blair, Metropolitan Police Commissioner:**

*"I am writing to thank you all immensely for your letter of 22nd August. This has been a difficult period for people of all faiths and none I suppose it is not surprising that the media, in their inimitable way, decide to take one issue and pursue it relentlessly.*

*"However, the tide now appears to be turning and I am so grateful to you for your expression*

*of support, which, if I may be very immodest, joins a very considerable number of other letters, emails and telephone calls from people of all backgrounds expressing dismay and amazement at what has happened over the last week.*

*"We will continue to be relentless in our pursuit of those who would cause death and destruction in our midsts."*

# AROUND THE REGIONS

## LONDON BOMBS: REACTION

### **Hampshire Three Faiths Forum – Response to terror**

*“The recent terrorist threat is designed to divide us, sowing fear, hatred and suspicion in our communities. We are committed to overcoming this threat by working together to promote the true values of our respective monotheistic faiths, our belief in the integrity of all life, respect for each other in the development of peaceful, harmonious relations in our communities and the utter rejection of any form of violence.”*

### **Extract of article for ‘In my view’ – Southern Daily Echo:**

*“We do need to reach out to each other and tentatively grasp the hand of friendship from those who, though different to ‘me’ in many ways, share the same fears and aspirations, the same desire for peace and justice in our communities. There are many worthwhile inter-faith initiatives seeking to do just that in our region and one in particular, the Three Faiths Forum.”*

**Rev’d Tim Selwood. LLB. Solicitor.  
Local co-ordinator, Hampshire  
Three Faiths Forum**

## OTHER NEWS

### **We must teach interfaith dialogue**

#### **Sir Sigmund’s letter to The Telegraph – 24 August 2005**

*“In all the recent debate about A-level examinations, I have yet to notice any discussion about the content of the education on which our children are being tested and in which apparently they are doing so well. I’d like to suggest the addition of a new topic to the curriculum, one which would benefit everyone who comes through our education system and which could have a major impact on the society in which we live. I am talking about dialogue – not just the ability to converse with each other, but to do so with the purpose of listening to and learning from one another, to break down the barriers between the religions and races which comprise the citizenry of Britain today and prevent the sort of cultural isolation which leads to fear, to hatred and worse.*

*“Comparative religion, taught in some schools, is not quite the same thing as a mutual sharing between those of different faiths. How to engage in interfaith dialogue in an open, listening and respectful way is not something that comes easily but has to be learned.*

### **Straw backs interfaith**

A specially invited audience including many leading Jews, Christians and Muslims put questions to the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, at the Sternberg Centre in Finchley. A Q&A session focussed on the impact of international issues on local faith relations, funding and support for the building of a cohesive society. Jack Straw met with RSY-Netzer, the Reform Movement’s Youth Movement and was shown around the Jewish Museum at the Sternberg Centre, where he was introduced to Auschwitz survivor, Leon Greenman, whose experiences are documented in the museum. Mr Straw spoke movingly about his own great grandparents who were Jewish immigrants.

### **Surrey Forum launched**

Rabbi Danny Rich, Revd Andrew Facey and Imam Shahid Hussain launched the Surrey Three Faiths Forum earlier this year with Sydney Assor in the chair. *“The establishment of the Surrey Three Faiths Forum is a major development in the annals of our organisation, particularly its launch in Guildford Cathedral,”* observed Sir Sigmund Sternberg.

### **Faith perspectives shared at Bournemouth University**

Muslims, Christians and Jews came together at Bournemouth University to take part in a series of workshops to share their own faith perspectives on a series of issues. These ranged from ‘Food and Faith’ to ‘Global Perspectives and Sustainability’ and were led by specialists in their particular fields of interest.

### **Three Faiths Forum at Eton College**

Earlier this year, Eton College was honoured by the visit of the Chief Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Sacks, who came to give the annual Bevir Lecture. Eton College now has a Three Faiths Forum group.

### **Dar-ul-Isra Mosque open day – first event of its kind in Cardiff**

On Sunday 5th June, the Three Faiths Forum in Wales Working group organised an Open Day at the Dar-ul-Isra Mosque near the centre of Cardiff in association with the Mosque Council. It is believed that this was the first event of its kind in Cardiff.

### **Bishop of Chelmsford speaks at East London Forum**

The Bishop of Chelmsford, the Right Reverend John Gladwin, was the guest speaker at a recent meeting of the East London Three Faiths Forum. He spoke to an audience of around 120 Christians, Muslims and Jews at the Community Centre attached to the Ilford Mosque; it was probably the largest attendance at an East London Three Faiths Forum meeting to date. It was also the Bishop’s first visit to a mosque in his Diocese. His topic was: ‘The Importance of Peace in the Middle East – A Christian Perspective’.

### **Multifaith forum established at Goldsmiths College**

Atheism, agnosticism, and humanism were some of many topics discussed at the inaugural meeting of Goldsmiths College’s Multifaith Forum in April. The panel consisted of Ms. Jila Yousefzadeh (Baha’i), Rabbi James Baaden (South London Liberal Synagogue), Khushwant Singh (Sikh), Imam Shakeel Begg (Lewisham Islamic Centre), Sidney Shipton and Fr. David O’Connell (Roman Catholic Chaplain).

### **New Centre for the Study of Islam at Cardiff University**

Cardiff University is opening a new Centre for the Study of Islam in the United Kingdom in September when Lord Elis-Thomas, the Presiding Officer of the Welsh Assembly will give a presentation. The guest of honour will be Yusuf Islam, and Professor Tariq Modood of Bristol University will give a keynote lecture: ‘British Multiculturalism, where do Muslims fit in’

### **Forum message board launched**

We now have our own message board: [www.activeboard.com/forum.spark?forumID=62726](http://www.activeboard.com/forum.spark?forumID=62726)

*Come join the debate!*

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## *Patrons*

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Baroness Boothroyd  
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HRH Dom Duarte,  
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Rabbi Professor  
Jonathan Magonet

The Rt. Hon.  
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