



Consensus in the Condemnation of Terror

At a time when terror has struck major cities around the globe killing innocent lives, Islam unfortunately is hijacked as a result and Muslims are seen as potential terrorists. We know that by the mere definition of a Muslim that a Muslim can not have the attributes of a terrorist and a terrorist can not represent being a Muslim.

Terror does not distinguish between a Muslim and a non-Muslim, it kills all in its path. The author of "Al Qaeda, the Myth" Belgian security expert, Prof. Rik Colsaet, strongly opposes the term "Islamic terror. From a study he conducted, he states, "...the number of people killed in terrorist attacks since 1990 is 175,000...Only 4,000 of these people are westerners and the September 11 attack is also included in this number. There is a very clear picture in front of us. Muslims are the biggest victims of this terror. In fact Muslims kill Muslims."

Affinity will be holding a Summit on September 11 to provide a platform for Muslim community and religious leaders to publicly denounce terrorism. This summit is open to all Australians and it will complement the summit already conducted by the Prime Minister. We fully support the Prime Minister's summit and feel that it was necessary to undertake. Our summit was planned prior to the PM announcing his summit and will only help drive the point that mainstream Muslims condemn all forms of terror and respect the laws and shared values of our country, Australia.

Perhaps, this is the time when we have a real consensus that all forms of terrorism must be strongly condemned and struggled against.

In this current era, it is of paramount importance that education and interfaith dialogue play an important role in breaking down the barriers and to building bridges between nations and faiths. Affinity is committed to this mission and prepared to serve in its realisation.

Mehmet Saral

UP COMING AFFINITY EVENTS:

"Muslims in Australia: Contribution to National Security & Harmony"

Forum Date: 11th September, 1 - 4pm

Venue: Everest Theatre at the Seymour Centre, The University of Sydney

"1st Legacy of Prophet Muhammad Conference"

Date: 17th September, 12:30 pm for 1 pm Start

Venue: Novotel Hotel, Olympic Park, Homebush

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Muhammad Al Habash
Head Islamic Studies Centre,
Damascus, Syria

Limited seats available for both events

Please register at www.affinity.org.au

For info call 9702 0789 or email info@affinity.org.au



10th Panel: "I am a young Australian Muslim because...?"

While looking for solutions to solve the social problems the multicultural society of Sydney and Australia in general faces today, it is worthwhile to look and plan for the future also. One solution that can never be over emphasised is that of communication and dialogue within the youth. It was for this reason that Affinity Intercultural Foundation held its 10th panel on 2nd July 2005, to hear the voice of the Muslim youth from themselves.

Four Australian Muslim youth: Ulku Uzun, Fatih Sahin, Dilek Taskun and Sadiq Ansari who had successfully been through the AIF's youth leadership program were selected to present their views of their religion, their challenges and where they see their role in society is.

While Ulku with her touching personal story explained how Islam and her headscarf was a 'choice', Fatih highlighted the numerous expectations he juggles with and how Islam has helped him to meet those expectations, whether it be of himself, his parents, society's or of God. To the social side, Dilek shed light on the problems of 'stereotypes' and explained how they can be challenged and rectified, while Sadiq emphasised the importance of integration at a social level, and suggested assimilation at our common level of humanity.

Keynote speaker Dr Paul White brought everyone's attention to the current dilemma the youth and especially the Lebanese youth face, highlighting some prejudices of the media and other social bodies.

The night ended on a positive note, as some of the 'toughest' questions posed by the 230+ audience were answered by the youth and Dr Paul White.



New Affinity Office

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Christian Benedictine Monks Mosque Visit - 03/6/05

Affinity's President Mr Mehmet Ozalp along with Affinity members: Mr Fawzan Malas, Mr Adam Karapinar, Ms Makiz Ansari and Ms Mahsheed Ansari welcomed a group of nine Christian Benedictine Monks at the Auburn Gallipoli Mosque.

The day began with a comprehensive tour of the mosque, tea and refreshments, followed by friendly conversations and many questions. Mr Fawzan Malas gave a presentation on the core tenants of the Islamic Faith. Later, intensive discussion with Mr Mehmet Ozalp centred upon the love and compassion of God and knowing and relating to God from an Islamic perspective.

Pennant Hills Council 'Growing Peace' Event - 17-06-05

As part of the 'Growing Peace' initiative by the Columban Institute and in line with Affinity's goals of promoting better understandings of other faiths, Affinity representatives, Mr Ahmet Keskin and Ms Makiz Ansari presented an Islamic perspective on the theological and practical examples of peace in Islam. Their discussion covered: Islamic belief; examples of Muslims actively working for peace and Affinity's local and living examples of promoting and fostering, peace and understanding through its dialogue initiatives. One councillor expressed how relevant the Muslim presentations were, saying he was 'enlightened' by them. Overall, it was an evening filled with positive communication and interactions.

'Spirituality in the Pub' Talk Rouse Hill - 14-06-05

Affinity member, Mr Fawzan Malas, accepted a rather unusual invitation to speak about Islam, at a pub, where 'Spirituality in the Pub' was the theme. He spoke regarding the Islamic perspective on 'Fundamentalism'. One may say that this event marked the good will of Affinity members to take their message of peace and harmony wherever welcomed and needed.

Community Presentation at CRC Symposium – 21/6/06

Affinity's Mr Mehmet Saral was invited to present one of the Cultural Harmony workshops. His presentation included a demonstration of the Affinity initiated 'Home Encounters' project. This workshop consisted of 2 other community projects: 'Information and Cultural Exchange' and the 'Goodness and Kindness Campaign'. Feedback was very pleasing with many people asking 'why doesn't Affinity do such projects with Australia's non-religious community as well'. Indeed, something to consider.

Mosque Tour & Discussion on Islam with Rev. Bill Crews and Co - 30/6/05

Reverend Bill Crews (2GB Sunday night program host) and his delightful Ashfield Uniting Church Congregation came to the Auburn Gallipoli Mosque for a social and friendly Mosque tour and discussion, hosted by Affinity's Mr Mehmet Saral and Mr Adam Karapinar. The evening was concluded with a delicious dinner at Mado Café.

Presentation at World History Conference 7/7/05

Mr Mehmet Ozalp spoke at the 20th World History Congress on the topic of the 'Ottoman Millet System: A social Theory for a Multifaith Society'. This was a very intellectual conference where professors and historian from around the world were attending. Professor Mehmet Ipsirli who spoke at the Ottoman Empire conference in 2003 chaired the panel of 8 speakers.

Christian- Muslim Dialogue Seminar at Tamworth 30/7/05

The Ecumenicals in Tamworth invited Affinity for a one day program, covering a range of topics in Islam and the theological similarities and differences between Islam and Christianity. This was addressed by Affinity's Mrs Zuleyha Keskin and The Columban's Sr Pauline Rae. Affinity's Ms Makiz Ansari addressed the importance of interfaith dialogue and what's being done in Sydney; she included a living case-study of Affinity. Another session, covered the 'Home Encounter's project' and discussions on issues of: terrorism, jihad and women's rights. The warm and hospitable audience showed interest in having more of such interfaith forums and expressed how much they had enjoyed and learnt from it.

Pathways to Peace: Sharing the Earth- Peace from the Ground up - 31/7/05

The 'Pathways to Peace' interfaith event was held at Auburn Mosque for the first time. The purpose of this event was to bring different people from different cultures, religions and beliefs together to recognize and discuss religious views in regards to the environment's importance and attributes to humanity. The theme for this gathering was "Sharing the Earth-Peace from the ground up". Affinity's Mr Ahmet Keskin hosted a tour of the Mosque which was received with much positive feedback. Followed were group discussions about Islam's view on the Environment. Presentations followed, from Buddhist, Christian, Baha'i and Indigenous speakers, expressing their religious views and similarities between their religions and Islam. The spirit of the day was reflected in the joint planting and watering of seeds as a sign of caring and sharing the environment and earth together in peace and harmony, one of Affinity's highest aspirations.

Sai Baba Group Visit 7/8/05

Sai Baba – a mystic Hindu group of mainly youth organisers invited Affinity to give a presentation as part of their interfaith program. Amine Atalay, Vicki Snowdon and Makiz Ansari attended this event held at Homebush Boys High School. Amine discussed the Status of Women in Islam and her spiritual journey to Islam. Questions asked ranged from the common queries relating to women, jihad, the definitions of Imam, Sheikh, Ayatollah continuing onto some deeper theological discussions on the concept and notion of Islamic Tawhid and the spirituality of halal meat.

Talk for Administrative Arbitration Tribunal 18/8/05

Ahmet Keskin conducted an Islam in the Modern World (IMW) Course for 35 staff of the Administrative Arbitration Tribunal (AAT).

Other Past Events

- o Visit to Uniting Church, Ashfield – 20/8/05
- o Affinity Visit Marist College, North Shore - 23/8/05
- o Affinity Talk, Edmund Rice College, Wollongong - 26/8/05