

On the Bus Campaign about 'Who is Muhammad (saw)?'

News:

The town of Luton outside London has a large Muslim population. In recent years, it has been in the local and global news for various examples of negative stories associated with Islam and Muslims; and the far right English Defence League (EDL) has planned provocative anti-Islam marches there. These and many other issues have caused there to be raised tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims there and in other parts of the UK.

Comment:

Standing by the roadside on a visit to Luton, I suddenly saw a bus with an advertising board on the back of it. It read, "Who is Muhammad (saw)? Order your copy of the Quran". I must confess that this warmed my heart as it was one of the last things I expected to see on buses driving through this tense town in these tense times when there is so much propaganda against Islam and Muslims from the government and sections of the media. From discussions with many Muslims and from many recent surveys, it is clear that the relentless anti-Islam propaganda is having an effect in poisoning the minds of average non-Muslims who live next to Muslims or encounter them at work or in the wider society. So our Mosques have been characterised in the media as places preaching hatred, Muslims schools are characterised as hotbeds of 'radicalisation' and various common Muslim practices have been characterised as barbaric and backward. The picture some paint is that the average Muslim wants to harm his non-Muslim neighbour and wishes them ill.

In the face of this relentless onslaught, many Muslims feel helpless and resigned. Just as one controversy ends, another starts. To the extent that the fact that a well-known restaurant chain served 'halal meat' without saying it was halal meat – became an issue which even government officials commented upon!

The elder generation of Muslims came to the west in the 1950s and 1960s and achieved so much in building Mosques, Muslim cemeteries and Muslim businesses including the halal meat industry. This was driven by their understanding that Islam demanded that they pray jumah and eat and bury their dead in the way that Allah (swt) commanded. Today, these old men and women need a new generation that carries forward this legacy and 1) maintains these institutions 2) conveys the true message of Islam to the common people we live with in the West so that they hear the true message of Islam – as opposed to the crazy and frightening image the government and sections of the media are attempting to paint.

In this regard, the initiative I saw in Luton with some Muslims putting up advertising billboards on the back of buses – and many other such initiatives to have Mosque open days when non-Muslims visit Mosques, or iftar's feeding the homeless and youtube videos and debates are to be welcomed. May Allah (swt) reward all those initiating and supporting them, may He open the eyes and hearts of our non-Muslim neighbours to our beautiful Deen and may He thwart the plans of those forces that seek to demonise our Deen.

﴿ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ ۗ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۗ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ﴾

"Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is [rightly] guided." [TMQ An-Nahl 16:125]

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