

Sikh and Muslim Media Monitoring and Response Project

FAITH MATTERS
www.faith-matters.org

Welcome to the third edition of the SMMMR Newsletter!

Dear readers welcome to the third edition of the SMMMR newsletter covering July-September 2011. We have been busy working on the project and welcoming several new volunteers who are keen to make a difference to the Sikh and Muslim communities. We held a Volunteer Induction Day at the new Faith Matters office on Friday 5th August where new volunteers got the chance to meet all the staff at Faith Matters and find out more about the project.



There have been extremely positive developments in terms of Sikh Muslim relations in the country as we have seen during the England riots where members of both communities united to defend each other against mindless criminals. It's a great shame that the unity was highlighted under circumstances where violence and looting became the order of the day.

New girl on the block!



I am a newcomer to the organisation Faith Matters and am super excited about my journey. I was really interested in Faith Matters

because it gives people of all faiths a voice and to really make a positive contribution and difference to their community.

I was brought up with two options of faith. The first one was that we are all equal regardless of our faith and no one should be judged on it.

(continued on page 3)

Goodbye and Good Luck!

The team at Faith Matters would like to wish Amardeep all the best for the future as she has moved on to pastures new. Amardeep worked on the project until mid August and is known to most of the Sikh Muslim group.

Hello and Welcome!

A very warm welcome to the new volunteers on the Sikh Muslim project. We thank you for choosing to support the project and hope you will enjoy the experience. We are also looking forward to working with all of you.



Sikhs and Muslims come together during the riots *by Hari Malhi*



During the August riots across England, Sikhs and Muslims came together to guard Mosques and Gurudwaras from looters. Sangat TV did their part in helping the police and showed some of the close knit bonds between Sikhs and Muslims, both of whom worked together to defend their businesses and towns. Unfortunately, three young Muslim men died during these events. Tariq Jahan, the father of hit and run victim Haroon, emerged as an excellent role model for Muslims. At such a difficult time, he was dignified throughout his speech about the atrocities, a change from the aggressive, radical Muslims we are unfortunately so used to seeing in the media.

All across England, the fuse for the most terrible riots in a generation ignited earlier last month. However, in the middle of all the looting and chaos, some positive intercultural stories also emerged. Whilst the pillaging criminals were running wild in areas including Birmingham, Leeds and Southall, members of the Sikh community were seen protecting the Masjid whilst Muslims were breaking their fasts and praying inside the mosque.

Similarly, Muslims were protecting Gurudwaras whilst Sikhs were praying. The phrase community policing took on a whole new meaning as Sikhs and Muslims stood side by side to guard their local places of worship and home towns. Following the intensely criminal activity that had taken place in Tottenham, they knew the police riot squads would not be able to contain the high numbers of ruthless gangs. As a result, people felt it was necessary to take policing into their own hands.



Sangat TV did a fantastic job in covering the events of this midsummer hell in the midlands area. They patrolled the streets to protect local communities and spent hours driving around in several locations to film the disturbing levels of violence and criminal activity. Over the next few days, they followed this coverage up with interviews and discussions with locals in the area. By questioning individuals from all cultural backgrounds and giving lengthy airtime to people that felt let down by the police, Sangat TV were doing their part to promote equality in these troubled times. They were commended for their efforts by the BBC news team, because it was

clear that the police did not have sufficient control over all the rioting thugs.

Amidst all the destruction of law and order during the riots, the lives of three young, courageous Muslim men were taken in West Brom. Haroon Jahan, 21, Shezad Ali, 30, and Abdul Musavir, 31, all of whom were cherished members of their communities, and had taken to the streets in their area to protect local businesses. Their only intention was to drive away the hostile yobs and looters. Haroon Jahan, who was hit by a car on Dudley Road in the Winson Green area of Birmingham, died in front of his father's eyes. After this tragic event, Sikhs and Muslims collectively worked to bring an end to this mayhem and came together to pay their respects for Haroon, Shezad and Abdul.



Sikh & Muslim Volunteers Nominated for Award

Three members from the Sikh/Muslim project have been nominated to receive an Exceptional Achievement Award at the Ealing Volunteer Awards Ceremony to mark CSV Make A Difference Day on Friday 4 November 2011.



Ravinder Kaur Dhesi (pictured left), Hari Malhi (pictured below) and Shah Shahin (pictured bottom left) have been nominated by Faith Matters for their hard work and dedication towards the Sikh and Muslim cohesion project.

They have all come together to share their experiences and work towards making a difference in their communities.



The ceremony will take place at the Ramada Ealing London Hotel and certificates will be presented to the nominees by the Mayor of Ealing Cllr John Gallagher .



New girl on the block!

Continued from Page 1

The second one was that I should only converse and socialise with people of my own faith. These two views are very extreme of each other and when you are a child this can be very confusing.

However, from childhood to adulthood I still believe that you should not question someone because of their faith but instead look at the real person inside them and form a relationship of friendship and allow it to grow. Let the friendship represent that we should all be respected and treated equally for who we are and not what faith we are from. Let it show that whatever faith you are from, the foundation of your faith is what brings us together to create unity and peace.

Sukhi

Rav's on TV!

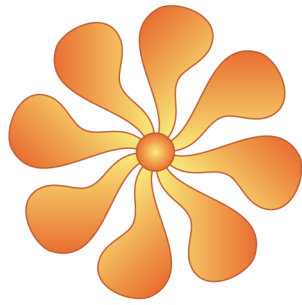
One of our volunteers Ravinder Kaur Dhesi (Rav) mentioned already in this newsletter has also made a TV appearance. Rav has quite a unique story in that she is Sikh and is married to a Muslim without converting to Islam. Rav has brought up her children to respect all faiths and the family are extremely liberal.

4Thought TV (a short programme after the Channel Four news where people discuss their thoughts on a particular topic) contacted Faith Matters as they wanted to speak to people who were in interfaith marriages.

Faith Matters put the programme producers in touch with Rav who went along and recorded her piece. The programme was aired on Monday 26th September on Channel Four - Well done Rav!

You can watch the full programme on the link below:
<http://www.4thought.tv/4thoughts/0437-Ravinder-Dhesi-Should-we-raise-children-in-mixed-marriages->





FAITH MATTERS

“Capable of opening paths to understanding and so to tolerance”

Faith Matters is a not for profit organisation founded in 2005 which works to reduce extremism and interfaith and intra-faith tensions and we develop platforms for discourse and interaction between Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Jewish and Hindu communities across the globe. We have offices in the United Kingdom, Pakistan and the Middle East (Jerusalem).

Below are just some of the projects which our dedicated team are currently involved in:

Community Cohesion

Community Cohesion is integral to Faith Matters. Community Cohesion is what we do well and Community Cohesion is what drives us. We have worked on various Community Cohesion projects: such as “Our Shared Faiths Our Shared Futures,” which brings together theologians from the Abrahamic faiths “Christianity, Islamic and Jewish” monotheism faiths. As well as our Resisting Through Resilience Project, which aims at providing a platform for young Muslims to discuss.

Building divides between Muslim and Sikh Communities

Faith Matters explored local areas of tensions among young Male Sikh and Muslim men which threatened to create local and national hotspots of tension. The project culminated in the Cohesive Community report to be used by communities as a resource to develop cohesion and to look at divergent dialogues.

One Community Many Voices

Faith Matters has developed an online blog which provides a space for people to post their thoughts, articles, opinion pieces and photographs on faith related themes as well as relevant current affairs. It’s a space to express yourself! So if you want to post something then email through to hasina@faith-matters.co.uk

People can access the blog using the link below:

One Community Many Voices <http://onecommunitymanyvoices.blogspot.com/>