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### Generating 'power' without politics

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This is certainly the most important gathering of Muslims in the short history of our presence in Britain as a substantial minority. We have come together to consider *The Muslim Manifesto* which attempts to offer a common programme that all parts of the Muslim community can pursue together. *The Muslim Manifesto* defines our situation today and sets out goals that we should attain over the next 30 years. But perhaps the most important feature of this meeting is that it is representative of all parts of the Muslim community. We are a vibrant and dynamic people. Among us there are those who are totally westernised, and there are those who, despite living in the west, have successfully remained aloof from the environment that surrounds them. We have a large working class with little formal education, but with a sense of history and occasion that makes them the bedrock of Islam. We have among us scholars with all the academic degrees that Britain has to offer. There are scientists, sociologists, doctors, dentists, accountants and computer buffs, too. Present among us are *ulama* who have specialised in Islamic learning and the art of leading the masses from the mosques. Most important of all, there is a generation born in Britain which, within 10 years or so, will take over from the first generation of immigrants.

In this sense *The Muslim Manifesto* is the platform for transition from the old to the young. There are also among us those known as 'modernists' and those known as 'traditionalists'. This dichotomy is the cause of many conflicts in modern Muslim societies. The modernists show contempt for the traditionalists, and the traditionalists, especially the *ulama*, have an equal measure of contempt for the western educated modernists. Neither can trust the other, and both blame one another for the failure of our societies to solve their problems in the 20th Century. The *ulama* accuse the modernists of having done well out of decline and failure in the colonial period. The modernists blame the *ulama* for living in the mythical past.

The fact of the matter is that, at least here in Britain, neither the 'modernists' nor the *ulama* can unite the Muslims on their own. They must either work together or others will 'divide and rule'. We in the Muslim Institute believe that the *ulama* are a great asset of our society. They ask for little, and we give them even less. The *ulama* at least do not suffer from a crisis of identity, as most of the western educated do. The time has come for us to work together, pooling our resources and ignoring each others' weaknesses. If the Muslim Institute had set out to produce a manifesto on its own, perhaps the final document may not be very different from the one you have in front of you today. But we went out of our way to create a small drafting committee of six, four of whom are *ulama*. We have worked together for over six months to iron out our problems of understanding. I believe we have achieved a cohesion and a formula with which all parts of the Muslim community can identify. And it is important that we do. Such a working cohesion across the entire Muslim spectrum in Britain will require a great deal of patience, tolerance and understanding on the part of all of us whatever our background. Unless we all, modernists and *ulama*, put our unity and common destiny above all other values, we will be swallowed up whole by you know who.

At the root of all our problems is that fact that Muslims have little experience of living as a minority in a country where we exercise

virtually no political power. Until relatively recent times Muslims lived in countries that they also ruled over, either as a majority or as a dominant minority. Muslims have vast experience of migration. Under certain circumstances, Islam prescribes migration as a duty. Indeed, the Prophet of Islam, upon whom be peace, first ordered his followers to migrate from Makkah, then himself followed them to Madinah where he established history's first Islamic State.

But, like so much else in modern Muslim behaviour, recent migration has not been undertaken in pursuit of the glory of Islam; this migration has been caused by world conditions created by the decline of Islam as a political force and the rise of new forces inimical to Islam. Before the most recent migration that has brought us to Britain, the countries of our origin had suffered nearly 200 years of western rule. Among factors that have brought us to Britain are:

- (a) The emergence of a global capitalist economy in which the rich countries were destined to get richer, and the poor were doomed to get poorer;
- (b) The two world wars this century, among competing imperialists, that caused unprecedented loss of life;
- (c) The decolonisation process that left westernised elites in control of post-colonial nation-States; and
- (d) The movement of labour from surplus to labour-scarce areas of the world. As migrants we were victims of global forces of history beyond our control.

The factors that pushed us out of our countries, and the factors that pulled us into Britain, were not of our making. We are not migrants by choice; indeed most of us find ourselves trapped here with nowhere to go.

The taunt that is thrown at us by white racists- 'if you don't like it here, go back to your country' - is designed to add insult to injury. In recent months we Muslims have been at the receiving end of more insult, abuse, obscenity and gratuitous advice than any other minority anywhere else in the world at any time in history. Each one of us carries scars from the red hot torrent of hatred of Islam and abuse of Muslims that erupted in the west some two years ago. This torrent of abuse and hatred shows no sign of abating. There is so much of it about and more is being churned out every day. It pours from the mouths of Cabinet ministers, from judges and petty sessional magistrates, from parsons and policemen, from dons and dustmen, from leader writers and small-time hacks, from school teachers and street sweepers, from politicians and petty thieves, from television presenters and prostitutes, from managers and shop stewards, indeed from every nook and cranny of this great country of ours. Under the circumstances we should be forgiven for refusing to believe a word of Mrs Thatcher's recent Pickwickian remark that she has 'the greatest respect for Islam'. Of course she has not; no-one in Britain has. It would be suicidal for us to believe otherwise.

The Muslim migration to Britain was not in pursuit of our religious duty to migrate to establish Islam. We came here under duress, driven by political, economic and demographic forces beyond our control. However, having arrived here the first generation of Muslim migrants did the best thing they could. Thirty years ago there were fewer than a dozen mosques in Britain. Today the number of mosques in the British Isles exceeds 1,000. At a time when most of us did low paid, unskilled, menial jobs, we saved and invested perhaps C as much as £200 million in mosques. In addition we purchased our homes and paid off our mortgages. There are about 400,000 houses owned by Muslims. These houses may be worth over £30 billion. The average Muslim family consists of two adults and four children. The British Muslim community is a young community. Perhaps three quarters of the Muslim population is under 25 and born in Britain.

Few of our children are in low paid menial jobs. Most have done well at school and in higher education. The proportion of Muslims in the professions is increasing rapidly. Muslim traders and entrepreneurs have shop-fronts in most high streets and occupy many corner shops. More than a few Patels are Muslim. It is important to remind ourselves that everything we have-our mosques, our homes, our shops, our businesses and the education and health of our families-we have paid for with our blood and sweat as well as rates and taxes. We asked for no favours and have received none. We came here as healthy, hard-working but somewhat meek and submissive factory fodder. However, we have produced and brought up a generation of young men and women to follow us who are equally healthy and hard-working, but neither meek nor submissive. Our young men and women have the modesty and humility essential for a morally upright outlook on life, and this is not a weakness. The young generation of Muslims, born and bred in Britain, is, if anything, stronger and firmer in their commitment to Islam and the culture and civilisation of Islam than their fathers. Any attempt to 'swallow them whole', as a writer in *The Times* recently suggested should be done to us, will not only succeed; it would cause social indigestion of seismic proportions.

At this conference to consider 'The Future of Muslims in Britain' we have to identify factors within our control and to set goals that can be achieved using our own resources. Having acknowledged the totally secular nature of our initial migration to Britain, we must now try to put down new roots to draw sustenance for our survival as Muslims from Islam itself. We owe this of course to ourselves and our future generations; but, more than that, we also owe it to Britain. Britain needs a strong Muslim presence. Contemporary western society is hell-bent on self-destruction. The Aids epidemic is only the tip of the iceberg. Western man's arrogant denial of any source of moral authority outside his own rationalism and self-interest is little short of a commitment to suicide. We Muslims are familiar with the syndrome that allows

great civilisations to grow and expand while eating away at its vitals. Such civilisations and traditions of culture and history are too arrogant to admit that anything could be wrong with them. We have lived through this syndrome and recognise the symptoms. All earlier civilisations (Chinese, Indian, Greek, Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Roman and Persian) went to their graves never to arise again believing they were invincible. It is because Islam is the primordial state of man that the civilisation of Islam, despite its defeat and dismemberment at the hands of the west, remains alive and kicking. The west is behaving like a frightened undertaker who is pursued by a coffin he believed he had buried for good. The fact is that Islam was too big to be buried by the west. Yes, the west managed to defeat the political power of Islam; yes, the west occupied most of our lands and peoples; yes, the west has parcelled the lands of Islam into client States; yes, the west has achieved a degree of cultural infiltration as well. All this was and still is temporary and superficial. But because no civilisation before has recovered from this position, the west believed that we, too, had been consigned to oblivion. Much of what is known in the west today as 'fundamentalism' and 'terrorism' is evidence that the power of Islam is abroad again; that Islam still has the ability to generate more than enough power to defeat any coalition of forces that can be put up against it. This, above all, is the significance of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. History is now inexorably moving towards a succession of Islamic Revolutions in all parts of the world of Islam. This process will continue until the civilisation of Islam, especially the political power of Islam, is restored to full health, dynamism and its old vitality. Muslims living in Britain, indeed Muslims living anywhere, will be part of this process. They will contribute to it and rejoice in its triumphs.

In Britain we are a religious minority. But in the world at large we belong to the greatest political movement that has ever emerged to change the course of history and to save mankind from self-destruction. To survive in Britain we need to do two things: (a) generate our own power, and (b) plug into the global grid of the

power of Islam. This formula has already been tried and it has worked. The *Satanic Verses* affair is an example of this combination of our local and global power. Our own protests, however impressive in terms of noise and numbers, were insufficient against the forces involved in the conspiracy that *The Satanic Verses* represents. But the existence of a political and judicial authority of Islam outside Britain has made us invincible on this issue. It has also ensured that the enemies of Islam will never again try to impose upon us with their values of the gutter. This gutter has been closed for good with the vermin trapped within.

It is of course part of our social contract with the British State that we will obey British Law. And it is widely acknowledged that Muslims in Britain are among the country's most law abiding citizens. This is how it should be and this is how we want to keep it. But we will not allow the law to be used to impose upon us the dictatorship of the majority. Minorities, too, have vital interests and the law must help to protect them or we will protect them ourselves. The *Satanic Verses* affair is such a vital interest of the Muslim community in Britain as well as in the world outside. Less than a year ago the media in Britain put me on trial for the alleged crime of incitement to murder. They found me guilty. It took the British Government more than three months to decide that I had done nothing of the kind. This announcement was greeted with derision by the media and a substantial body of influential political opinion in the country. There were no fewer than four debates in the House of Lords. The 'liberal' lobby in the two Houses of Parliament and the media finally concluded that I was saved from prosecution by the consideration of the 'public interest'. And the 'public interest', they surmised, was the likely adverse impact on the British Government's desire to improve relations with Iran. True or not, this illustrates the advantage of having an Islamic State as part of a Muslim's repertoire of safety measures. And I am glad I did not depend on the Saudi regime's influence with British Government for my protection. To qualify

for Saudi protection one would have to be an adulterous Saudi princess who is first beheaded by her equally adulterous royal uncles. And after the beheading in Jeddah one would have to persuade the British to make a film of the episode. Nor does being innocent necessarily protect one from the operation of British law. Just ask the McGuire family, or the Guildford Four or the Birmingham Six and numerous others who must now still be languishing in British prisons on trumped-up charges, fabricated confessions and other evidence manufactured by the police. Muslims in Britain clearly cannot rely on British law on its own for protection from wrongful and malicious prosecution and imprisonment.

We need more than that; what we need is a 'special relationship' with an Islamic State. There is nothing wrong with having an extra-territorial 'special relationship'. The British Government has a 'special relationship' with the United States and every British prime minister claims to have a 'special relationship' with the US president of the time. This is the British way of plugging into the power of the US. British Jews and Roman Catholics are also well plugged in abroad. My own special relationship with Iran is well-known. I believe that the entire Muslim community in Britain now shares this special relationship with the Islamic State of Iran. For precedence we only have to recall the special relationship Christian citizens of the Ottoman Empire maintained with Russia, France and Britain. We are now an autonomous community, capable of setting our own goals, priorities and domestic and foreign relationships. This brings me back to the point I made earlier; that, in Islam, Muslims are expected to migrate to set up the Islamic State. That is the Sunnah (tradition) of the Prophet of Islam, upon whom be peace. We cannot establish a territorial Islamic State in Britain. We did not come here to do so. But what we can do is the next best thing; we can now create a range of institutions in Britain that will protect us from predatory forces and develop our distinctive culture and identity. This is precisely



what is proposed in The Muslim Manifesto that we have gathered here today to consider.

Let me say at once, and with all the emphasis at my command, that we are absolutely not going into politics; we are not here to launch a political party. *The Muslim Manifesto* is a programme for the entire Muslim community in Britain and not for any part of it. This manifesto is equally for those who may not now agree with all of it. We can say with confidence that those with reservations will in time to come to see the advantages of the blueprint that is on offer in the manifesto. We oppose no one. We will pray for those who choose not to join us now, in the hope that one day they will come along with us. We do not want to create new divisions in our society; we in fact want to remove the divisions that now exist. Those divisions that we cannot remove immediately or soon, we should try to minimise and play down. Ideally, we would like every Muslim to be part of what may be called the Muslim Manifesto movement; realistically, this may not be possible. Nonetheless, we want to achieve the widest possible consensus and participation in the range of institutions that are proposed in this manifesto. It is possible that in some areas, for example education, our proposals are not fully developed; youth and women's groups need to do a great deal more detailed thinking; the manifesto does not even touch upon the needs of the Muslim businessmen or academics, except in very general terms. *The Muslim Manifesto* at present is only a broad framework within which every sector of the community has to develop its ideas and proposals to meet their own needs. In this sense The Muslim Manifesto is only a beginning; it is only a first step towards thinking of the entire *Ummah* in Britain before thinking of all its parts. Thus, the Muslim Manifesto movement has to grow into a comprehensive and all-inclusive range of institutions as well as individual and family efforts to attain *taqwa*, or moral and material excellence. All attempts, unfortunately all too prevalent today, to attain material gains of profit, plenty and ostentatious living, at the cost of moral excellence will backfire on us and our

coming generations. The pre-eminence of moral values over all other considerations is the touchstone of Muslim life. Any compromise on moral issues would damage the individual as well as the community.

Let me repeat what I have already said a few moments ago, that we are not starting a political party. But at the same time let it be understood that Muslims here are seeking the widest possible influence on public policy. To repeat, in matters of vital interest to us, the dictatorship of the majority in the name of democracy will not be accepted. We understand and make allowance for the fact that the framework of law and public policy in Britain evolved at a time when we were either not here, or we had yet to find our feet. Now that is no longer the case. Any attempt to ignore us, or to reduce us into a disparaged, marginalised minority, will be firmly resisted. Henceforth, we expect our needs to be taken into account at every stage of public decision-making, allocation of resources, and drafting of legislation, irrespective of what party is in power at Westminster or in local government up and down the country. We cannot wait for the emergence of Muslim Members of Parliament, Muslim peers, Muslim judges and Muslim councillors for our needs to be taken into account. In fact, the path to elective office is so tortuous and requires such loyalty to party leadership and policy that by the time a Muslim would get into Parliament, his Islam would be little more than a cosmetic. In a country where parliamentary procedures and three-line whips make the official opposition with hundreds of MPs wholly impotent, there is little a handful of Muslims sitting on either side of the House, or on the crossbenches, would be able to do for the Muslim community in Britain. Filling a few extra columns of Hansard is not our idea of participation in politics or representation. Many Muslims as individuals will join the established political parties and some may even be allowed to succeed as politicians. But as a community Muslims have no preference for anyone or other of the major political parties.

However, it is possible that on major issues the Council of British Muslims, the 'Muslim parliament' that is proposed in The Muslim Manifesto, might, after due debate, decide to recommend Muslim support for one or other of the parties nationally, or for individual candidates. The 'Muslim parliament' may also consider the balance of advantage to the Muslim community in constituencies or wards where the Muslim vote might influence the outcome and advise Muslim voters accordingly. However, such intervention will never be to support or oppose a particular party, or for the personal advantage of a preferred candidate; such decisions will be infrequent and always based on the advantage to the Muslim community as a whole. It is in the wider field of education, judiciary, welfare and local authority services that we are looking for substantial change. We are sick and tired of Judges and Magistrates lecturing us about the need to become 'civilised'. We are sick and tired of headmasters and teachers discriminating against our children. We are sick and tired of being told to 'free' our women from 'slavery'. Our women will never be available to become sex-slaves of the west. We are sick and tired of lectures on the need to become 'westernised' and do in Rome as Romans do. We are, in short, sick and tired all-round. Our message to our tormentors is short and simple - get off our backs.

We have now realised that the only way we can survive and live in freedom, honour and dignity in Britain and Europe (remember 1992 and all that) is by organising Muslims and mobilising their resources. All European societies contain powerful forces that are determined to destroy Islam in the world and Muslims who have settled in Europe. We are left with no alternative but to take them on. By doing so we are introducing no new conflicts. So far their campaign against us was subtle, deceptive and well-camouflaged with slogans of freedom, liberty and tolerance. *The Satanic Verses* affair has unmasked them. We now know the full extent of the dangers we face. We also know that our campaign of self-defence will be effective only if Muslims in Britain, indeed in all Europe,

are much better organised than had been considered necessary so far.

*The Muslim Manifesto* suggests a framework for the organisation and politicisation of Muslims in Britain on a scale never before achieved or even attempted by a Muslim minority anywhere. If all the proposals are fully developed and implemented, dare I suggest that we might end up with what may be called a 'non-territorial Islamic State'? I do not propose to pursue that line of thought today. But let me point out that *The Muslim Manifesto* proposes the setting up of a 'Muslim parliament', or 'The Council of British Muslims' (CBM). One does not need a 'parliament' without very serious intentions.

I like to think that our intentions are noble as well as high. *The Muslim Manifesto* must not be a middle-class, middle-aged and male-dominated movement. We must create a series of institutions combining all age groups, men and women, and the full range of knowledge and experience that is found among Muslims in Britain. All this can only be achieved if a support group is first identified. This support group can only emerge from those who may now be over 40 years of age. They are heads of their families who bought their houses perhaps 20 or more years ago. Their mortgages are either paid up or little remains to be paid. Most have grown-up children and some children may now be in jobs and married. Some of them have more than one wage earner in their family. Such men, the elders of our society, are the ones who came to Britain first, who did menial jobs on low wages, who purchased our homes, who paid for our mosques, who opened our shops and who brought up a new upright generation of young men and women. Now we must ask them, the elders of our community, to come forward and provide the initial financial resources to put *The Muslim Manifesto's* proposals into operation. We ask them to put the initial 'tiger in the tank' once again.

It is estimated that, in order to establish the basic institutions outlined in *The Muslim Manifesto* and to provide them with

essential professional services, it would cost £1 million a year. All great undertakings are initially begun and supported by a small group of dedicated people. The Muslim Manifesto movement also needs a support group to get it going. Support groups are usually small and consist of a highly motivated and dedicated people. To raise £1 million a year for the first five to ten years we need 1,000 elders of the community, each making a contribution of between £500 to £2,000 a year. An average contribution of £1,000 a year from 1,000 elders will produce £1 million a year. Persuading 1,000 of the community's elders to come forward with this level of support is the first target we must meet as soon as possible.

But let me assure the elders that we do not intend to put too great a burden on them for too long. Every part of the Muslim Ummah must and will contribute to The Muslim Ummah Fund (MUF) that is proposed in *The Muslim Manifesto*. But to secure payment from all Muslim households in the country would require a computerised database. It is estimated that perhaps a population of 2 million Muslims lives in 400,000 households, five to a house. These addresses will need to be extracted from electoral and poll tax lists. The Muslim Institute has already begun inquiry to identify possible commercial uses of such a list. We will try to come up with a partnership with Muslim commercial interests to share the cost of putting the entire Muslim population on a centralised computer. This will take a little time; now that we have set out to organise the Muslim population here, let us do it with the best technology and systems available. In the meantime this process of consultation will take us to all parts of the country and fund raising on a large scale will be uppermost in our minds.

At the same time, let us make a commitment to develop the Muslim community's all-round performance. Let there be more Muslim graduates per thousand of our population; let there be more doctors; let there be more professionals in other fields, and let there be more traders and shopkeepers; let there be more of the best of everything among Muslims. There is nothing wrong in aiming to make the Muslims in Britain the richest community. Let

us have more millionaires than the Jews. The Jews have a population of less than half a million; we already have two million Muslims here. Inside ten years we can pack a greater punch than the Jews. We must attain all these material goals not for the sake of leading a life of corruption, moral laxity, drunkenness, luxury for its own sake, arrogance and ostentation. Instead, let us do it for the common good, let us show to the whole world that wealth does not corrupt Muslims; that a wealthy Muslim and a wealthy Muslim population can also live the life of piety. Let Muslims have a programme of mutual assistance, mutual savings and mutual investment. Let the Muslims have a programme to lift the poorest among us to a higher level of income, enjoyment of life and all-round performance. Let us open the doors of opportunity for everyone. Let us learn to discriminate in our own favour to balance the effects of discrimination against us that is so prevalent in this society. Let the shopkeepers, businessmen, employers and professionals among us work out a 'Most Favoured Customer' system for their mutual benefit and for the benefit of the Muslim community as a whole. Let us also work out a welfare and mutual help system based on *zakat* funds. When it comes to helping those in need, let us help everyone in need, Muslim and non-Muslim.

I have said enough to convey to you, and to the world outside, the full range of goals we have set out to achieve and the vision of the future we have set before us. We are not the narrow-minded bunch of blood thirsty religious bigots that we are so graphically portrayed as by the media.

With grand designs the question always is where do we begin? This is a question that *The Muslim Manifesto* answers. We must clearly begin with the greatest assets we already have. These are our mosques. These mosques were built, or converted from churches and houses, when we needed them only as places of worship. Now our needs are wider and greater. Already in the Rushdie affair our mosques have played a major part in mobilising the community in protest. Now the mosques must prepare to play

a more positive role in achieving the collective goals of the Muslim community in Britain.

But first of all, and most importantly, the *imams* and *khateeb*s must be treated better than they have been treated so far. The fact that *imams* and *khateeb*s are some of the lowest-paid members of our society is a matter of great regret. However irrelevant or 'out of touch' they may seem to some, the fact is that they and virtually they alone have the knowledge of the Qur'an and Hadith that is so woefully lacking in the rest of us. Whatever its historic reasons, the present state of affairs must change very quickly. Trustees and mosque committees have to change their attitudes towards the *ulama*. The *ulama* must be treated with respect and their pay must be raised to around £20,000 a year as soon as possible. The younger generation of Muslims, born and brought up in Britain, must also join management committees of mosques. The young Muslims must respect their elders, but they must also inject new ideas into mosque management and utilisation of buildings and other assets and investment our mosques represent. All this must happen in a matter of months, rather than years. The mosque is the basic institution in Islam and the further institutionalisation that is proposed in *The Muslim Manifesto* must be based on the transformation of our mosques.

Some other priorities are indicated, and the agenda is drawn up, in *The Muslim Manifesto*. I do not propose to repeat them here.

I have already said what there was to say to our elders. Their sacrifices and achievements are already legendary. They have laid the foundations on which the Muslim *Ummah* in Britain has to build itself to face the new challenges of the future. The fact that we are asking them to make more sacrifices, to put 'the tiger in the tank' once again, is because they have the 'tiger' and we have the 'tank'. I know, because I am one of them, that our elders will willingly make the sacrifices we are asking of them now for the sake of the future generations that we have brought into this world. We owe it to them.

To the younger generation we must apologise. We are responsible for them being born British! We are responsible for putting them through the hardships of a hostile environment at schools and colleges and now in places of work. We have put them in a difficult position. To be fair, if our children sued us for damages for bringing them to a place where they have suffered a crisis of identity, cultural dislocation and now religious and political oppression, we would have no alternative but to plead guilty. *The Muslim Manifesto* is a framework within which we can compensate our children, and within this framework our children can take charge of their inheritance, such as it is.

The young men and women of Islam, born and brought up in Britain, also have the opportunity to prove that being born with a handicap is not necessarily a handicap. Given the will, determination and strength of character and spiritual resources, which we know they possess, every disadvantage can be turned into an advantage.

In any case, the greatest compensation the young Muslim men and women of today enjoy is the new outlook on the horizon of history. The darkest days of our history are over. The history of Islam is on the march again. In the next 40 or 50 years all parts of the world of Islam will undergo Islamic Revolutions liberating our lands and peoples from the modern Dark Ages of western colonial and cultural domination. They will live through the period of greatest revolutionary change in the history of Islam and are in a position to contribute greatly to it. Let them organise themselves here in Europe, as European Muslims, in order to take part in the global responsibilities that history will put on their shoulders.