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15th July 2010

Faith and Civic Leaders Reflect on Srebrenica Genocide with Grand Mufti of Bosnia

The East London Mosque and London Muslim Centre hosted a reception yesterday for the Grand Mufti of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Dr. Mustafa Cerić, an event attended by Muslim community leaders and civic leaders from the wider society.

A central part of the Mufti's trip to the United Kingdom is to highlight the genocide that took place in Srebrenica on 11th July 1995, when 8,000 Bosniak Muslim men and boys were massacred by Serbian forces even though Srebrenica was a designated 'safe area' under UN protection. This remains the single most worst atrocity after the holocaust during World War II, when Europe and the world promised not to let it happen ever again.

Speaking to guests at the reception, the Mufti said: "You cannot change the past, you can only shape the future. The big question is, are we doing this?"

"My duty is to let others know the date when so many of our brothers were massacred. Many people recognise the dates of 9/11 and 7/7, but 11/7 goes unrecognised.

"Religion should not be left with the clergy and politics should not be left alone with the politicians. We all have a greater role to play in society and defeating terrorism and the threats we face from people who wish to terrorise others."

Addressing the guests, the Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain, Farooq Murad spoke of the importance of remembering the horrors which unfolded 15 years ago. In a statement released earlier in the week, Murad said: "As Muslims across the UK reflect on the fifth anniversary of the London bombings and the steady rise in anti Muslim attacks from an emboldened and growing extremist far right, the Remembrance of the Srebrenica Genocide ceremony, led by the Grand Mufti of Bosnia, Dr Mustafa Cerić, reminds us all of the heinous consequences of a violent hatred for the other."

The chairman of the East London Mosque, Dr. Muhammad Abdul Bari, thanked the Mufti for taking up this issue with the European Union (EU), where he led a

successful campaign to persuade EU parliament to recognise the 11th of July as ‘a day of commemoration throughout the EU’.

He added: “Whilst Europe has come a long way in its journey towards pluralism and accommodation of diverse communities, we need to guard against rising intolerance against Muslims in some countries”

Musleh Faradhi, president of the Islamic Forum of Europe (IFE), whose organisation helped provide the launching pad for the Grand Mufti’s “Declarations for European Muslims” in 2005 reassured that “IFE would continue to support projects in Bosnia which we are already engaged in such as sponsorship of orphans.”

Maragret Minoletti reflected on her experience attending the Srebrenica memorial in 2009 as part of an interfaith delegation to Bosnia: “The trip was a very powerful and moving experience for me – something that I will not easily forget.”

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Notes to editors:

- The East London Mosque & London Muslim Centre is at the heart of London's diverse East End. The Mosque works to promote tolerance and understanding in all sectors of the community. It enjoys excellent interfaith relations. The Mosque's imams and community workers encourage active engagement in society and rejection of extremism in all its forms.
- For further information related to this event please contact:
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