

## Young Activists Interfaith Afternoon Tea Roundtable – Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2020

### Aims:

I, Hashim Bhatti, aged 30, as a volunteer organised a roundtable with a group of 15 young interfaith activists at the grassroots level to celebrate World Interfaith Harmony Week 2020 at my own expense.

My aim was to bring a group of youngsters between the ages of 21-35 from different faiths (Jewish, Christian and Muslim) together to think about ways in which we could work together to strengthen and shape interfaith relations in the UK. By doing so, I was subconsciously showing them that they all held common values which outweighed their differences, and this provided opportunities for them to collaborate.

I was hoping by bringing them together they could learn from each other's experiences/stories and explore if there were potential areas they could work together on. As some were in more established positions than others this allowed others to connect and hear from those more experienced on how to navigate UK interfaith relations whilst also motivating them to play a vital role.

Finally, I was hoping it would give us all an opportunity to see how different young people from different upbringings and faiths viewed interfaith relations in the UK right now and how they envisioned things in 10-20 years' time.

### **Question for the roundtable?**

What can we as interfaith activists, old and new, do as a collective to ensure prejudice, antisemitism and Islamophobia is top of the agenda across all UK political parties? How can we shape the UK interfaith landscape amidst a hostile environment?

The following individuals attended the interfaith roundtable:

- Hashim Bhatti – host and organiser – long term volunteer interfaith activist
- Aqeelah Malek - Faith & Belief Forum/APPG on British Muslims
- Sharon Booth - Solutions Not Sides
- Rubab Mehdi Rizvi - Barrister/Human Rights activist
- Georgia May - Rosecastle Foundation
- Phil Rosenberg - The Board of Deputies of British Jews/Camden Faith Leaders Forum
- Sasha Lawson - Faiths Forum in London
- Fatima Zaman - Kofi Annan Foundation/diplomat/ Extremely Together
- Hilya - Malaysian Embassy diplomat
- Sumayah Saadi - young activist/British Youth Council, new to interfaith relations from Manchester
- Saika Ali - UBS/CCHQ works for Conservative party
- Rakin Sayed – Faith & Belief Forum, London representative
- Rabbi Debbie Young-Somers - The Movement for Reform Judaism/Rabbi (tbc)
- Charly Burridge-Jones - Actress/Mormon community
- Faruk Miah MBE – Leeds Council, Educationist

## **Outcomes:**

1. I managed to create some social media buzz as I was featured on Twitter and on your Wihw Instagram page during Interfaith week.
2. The group agreed to join forces as activists to force faith-based charities to agree some sort of charter/communique that is then signed by all major political parties stamping out hate, discrimination, antisemitism, islamophobia etc. This also extends into the selection of parliamentary candidates with potential new candidates agreeing a similar charter once selected.
3. The group agreed to explore the idea of setting up a 10 pledges multi-faith, multi-party version as below:  
<https://twitter.com/boardofdeputies/status/1216290591442722816?s=21>
4. The group believed that there needed to be robust training and development for MPs who wanted to represent us. We think the idea of having a group of faith-based charities deliver workshops to MPs as part of their ongoing development as essential. We could also deliver these workshops as young activists.
5. We believe that there needs to be a new APPG or group that represents both sides of the Israel & Palestine conflict not just one perspective. This discussion happened at the end of the evening once everyone was comfortable.
6. We need some sort of funding to help us setup a committee to organise events/workshops to drive policy change with key stakeholders etc.

## **Conclusion: why we need the funding?**

I would like the funding from the prize money to establish a robust committee/structure that can allow the group to organise and plan our agenda for the year. This would involve monthly committee meetings to set targets. I also believe we need to establish ourselves as some sort of community enterprise or charity which comes at a cost.

With the funding, I can also hire an administrator who can organise workshops for MPs and events to engage more young activists to get involved. A key part of doing this is the time commitment involved in arranging meetings with key policy decision makers and across the political divide as we are all volunteers.

As such, the prize money would go some way in helping further UK interfaith relations fostering a more cohesive and harmonious society in the long term.