



A l - I t t i h a a d

UNITY



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4 Days in Albania with Mufti Taqi Usmani Saheb

Invitation

It was a privilege for us at the M.W.I. when one of the world-renowned personalities Mufti Taqi Usmani Saheb accepted our invitation & visited Albania last September. Our intention was to take advice on how to advance our projects in Albania & also to give an opportunity to religious personalities & the Albanian Muslims to meet Mufti Saheb in order to exchange views and strengthen relations.

Mufti Mohammad Taqi Usmani

Born in Deoband India in 1943, Mufti Taqi Usmani is the son of Mufti Mohammad Shafi Saheb (the Late Grand Mufti of Pakistan). Having obtained his degree in Islamic Education from Darul Uloom Karachi, Mufti Saheb gained his Master's degree in Arabic Literature from Punjab University and a Law Degree from the Karachi University.

Mufti Taqi Usmani has been teaching Islamic Education for 42 years including Hadith & Islamic Jurisprudence. Mufti Saheb held the position of a judge of Shariat Appellate Bench of Supreme Court of Pakistan from 1982 to 2002 & is also the permanent member of International Fiqh Academy of Jeddah, an organ of OIC.

An author of more than 60 Books in Arabic, English & Urdu, Mufti Taqi Usmani also holds the position of Chairman/Member of a dozen of Islamic Banks & Financial Institutions in different parts of the world. Currently, Mufti Saheb is also the Shaikhul Hadith & Vice President of Darul Uloom Karachi, a world renowned Islamic Education Institution in Pakistan.

Sunday 3rd Sept. 06

Arrival at Heathrow

Seven representatives of the M.W.I. together with 2 colleagues from East London received Mufti Saheb at Heathrow Airport on Sunday 3rd September 2006.

After exchanging greetings & spending some time with Mufti Saheb, 5 reps. returned back to Blackburn. The following day, after obtaining the Albanian visa, 2 reps. of the M.W.I. from Blackburn together with Mufti Saheb departed from Gatwick Airport.

Monday 4th Sept. - Tirana

We were received at Tirana Airport by some of our Scholars & Teachers accompanied by Mr. Bujar Ahmed Mullahi of the Foreign Public Relations Dept. of the Islamic Community of Albania. Our first stop was at the Mosque of Laknas Village on the outskirts of Tirana, which is also being used as the Tablighi Markaz. After the Isha Salaah, Mufti Saheb addressed the gathering touching upon the importance of Tabligh, connection with the Scholars and also of the importance of unity. The speech was followed by a Question & Answer Session. Translations throughout the visit were carried out by one of our Albanian Scholars by the name of Moulana Hafez Ismail who is a graduate of the Raiwin Madrasah of Pakistan.

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Fatmir hosts Mufti Saheb

That night we were hosted by a local businessman by the name of Fatmir who had insisted that Mufti Saheb should remain as his guest & for this purpose had vacated the second floor of his apartment & prepared a traditional Albanian dinner, such wonderful hospitality from a person who had reverted to Islam some 6 months before & had also brought 10 members of staff from his bakery business into Islam.

T u e s d a y 5th S e p t .

Islamic Community of Albania

Our first stop the next morning was the headquarters of the Islamic Community in Tirana where Mufti Saheb was given a warm reception by the vice chairman Sayamir & his colleagues. The discussions centred on the history of Albanian Muslims & the role of the Islamic Community, which is the largest recognised Islamic organisation

Albanian Author meets Mufti Saheb

Also present in the discussions were Mufti Shabaan of Tirana & Professor Ahmed Isa, an author on Albanian Islamic history, who gifted 2 of his books to Mufti Saheb. The discussions in Arabic were fruitful and the Islamic Community agreed to continue working with the M.W.I. for the betterment of the Muslims of Albania.

Kruje & Skhodra

We then travelled North passing through Kruje visiting an ancient fort which had been converted into a museum & arrived in Skhodra where we were hosted by another local brother by the name of Fatmir who had prepared a traditional Albanian lunch in the gardens of his house surrounded by fig trees. Fatmir touched upon the condition of the Muslims of Skhodra & the local activities taking place.

2 New Mosques

We went into the city to see 2 new Mosques, Jameah Parutz financed by an Albanian family & Jameah Abu Bakr (R.A.) financed by an Arab family, both Mosques feature rich Islamic architecture with high rising Minarets.

Jameah Plumbi

One of the saddest moments of our visit was when we passed by the ancient Mosque of Plumbi, which was the first Mosque to re-open in Albania after Communism and was now in a derelict state. The authorities had abandoned it and it was very sorry to see that the Mosque was now merely a historical building.

Kavaja

From Skhodra we headed for Kavaja and reached there just after the Maghrib Salaah, It was very positive to see that the Mosque was full of worshippers. Here we met Mufti Besnik of Kavaja & Qari Shabbir Ahmed, graduate of Jameah Imdadiyah Faisalabad, Pakistan, who is the principal of a residential Madrasah by the name of Madrasah Abdullah Ibn Masood (R.A.), which has 15 students. Mufti Taqi Saheb performed dua for success & progress at the Madrasah. That evening we were hosted by a local Albanian by the name of Rajab who is active in organising Islamic activities. Mufti Besnik was fluent in Arabic & enjoyed the company of Mufti Saheb. That night we spent in Durres on the Adriatic Coast.

W e d n e s d a y 6th S e p t .

Hafiz Sabri Institute - Belesh

We then travelled south towards Belesh where our first residential Madrasah by the name of Hafiz Sabri Institute is situated. A number of locals together with some of our teachers & graduates had gathered there with our 10 residential students. After listening to the recitation of the Holy Quraan, Mufti Saheb addressed the students on the importance of acquiring Islamic knowledge.

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Mufti Saheb congratulates our 3 Scholars from abroad

This Madrasah & many other of our M.W.I. Islamic Awareness Projects are the fruits of the sacrifices made by our 18 teachers, especially 3 scholars of India, Moulana Nazir, Moulana Maqsd & Moulana Siraj who are all graduates of the famous Falah-e-Darayn Madrasah of Tadkesar, Gujarat, India. Mufti Taqi Saheb personally congratulated all 3 of them for their achievements, especially as they together with their families had picked up the Albanian language & had fitted into Albanian society almost perfectly keeping in mind the vast differences of culture, tradition & climate.

Doctors come to meet Mufti Saheb

Some Doctors from the local hospital came to meet Mufti Saheb to whom Mufti Saheb parted some valuable advices explaining that similar to physical illnesses which require medical treatment, there are also illnesses of the soul that require spiritual treatment which can only be found in religion. The Doctors were most touched by Mufti Saheb's words of wisdom.

Jameah Pasha - Elbasan

Our next stop was Jameah Pasha in Elbasan where Mufti Saheb addressed the gathering after Zohar Salaah, at all gatherings Mufti Saheb praised the resolve & patience of the people who after such a strict period of Communism had kept their faith close to their heart, Mufti Saheb was very moved when he heard the accounts of some of the elders how they preserved their Imaan in the dark days of Albanian history. Here we also met Mufti Agim, the Mufti of Elbasan who informed Mufti Saheb regarding Elbasan & its people.

Pogradec & Korce

Our next stop was the famous City of Pogradec situated on the border of Lake Ohrit, Albania's largest lake, from where Macedonia is visible. We stopped for a short rest at Pogradec where we were received by Mufti Namik, the Mufti of Pogradec. From here we travelled onto Korce

meeting some of our Islamic Classes students on the way who had travelled a long way to come to meet Mufti Saheb. We arrived at the local Mosque of Korce at the time of Maghrib, where we were met by Mufti Qazim, the Mufti of Korce. It was disappointing to see that only 8 people had turned up for Maghrib, in a city, which has approx. 40,000 Muslims. Mufti Saheb spoke with the responsible brothers present regarding the importance of going house to house in order to propagate the message of Islam. We returned back to Pogradec & spent the night there.

Thursday 7th Sept.

Jameah Abu Bakr (R.A.) Pogradec

This was our last day in Albania. Our morning started with a visit to the local Mosque, Jameah Abu Bakr (R.A.), which had been converted into a cinema during Communism; here we met some of the local elders including Mufti Fuad who touched on a lot of Albanian Islamic history with Mufti Saheb.

Jameah Adham Beg – Tirana

We started our journey back to Tirana passing through Elbasan seeing the Nazaresh Mosque on the way and arriving at the Adham Beg Mosque in the heart of Tirana City at the time of Zohar, it was wonderful to hear the echo of the Azaan across the whole city.

The interior & exterior of the Mosque is a masterpiece of Islamic architecture, well preserved during Communism. The Mosque was full to capacity for Zohar Salaah.

It was then time to part company with one of the greatest scholars of our time. Our return flight was in the afternoon to Heathrow & Mufti Saheb was scheduled to return in the evening to Gatwick. We said our farewells to Mufti Saheb leaving him in the company of our Scholars for the last few hours of his historical visit to Albania.

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Precious advice from Mufti Taqi Usmani Saheb

Having travelled to some 40 different countries (mentioned in his famous books Jahan-e-Deedah & Dunya Mere Agey – a must reading for all travellers) this was the first time Mufti Taqi Usmani got an opportunity to visit a Muslim Country situated in the Balkans. It was a visit where Mufti Saheb expressed mixed feelings. A feeling of sadness & sorrow by the effects of 40 years of Communism on a nation, which had enjoyed over 500 years of Glorious Islamic Rule. On the other hand, Mufti Saheb was overjoyed to see that many hundreds of thousands had preserved their Imaan in an era where no religious practices were allowed.

Mufti Taqi Usmani was very optimistic that with hard effort & vital input from Educational & Welfare Establishments & Organisations, Islam & Imaan can once again be revived in Albania, especially amongst the younger generations, the ones that have been most affected by Communism rule. In Mufti Saheb`s view, immediate measures need to be taken to propagate Islam to each & every household of Albania, may it be in the form of Literature, personal visits, Tablighi Missions etc.

During the visit, Mufti Saheb requested that some basic Islamic Books containing the Fundamentals of Islam should be translated into Albanian & distributed widely, Mufti Saheb recommended that this work commences immediately with the translation of Mufti Kifayatullah`s world famous series of Talimul Islam. Mufti Saheb also took the responsibility of financing the printing of the first part. It is pleasing to report that as you read this edition of UNITY, the first part of Talimul Islam is in print in Albania. The translation was done by our Albanian Scholar Moulana Ismail under the guidance of our 3 Scholars from India.

We at the M.W.I. would like to take this opportunity to request all brothers & sisters to keep the Albanian Muslims in mind at all times by financially assisting the M.W.I. in its endeavours to establish as many Islamic Awareness Projects as possible in Albania.

May The Almighty accept all our efforts & reward us all accordingly, Ameen.

Representatives

Audley Range – Moulana Yusuf Hajat, Moulana M. Ali Nagdee, Moulana Hasan Patel

Shear Brow/Brookhouse – Moulana Usman Gani, Moulana Shafiq A. Rahman

Bastwell – Moulana Rafiq Sufi

Little Harwood – Moulana Hasan Sidat

Whalley Range – Moulana Hanif Dudhwala

Bank Top/Preston New Rd. – Moulana Irfan Sange