

Inter Faith Week: 15-21 November

This year celebrates the first National Inter Faith Week in Britain. The Week is being facilitated by the Inter Faith Network for the UK and the Department for Communities and Local Government, but will be community-led, with local and National Interfaith Organisations holding their own events, highlighting the work they do to promote understanding between people of different faiths and beliefs.

Its aims are:

- to strengthen good inter faith relations at all levels;
- to increase awareness of the different and distinct faith communities in the UK, in particular celebrating and building on the contribution which their members make to their neighbourhoods and to wider society
- to increase understanding between people of religious and non-religious belief.

The Joseph Interfaith Foundation organised three programmes for the Inter Faith Week, including the international conference on “Confronting anti-Semitism and Islamophobia” at SOAS, University of London. Please see:

www.josephinterfaithfoundation.org

The National Launch of the Inter Faith Week

The national launch of Inter Faith Week in England took place on Thursday 12th November at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in London. An exhibition about inter faith and social action work in the UK was a key part of this. It reflected the work of all the different categories of Network member bodies – as did the presentations during the day.

The Joseph Interfaith Foundation was invited to the launch.



Shahid Malik MP, The first Muslim MP and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with Mehri Niknam, the Foundation's Executive Director

Archbishop and Faith Leaders Launch Inter Faith Week

Monday 16 November 2009

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, invited faith leaders and Trustees of the Inter Faith Network for the UK to Lambeth Palace to launch Inter Faith Week. The Joseph Interfaith Foundation was represented by Mehri Niknam MBE, the Executive Director.



The Archbishop of Canterbury and Mehri Niknam at Lambeth Palace

Representatives of the denominations of all the major faiths in this country and representatives of Inter Faith organisations came together at that meeting at Lambeth Palace to sign a declaration of understanding and cooperation.



Dr Manazir Ahsan MBE, Vice Chair of Inter Faith Network and Mehri Niknam

The text of the declaration read:

"We believe that good inter faith relations are a vital part of a harmonious, just and respectful society.

We pledge, today, to deepen our work to increase understanding about and between our faiths and to strengthen our cooperation on social issues.

We renew our commitment to developing effective and long term ways of dialogue and mutual learning. We shall continue to seek to understand the patterns of engagement of our faith communities – through history and today; to affirm the positive aspects of these patterns; and to heal wounds of misunderstanding where these are found.

While our great religious traditions are distinct in belief and practice, there is much that unites us. We will draw on fundamental values held in common and on the wisdom of our respective faith traditions to continue to work - as individual communities and together - for the wellbeing of our society, our wider global community and the planet that is our home.

Alongside all of good will, we will work to tackle with renewed determination the challenges of poverty, ignorance, injustice, crime and violence, and social fragmentation and to help shape a society where all feel at home; all are valued and justly treated; and all have a chance to thrive."



Mehri Niknam signing the Declaration at Lambeth Palace