



AFSA
Asian Fire Service Association

**Islam Awareness Guide for
the Fire & Rescue Service**

**Issues and Challenges
in Ramadan Month**

Dr Muhammad Ahsan (FRSA)



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Dr Muhammad Ahsan has extensive experience of research and teaching in various capacities. His research is mainly focused on issues related to community cohesion at local, national and international levels. His major publications include eight books, a large number of research papers and a variety reports. He has significantly contributed in the Fire and Rescue Services' recently published community handbook, entitled: *Working with Diverse Communities: A Useful Reference Guide to Understanding the UK's Diverse Faith & Ethnic Communities* (AFSA & ECFRS: 2010) - a unique document highly appreciate in various local and national circles.

Contents

Acknowledgement	i
Foreword: Bob Neill - Fire Service Minster, CLG	ii
Message: Peter Holland, President, CFOA	iii
Message: David Johnson, CFO, ECFRS	iv
Introduction	1
1 Why do We Need this Handbook?	6
2 The Islamic Concept of the Human Safety and the Role of the FRS	8
3 Fasting: A Religious Obligation or a Privilege at Work?	10
4 Routine Practices During Ramadan	12
5 What Managers Need to Know about Ramadan	13
5.1 Regulations	15
5.2 Leave	15
5.3 Room for Prayer	15
5.4 Building Alteration for Prayer	15
5.5 Dress Code	16
5.6 Time off for Prayers	16
5.7 Friday Prayer in the Mosque during Ramadan	16
5.8 Provision for Prayer Facilities	17
5.9 Unavailability of a Separate Room	17
5.10 Arrangements for Ablution	17
5.11 Lunch Break at Sunset Time	18
5.12 Prohibited Food	18
Appendix One: Islam in Britain: Faith and Historical Perspective	19
Appendix Two: Useful Terms for Fire Service Managers and Employees	27

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Foreword



Bob Neill

The publication of this handbook, *Islam Awareness Guide for the Fire & Rescue Service: Issues and Challenges in Ramadan Month*, marks a valuable contribution by the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) to the Fire and Rescue Service's aim to create an inclusive culture which values the diversity of its workforce and treats everyone with dignity and respect.

This guide is an example of AFSA's leadership and of its commitment to ensure that equality, diversity and fairness are mainstreamed in the modern Fire and Rescue Service. I am sure that the advice contained in these pages

will help Fire and Rescue Service staff at all levels throughout the organisation to achieve a better understanding of the needs, beliefs and religious observations of Muslim colleagues.

The key to the success of the guidance will be its dissemination and implementation and I hope that Fire and Rescue Services will use it to inform policy development and assess the impact of existing policies, processes and practices.

Bob Neill

Minister for Fire and Rescue Service
The Department for Communities
and Local Government

Message

Peter Holland CBE President Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA)

Chief Fire Officer Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service



I am pleased to support AFSA as the president of the Chief Fire Officers Association. Since its inception AFSA have provided critical and timely advice and support for the Fire Service and to its members. At the 2010 conference that I hosted, AFSA launched its very useful reference guide, entitled: *Working with Diverse Communities*. No doubt, this was one of the very best booklets of its type. I also welcome the Islam awareness booklet and know that this will be well received by all in the Service.

As we all move forward and get ready to take on the challenges of the 'Big Society', our success will depend upon our ability to embrace diversity and to draw upon the skills, understanding and experience of all people; with dignity and respect for everyone at the heart of all that we do. The guidance in this book will without a doubt help us to show respect to staff from Muslim backgrounds and also help us to better engage with Muslim communities.

The FRS recognises the significance of diversity in tackling inequality and shaping cohesive communities. We have over my service career made progress on equality, diversity & fairness issues and the consequent benefits in community engagement and reductions in fire deaths and injuries. We must continue to ensure diversity figures highly among our priorities. I personally will ensure that in my presidential year and beyond we support initiatives that help us to better engage with all staff and communities and I am sure this handbook will do that.

Message

David Johnson

Chief Fire Officer Essex County Fire and Rescue Service

Essex County Fire & Rescue Service (ECFRS) continues to strive for operational excellence, doing more than we have ever done to keep our communities safe. With a modernisation agenda and a focus on providing an efficient, effective and value-for-money service, our efforts are firmly fixed on directing our resources in the areas where they can be best utilised. ECFRS values its people, recognising that their contribution to the organisation is crucial to its ongoing growth and development. Therefore, in addition to focusing on the enhancement of technical professionalism, we also focus on training our staff to promote their knowledge of communities' culture and traditions.

The production of this handbook *Islam Awareness Guide for the Fire & Rescue Service: Issues and Challenges in Ramadan Month*, is another step forward in this direction. No doubt, there are many issues and sensitivities involved with regard to faith and the Ramadan month which are directly and indirectly related to community safety. The relevant information



on such an issue will definitely enhance the professionalism of our workforce which will ultimately be helpful in making Essex even safer. I am thankful to Muhammad Ahsan and our Equality and Policy Team for taking this initiative. I am also grateful to Jagtar Singh and Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) for publishing this handbook. I am pleased to say that we have established a strong working relationship with AFSA which is making a significant positive difference.

Introduction

by Jagtar Singh OBE

National AFSA Advisor

Islam is the youngest of the three Abrahamic faiths: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It is the second largest and fastest growing religion in the world. It is also the second largest in the UK, with Muslims constituting over four percent of the British population. Thus the Islamic faith is also an integral part of the daily lives of British Muslims. It goes without saying that faith has always been a vital and sensitive issue in human history. Fasting during Ramadan is considered one of the five pillars of Islam, but it is not simply abstinence from food and drink during the daytime. Muslims believe that there are several other benefits they acquire during this month. Fasting is an act to strengthen personal and communal devotion and commitment to seek closeness to God, it also helps in the attainment of spiritual piety. In addition, it promotes obedience to the Divine commandments, Muslims like to see it as an annual spiritual training programme. Fasting in Ramadan helps Muslims to appreciate the bounties of God, rather than taking everything for granted, and finally strengthens the elements of self-confidence, self-control, tolerance and patience.

There are many Muslims currently working in the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) in various capacities ranging from operational roles to community outreach officers. Needless to say

that on some occasions, specific issues arise which are directly or indirectly related to faith and culture as well as the job responsibilities of Muslim members of staff. Managers and staff have often sought advice and have occasionally found it difficult to get guidance that is consistent and reliable. In writing this handbook, the AFSA executive aims to provide comprehensive information on various issues which managers and staff may come across in the work place. This document will, we hope, help to tackle such issues strategically and sensitively. The handbook is divided into three main sections. The first section in particular provides information on the issues directly linked to various work related issues during the month of Ramadan. In the next two sections, additional information is given in the form of appendixes.

Islam considers all human beings as one extended family – the human family. Therefore, equality and diversity is a core element of this faith. This element also highlights the importance of cultural awareness, mutual respect, human dignity and security of every individual in this world. From this perspective, the relevant knowledge on fire safety issues in relation to the work situation during Ramadan is not only useful but is also an essential part of the professionalism of the FRS staff. There are



some particular religious practices, in addition to fasting, which are only specific to this month. For instance: i) Suhoor (waking up before dawn for a meal for starting of the fast), ii) Iftar (breaking the fast at sunset), iii) Tarweeh (an additional night prayer), and, iv) I'tikaf (worship performed by continuously staying in a mosque during the last ten days and nights of Ramadan). The last ten days of Ramadan are

a particularly sacred part of this month as the Quran was revealed during this time. Therefore, during this period, some Muslim men perform their prayers in an isolated place at the mosque. However, I'tikaf is a voluntary and non-obligatory practise.

It is quite common that during this month, many Muslims perform their prayers on a more regular basis. Therefore, respective issue should be dealt with skilfully. As the British legal system ensures equality and human rights, employers are bound to ensure that the work place is free from any form of discrimination whether based on race or faith. It is important that managers make plans by taking account of the work situation and fire safety requirements. They also need to ensure that all members of staff have a basic understanding of fasting and respective work related issues. Equally important is to accommodate Muslim members of staff so that they can comfortably perform their religious obligations without having any adverse impact on the daily work routine.

Due to the sensitivity of the issue, it may not be a simple and straightforward situation during the whole of Ramadan. For instance, when considering the taking of leave for Friday prayer or for the end of Ramadan festival (Eid), managers may need to know that the Islamic calendar is based on the moon and it is ten days shorter than the sun calendar. Therefore, due to the uncertainty of the sighting of the moon, dates for booking leave often cannot be fixed well before time. The same is also true

for a Muslim fire fighter who may not want to take a meal break during the fixed period for the meal, rather he/she would like this time off at sunset, ie. the moment when the fast ends. Similarly, the last daily prayer during the late evening, is considerably longer in the Ramadan month and usually takes over an hour. Therefore, a Muslim employee and his/her manager have to consider how to deal with this situation if there is a state of emergency at work.

It is noteworthy that the law does not say that employers have to provide all facilities for prayer at workplace. However, at the same time, employers should consider whether their policies and procedures indirectly discriminate against staff of particular religions or beliefs and if so, whether reasonable changes might be made, ie. employers have to carry out Equality Impact Assessment (EIA). Similarly, with regard to the request for leave at the time of the Eid festival, a manager should sympathetically consider such a request where it is reasonable and practical for the employee to be away from work, provided he/she has sufficient leave entitlement in hand. It is also noteworthy that during daily prayer time, employers are not obliged to provide a separate room for prayer. However, if a quiet place is available,

allowing its use for prayer which does not cause problems for other workers or the business, managers should agree to the request.

During the month of Ramadan, Muslim members of staff may request time off to observe their Friday prayer (Jumu'ah), which needs to be performed in a congregation which is usually held in a mosque around mid-day. As mentioned above, the regulations do not require employers to provide time off for prayers. However, where employees request time off that they can make up later and then if their request is refused, an employer may be found to be discriminating indirectly if the fulfilment of such requests cannot be shown to adversely affect business and also if it is shown that other employees are allowed time off for other reasons, such as doctors appointments.

We hope you will find this booklet useful and a reliable resource. Should you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact AFSA representative or one of the Executive, or alternatively, please e-mail: Jagtar Singh on: jagtarbasi@yahoo.com, or Mohammed Ahsan: muhammad.ahsan@essex-fire.gov.uk. For information on AFSA, other documents and reports produced by AFSA, please visit: www.afsa.co.uk.

Jagtar Singh joined the West Midlands Fire Service and saw him move from a recruit fire-fighter in 1977 to the Acting Chief Fire Officer in 2001. He retired from the Fire Service in 2005. The following year, he was appointed as a Non Executive Director of East of England Ambulance Service - a post he held up to August 2009 when he was appointed Non Executive Director of Luton and Dunstable hospital. He has delivered numerous training at local, national and international levels. He is an active voluntary worker and until recently, he was also the President of 'West Midlands Fire Service Romania Aid', a charity that was set up in 1993 and is still going strong today. Jagtar has also helped to develop and establish several minority support groups in the Fire Service and is now supporting the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) as a National Adviser.

Islam Awareness Guide for the Fire & Rescue Service

Issues and Challenges in Ramadan Month

British Muslims comprise a rich, vibrant and diverse group of communities. And, whilst the majority are born into the faith with origins or heritage in Muslim countries and regions overseas, British Muslims are also represented across all ethnicities including indigenous white English and those of dual/multiple heritage. Within these diverse communities there are established communities of second, third and even fourth generation as well as the more recently settled and newer arrivals.

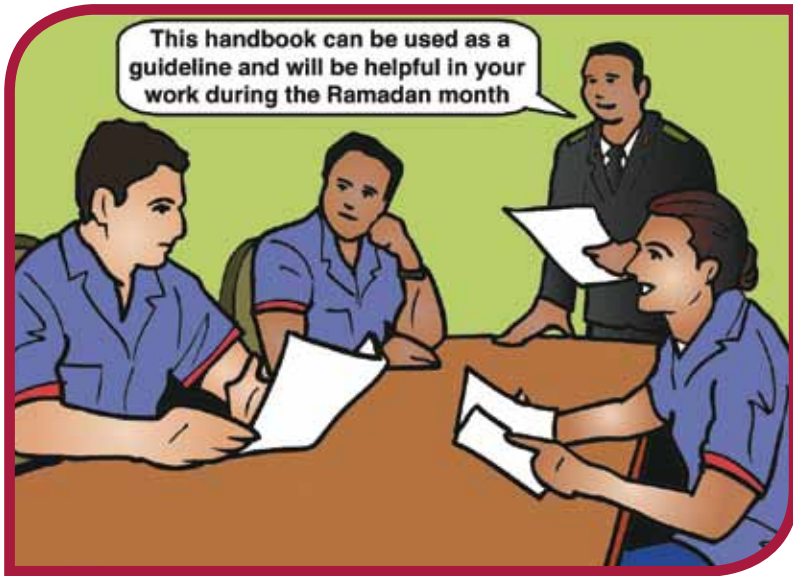
*Understanding and Appreciating Muslim Diversity:
Towards better Engagement and Participation*
(Institute of Community Cohesion, 2008)

1. Why Do We Need This Handbook?

There are around 2.54 million Muslims living in Britain which amounts to 4.2 percent of the country's population. This means that after Christianity, Muslims are the second largest faith community in this country. Although a large majority of Muslims originally came from South Asia; ethnically and culturally they are diverse. This is totally opposite to the impression portrayed by the media that all Muslims are more or less the same. Muslims who came to this country from South East Asia (eg. Indonesia or Malaysia) have a different cultural background to the Muslims who came here from North Africa (eg. Egypt or Algeria). Moreover, not all Muslims are immigrants in this country, there are many indigenous British citizens who are converts to Islam and who obviously have an entirely different ethno-linguistic and socio-cultural background than immigrant Muslims.

Whether in individual or family matters, social life or in the workplace, the Islamic faith is a vital part of the daily lives of most Muslims. British Muslims take an active role in every area of life and, similar to other faith communities, they are also protected under the British legal system. There are many Muslims who currently work in the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) at different levels in various roles, ranging from operational to support staff roles. We are aware that on some occasions, specific issues arise that are related to faith and culture which impact on work routines and tasks required of Muslim staff. These issues need to be tackled skilfully and sensitively so that neither the law is broken nor are the staff members discriminated against.





We also need to be aware that the concerned person(s) is not given undue favour. For instance, fasting is one of the five pillars of Islam. During the month of Ramadan, Muslims fast from dawn to dusk. How this affects the work situation and what a manager needs to know about Ramadan, is an important issue that we will cover in this handbook. This document is designed to provide detailed guidance on a number of situations which may arise in the

work place. It is divided into three main sections. The present section deals with major issues which may arise at work during the month of Ramadan. This section is followed by two appendixes. Appendix one provides additional information on Islam and fasting, while appendix two consists of a glossary of commonly used terms in the Islamic faith in general, and during Ramadan, in particular.

2. The Islamic Concept of the Human Safety and the Role of the FRS

According to Islamic belief, all human beings are the descendents of Adam and Eve. The Quran clearly says that the present division between human beings, whether it is based on nationality or ethnicity, is for their identification, not for grading them in superior or inferior strata (49:13).

This situation highlights at least three important points:

- the whole of humanity is like one family – a single ‘human family’;
- equality and diversity is the natural beauty and essence of this family, and,

- it is obligatory for every individual to ensure the safety and security of each member of the ‘human family.’

With reference to the context, here the last point needs to be further explained. In one of its verses, the Quran places particular emphasis on ensuring the safety and security of all human beings in this world. This Divinely revealed book is considered the primary source of guidance for every Muslim. In one verse, the Quran says that anyone who saves one life, it is as if they have saved the whole of humanity and anyone who kills a person, it is as if they have killed the whole of humanity (5:32).



A careful consideration of this verse also reflects that people who are engaged in saving human lives are in fact working for a very noble cause. Interestingly, the philosophy of Islamic spirituality also highlights a few other important aspects of this principle, such as:

- Saving human lives is a holy activity in Islam, irrespective of whether it is an individual effort or an organisational responsibility, eg. FRS.
- There are various organisations which are directly or indirectly engaged in saving human lives, eg. medic, para-medic, police and FRS.
- Although the work of each individual or organisation involved in saving human lives cannot be underestimated in any circumstances, the staffs of FRS, particularly

the frontline operational staff deserve special respect and appreciation, because on many occasions, they put their own lives in danger to save other peoples' lives. This situation also reflects that the work of the FRS is not an ordinary job rather it is a unique mission to accomplish a noble cause.

In terms of the month of Ramadan, these points highlight the importance of equality and diversity, and cultural awareness with regards to the Muslim community. The relevant knowledge on fire safety issues and the work situation during Ramadan is not only useful but is also an integral part of the professionalism of the FRS staff.



3. Fasting: A Religious Obligation or a Privilege at Work?

The fasting is one of the five pillars of Islam and saving human lives is compulsory in this faith. It is common knowledge that when Muslims are fasting, they may be physically weaker due to complete abstinence from food during the daytime. Moreover, Muslims believe that during the month of Ramadan, there are some additional religious obligations as well as rewards for them. For this reason, most Muslims choose to follow more strictly to their faith during this month. When considering the job responsibilities in the FRS, the sensitivity of this situation raises various questions, such as:

- During working hours, is it obligatory for the FRS to provide every facility to a Muslim member of staff when he/she is fasting during the month of Ramadan?
- If a Muslim member of staff has to make a competing choice between his/her job responsibilities or fasting, which one should be given priority?
- In an emergency or non-emergency situation, if a manager has to make a competing choice with regard to his/her member of staff who is fasting; what should be the priority?



In the following pages, we will attempt to provide answers to these and several other similar questions. However, it must be mentioned here that Islam is a flexible and accommodating religion. Therefore, in such a competing choice, Islamically the priority must always be given to saving human life as there is no compromise on this issue. It means that during an emergency situation, a Muslim member of staff has to break his/her fast. Nevertheless, Islam has fixed some conditions and marked specific boundaries with regard to fasting; it does not mean that a person, who is fasting, should consider that it is his/her right to demand specific privileges. Nor can he/she provide justification for his/her exemption from a specific essential task at work. Therefore, in accordance with Islamic teachings, it is noteworthy that:

- If a Muslim employee faces a life threatening situation, where the only option is to break their fast in order to save a life, whether it be their own or someone else's (eg. if needing

to give mouth to mouth resuscitation, inhalation of thick smoke from fire or if they are in danger from severe dehydration or need medicine), of course they are allowed to break their fast and make up this fast after Ramadan.

- Breaking the fast in a non-emergency situation where a life or long-term health is not at risk however, is not acceptable and the person must fast 60 consecutive days after Ramadan to compensate.
- If a Muslim breaks his/her fast by accident; for example if water is accidentally ingested, the fast is not broken and he/she does not have to compensate for this missed day but should continue fasting.
- As no employee knows the day before what duties they may face, a Muslim should start every day with the fast, and if they encounter a life-threatening situation, then they should make the decision whether or not they should keep fasting.

4. Routine Practices during Ramadan

It is quite common that during the month of Ramadan, many Muslims adhere more strictly to their religious obligations, such as praying, recitation of the Quran and giving to charity. However, as aforementioned, there are at least four main practices which are only specific to Ramadan, eg:

- **Suhoor:** This is waking up before dawn for a meal before the starting of the fast. The fast starts at the call for *Fajr* (dawn) prayer.
- **Iftar:** Breaking the fast with dates and water, or juice. The fast ends each day at the time of sunset. This is also the time for the call of *Maghrib* (sunset) prayer.

- **Traweeh:** An additional prayer performed each day at the end of *'Isha* (night prayer). This is usually performed in congregation in a local mosque following the *'Isha* prayer.
- **I'tikaf:** This takes the form of seclusion, usually in a mosque, for a continuous period, usually ten days, in which Muslims devote themselves solely to worship. This is most common during the last ten days and nights of Ramadan. These last ten days are considered to be particularly sacred as the first revelation of the Quran was revealed during this time. As aforementioned, *I'tikaf* is a voluntary, non-obligatory practise.



5. What Managers Need to Know about Ramadan

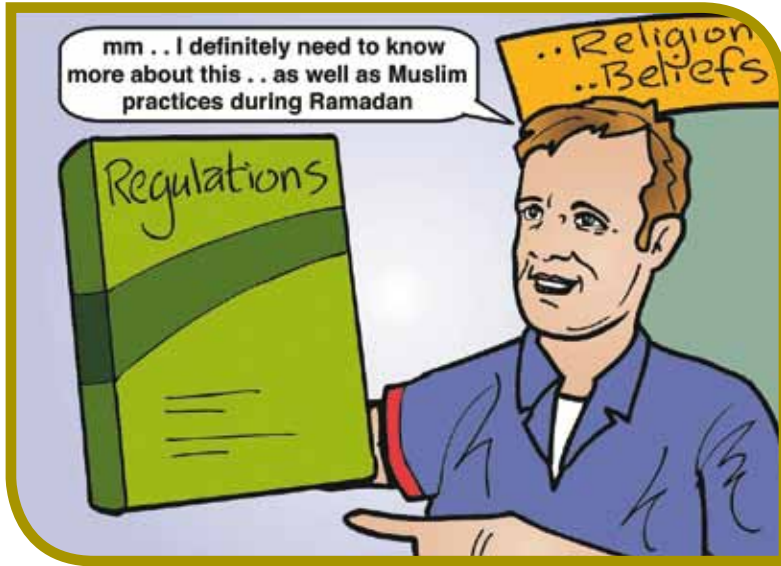
In Britain, we have a culture where people from all faiths, ethnicities and backgrounds enjoy equal rights and are protected against all forms of discrimination. The legal system of our country ensures that all citizens are free to lead their lives without fear of persecution or discrimination. Therefore, every organisation needs to implement a policy to protect the legitimate rights of its members of staff. Similarly, employers are bound to make sure that the work place is free from any form of discrimination whether based on race or faith.

Employers are also obliged to provide facilities wherever they can make reasonable and practicable arrangements so that the respective members of staff can pray during working hours. For this reason, employers need to have a basic knowledge of different faiths and practices being carried out by staff. This is because there are a number of issues which are directly and indirectly related with the working environment in the FRS.

It is important that in the FRS, Watch Managers, Station Commanders, other senior officers, particularly members of the Senior Management Boards (SMB) and the staff of Human Resources (HR), know some important dimensions of the month of Ramadan. By doing so, they will not only be able to manage the situation more effectively but it will also enable them to provide a comfortable and pleasant working environment for their Muslim Fire

Fighters and other Muslim members of staff. With regards to Ramadan, managers should be able to:

- make plans by taking account of the work situation and fire safety requirements;
- ensure that all members of staff have a basic understanding of fasting;
- try to ensure that food and drink are not placed near a fasting person;
- ensure that fasting staff are allowed time for daily prayers;
- allow Muslims break at the time of sunset so that they can break their fast and pray;
- seek the possibility, if a fasting person can continue work during his/her lunch break and make up for time required for pray and breaking fast;
- explore the possibility for making arrangements for collective breaking fast, if there is more than one person who is fasting;
- look into how the FRS can accommodate Muslim employees to take one to three days leave at the end of Ramadan so that they can celebrate Eid festival with their family, and;
- seek the possibility of promoting cross-cultural awareness during Iftar and at the occasion of Eid festival.



In addition to the above, it is also noteworthy that during the prayers, Muslims face to the Qibla. The Qibla is the direction for prayer, which points to the Ka'bah, the House of God, in the city of Makkah in Saudi Arabia. In Britain, this is in a south-easterly direction. Muslims can pray more or less anywhere, provided it is clean and quiet. In the same context, it is also important to note that:

- as the lunar calendar is around ten days shorter than the solar calendar, the month of Ramadan moves back ten days every year;
- during the winter, when the days are shorter, two or three prayers may fall within working hours;
- when a Muslim fire fighter is on night shift, Isha (night prayer) / Taraweeh (extra night prayers specific to Ramadan) and Fajr (dawn prayer) will fall within working hours;
- while Fajr will take only few minutes, Taraweeh may need at least half an hour to perform individually, although it often takes over an hour when performed in a mosque in congregation;
- ritual ablution (Wudhu) is compulsory before prayer and includes the washing of hands, face, arms, head and feet, therefore, respective facilities for this need to be organised if possible;
- before ablution, if someone needs to use the toilet, he/she needs to use water to wash as toilet paper does not fulfil the Islamic requirement;
- Friday prayer (Jumu'ah) is a mandatory congregational prayer for all male Muslims and is held in the mosques on Friday, in the early afternoon usually between 1:00pm and 2:00pm.

An obvious question that arises is whether an employer should provide facilities for a Muslim employee who is fasting during Ramadan, or whether an employer enjoys discretionary powers and can openly refuse to give any concession to the respective employee. With reference to the context, here we would like to mention a few points which are based on a handbook, entitled, *Religion or Belief and the Workplace: A Guide for Employers and Employees*, published by Acas (November 2005).

5.1. Regulations

The Regulations do not say that employers must provide time and facilities for religious or belief observance in the workplace. However, employers should consider whether their policies, rules and procedures indirectly discriminate against staff of particular religions or beliefs and if so whether reasonable changes might be made.

5.2. Leave

With regard to request for a couple of days leave at the time of the Eid festival, a manager should sympathetically consider such a request where it is reasonable and practical for the employee to be away from work, and he/she has sufficient holiday entitlement in hand. However, in the case of several repeated requests, eg. for Friday prayers, the manager should discuss the matter with the employee. The FRS should have clear and reasonably

balanced procedures for handling requests for leave and ensure that all staff are aware of and adhere to the procedures. Staff should give as much notice as possible when requesting leave and in doing so should also consider that there may be a number of their colleagues who would like leave at the same time.

5.3. Room for Prayer

During the daily prayer time, employers are not required to provide a separate prayer room. However, if a quiet place is available and allowing its use for prayer does not cause problems for other workers or the business, manager should agree to the request. Where possible, it is good employee relations practice for the FRS to set aside a quiet room or area for prayer.



5.4. Building Alteration for Prayer

Employers are not required to enter into significant expenditure and/or building

alterations to meet religious needs. For example, ablution facility can be provided symbolically or by using the existing facilities. It may help if all workers understand the religious observances of their colleagues thus avoiding embarrassment or difficulties for those practicing their religious obligations.

5.5. Dress Code

If it is practical and safe to do so, the FRS staff may be allowed to wear clothing consistent with the Islamic dress code. Although it can be easily managed in the case of support staff, it is difficult for operational staff due to fire and safety issues. In the case of support staff, the general dress codes which have the effect of conflicting with religious requirements, may constitute indirect discrimination unless they can be justified for example, on the grounds of health and safety.

5.6. Time off for Prayers

The FRS may expect Muslim employees to pray during their break entitlements. However it is still necessary for managers to consider how long an individual employee requires for their prayers. Some Muslim employees may only wish to take ten minutes for each prayer, and simply pray alone in their office. Others may require longer and wish to pray in congregation. This can happen in Friday prayer in the work place in the case where there may be several Muslims at a fire station or HQs and there are also arrangements for congregation.

In such cases, watch/line managers should be flexible where they can and consult with employees about all possible alternatives.

This situation can be illustrated by an example. Suppose a female Muslim fire fighter requests time off for night prayer (Taraweeh) at a station. The Watch Manager has the staff to cover for her if there is an emergency call. The Watch Manager refuses this time off. This would amount to indirect discrimination which cannot be objectively justified as the Watch Manager will not suffer any adverse effects from allowing her time off for prayers and will, therefore, be acting unlawfully. Where a Watch Manager allows non-Muslim fire fighters to take smoking or coffee break outside of their usual break entitlement but requires Muslim fire fighter to pray during her break entitlement; this would amount to direct discrimination.

5.7. Friday Prayer in the Mosque during Ramadan

Employees may request time off to observe their Friday prayer (Jumu'ah), which needs to be performed in congregation and is usually held in a mosque. As mentioned previously, the regulations do not require employers to provide time off for prayers. However, where employees request time off that they will make up later and their request is refused, an employer will be found to be discriminating indirectly if the fulfilment of such requests cannot be shown

to adversely affect their business, and directly if other employees are allowed time off for other reasons; for example for doctors appointments.

5.8. Provision for Prayer Facilities

Employers are not required to make costly adjustments for religious observance at work. However, employees may request access to a place to pray, and if it is possible to provide a room without an unacceptable adverse impact on business or other staff, then employers may be found to be indirectly discriminating if they refuse such a request. Furthermore, it is good practice for employers to provide a prayer room for their employees. Where only one room is available, it could be designated as a multi-faith prayer or contemplation room. Where employers are providing prayer facilities, they should be aware of the following:

- the room should be clean and quiet;
- if a room is set aside for prayer, there should be a notice requesting people to remove their shoes before entering the room;
- the Qibla (the direction in which Muslims pray) could also be pointed out on the wall or a compass can be placed in the room for use by those wishing to pray;
- Muslims will not generally pray in a room where there are photos, images, or statues of people or animals;

- if employers provide a multi-faith prayer room, they should consult with employees about the display and storage of religious items such as statues or posters;
- employers should consult with employees in order to reach an amicable agreement as to the timings for use of the room, and also,
- employers will need to be aware that it is obligatory for Muslims to perform their prayers at certain times of the day as set out above.

5.9. Unavailability of a Separate Room

Where a room is unavailable, space could be made in a corner of a room to place a prayer mat at prayer times.



5.10. Arrangement for Ablution

Due to the obligation to perform ablution (Wudhu), employers may wish to make some



adjustments in relation to washing facilities. For example, toilets could include a low sink for washing feet, which in many circumstances would not entail excessive or disproportionate cost to the employer but would make it more practical for Muslim and non-Muslim employees using the toilets. Alternatively, employers can supply storage in the washroom areas for a plastic washing-up basin and a small jug that can be used by Muslim employees for washing their feet and left in a clean manner by them. However, in many cases, normal toilet facilities will be adequate.

5.11. Lunch Break at Sunset Time

During the winter, Muslim employees who are fasting may ask to take their lunch break at sunset time to break their fast. Employers may be justified in refusing such a request if this would conflict with legitimate business needs which they are unable to meet in any other ways. However, if they are unable to objectively justify such a refusal, this could amount to unlawful indirect discrimination.

5.12. Prohibited Food

Muslims do not eat pork or drink alcohol as it is Haraam (non-Halal / prohibited) for them. Therefore, they may also feel uncomfortable to be in places where pork or alcohol are freely stored and eaten. They may also prefer not to attend events where pork or alcohol are served. If Muslim staff brings food into the workplace they may need to store and heat their food separately from other food. It is good practice for employees to be consulted on such issues so that a mutually acceptable solution can be found. For instance, suppose a Muslim fire fighter feels unable to store his/her lunch in a Red Watch's refrigerator next to pork belonging to a colleague. Following consultation with staff, the Watch Manager introduces a policy by which all food is to be stored in sealed containers and shelves are separately designated 'vegetarian', 'meat' and 'pork'. The arrangement meets the needs of all staff and at no cost to FRS.



Appendix One

Islam in Britain: Faith and Historical Perspective

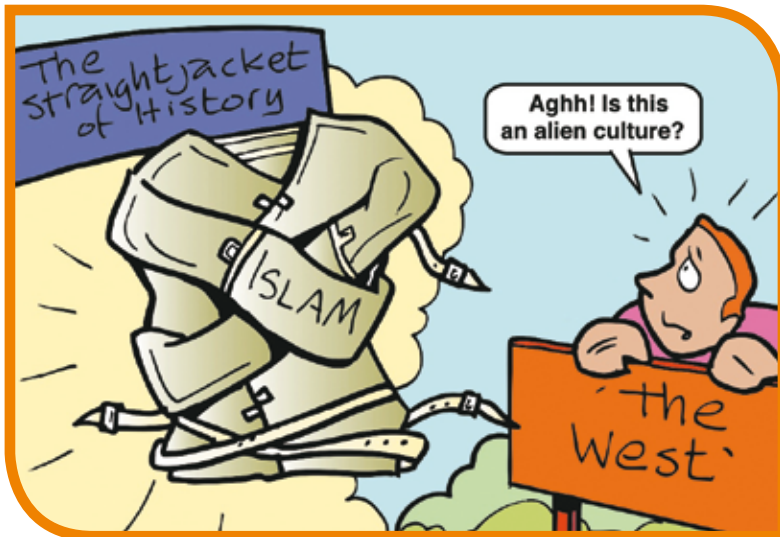
If there is much misunderstanding in the West about the nature of Islam, there is also much ignorance about the debt our own culture and civilisation owe to the Islamic world. It is a failure, which stems, I think, from the straight-jacket of history, which we have inherited. The medieval Islamic world, from central Asia to the shores of the Atlantic, was a world where scholars and men of learning flourished. But because we have tended to see Islam as the enemy of the West, as an alien culture, society, and system of belief, we have tended to ignore or erase its great relevance to our own history.

Prince Charles: 1993

Origin of Islam

Islam is derived from the Arabic root Salama, which means 'peace and submission to God'. The origins of Islam can be traced back to the seventh century in the city of Makkah in present day Saudi Arabia. Islam is thus the youngest religion of the three sister religions, ie. Judaism, Christianity and Islam, commonly known as the Abrahamic faiths. This is because the followers of these faiths claim descent from the Prophet Abraham, who preached and adhered to monotheism. According to Muslim belief, Islam began long before their Prophet Muhammad, the last prophet who arrived in the seventh century. They believe in a whole chain of prophets which includes Moses, David and Jesus. They also believe in the divinely revealed books given to these prophets.

The Quran, the Holy Book of Muslims revealed to the Prophet Muhammad over one thousand four hundred years ago, is considered the word of God by all Muslims and thus is a source of guidance and a primary code of life for them. Shari'ah or Islamic law, in other words an Islamic code of conduct is essentially based on Quranic injunctions. It strongly encourages human development which includes both physical and spiritual development. Therefore, during medieval times, Muslims were seen as the torch bearers of civilisation and pioneers in socio-economic and scientific development. During this time they also had an immense influence on European civilisation.



Appendix One

Muslims in Britain

Talking about Islam's place in history, Abdul-Bari (*Race, Religion and Muslim Identity in Britain*, Swansea: 2005), a contemporary British Muslim intellectual, says that the interaction and 'coexistence with other communities remained the hallmark of Islamic civilisation since its inception. Europe saw this in Spain and subsequently in most parts of the Ottoman Empire where Muslims, Christians and Jews lived in harmony and peace.' He further reveals that 'the history of Muslim interaction with Britain is a long and deep-rooted one. The relationship between the United Kingdom and the Muslim World dates back hundreds of years. The first and the most prominent personality linked with this relationship was the Anglo-Saxon King Offa (died 796), who had coins minted with the Islamic declaration of faith in Arabic.'

Throughout history, the relationship between Muslim countries and Britain continued to improve. This was particularly true during colonial times. This was one of the main reasons that during the post-colonial era, a large number of Muslims from different countries arrived in Britain as economic migrants. They worked hard in all trades and professions and have made vital contributions to the economy of this country. Whilst in the process of making this contribution, they also kept alive their faith by fulfilling their religious obligations. This situation also highlights that it is always helpful

if employers are aware of the basic teachings of Islam in relation to their work situations.

The Islamic Faith

According to Muslim belief, Islam is a unique religion as it asks its followers to lead every aspect of their lives in accordance with God's commandments. There are Five Pillars of Islam which refer to those duties which every Muslim must perform. It is noteworthy, that the importance and appreciation of these pillars are well understood by every Muslim, irrespective of the fact of whether he/she is practicing or not. The five pillars of Islam are:

- i) the Declaration of Faith (Shahadah),
- ii) the performance of five daily Prayers (Salah),
- iii) Fasting in the month of Ramadan (Sawm),
- iv) compulsory Charity (Zakat) and,
- v) Pilgrimage to Makkah (Hajj).

The Declaration of Faith

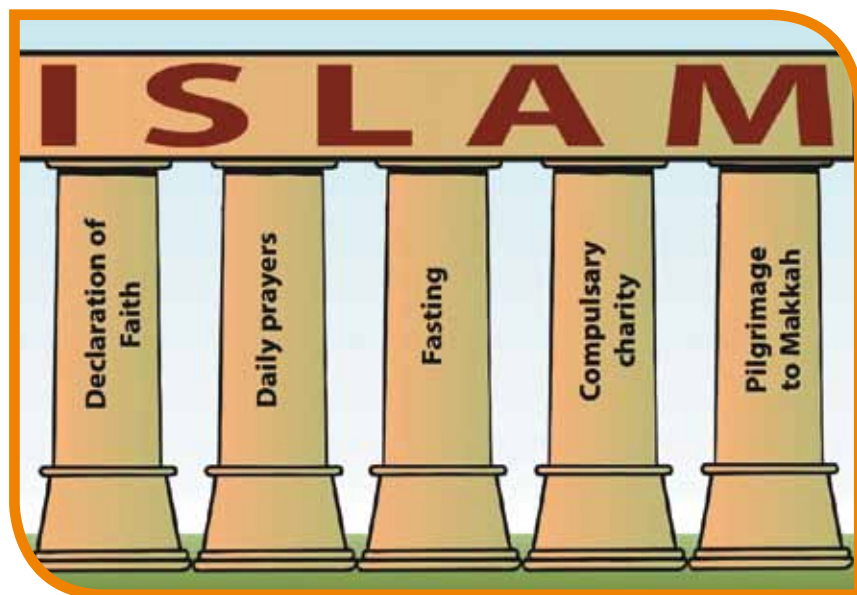
The first requirement to being a Muslim is that a person needs to believe and declare that: 'There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His [last] Messenger'. This testament is the foundation for all other beliefs and practices in Islam. To become a Muslim, a person must repeat the Shahadatain which is: 'There is no God except the almighty Allah and Muhammad is the last prophet of Allah' (Arabic: La-Ilaha Ill-Allah-u, Muhammad durr Rasool Ullah) in the presence of at least two Muslims witnesses.

The beliefs vital to the Muslim faith are 'Pillars of Faith':

- **Belief in One God (Allah):** Muslims believe in the absolute Oneness of Almighty Allah, alone without partners or equals.
- **Belief in the Prophets:** They believe in the chain of Prophets (almost identical to that of Christianity and Judaism) stretching from Adam, including Noah, Moses, Abraham, Joseph, Jesus, to the last Prophet Muhammad, all of whom carried the same message of pure monotheism.
- **Belief in the Holy Books:** Muslims believe in all the holy books revealed to mankind by God, in their original forms. This includes the original words of the Bible, the Torah and

the Quran, which Muslims believe to be the unchanged word of God.

- **Belief in Angels:** Muslims believe angels to be creatures created by God, their chief responsibility being to praise Allah and to carry out His will.
- **Belief in the Day of Judgment:** Muslims believe in the day of accountability when all humanity will be resurrected and their deeds will be judged. Based on their deeds, each individual will be admitted to either heaven or hell.
- **Belief in Fate:** Finally, Muslims believe that everything good or bad, all moments of happiness or sorrow, pleasure or pain, come from God.



Appendix One

Daily Prayers

Salah or **Salaat** is the name for the obligatory prayers which are performed five times a day. These prayers are considered a direct link between the worshipper and God. All Muslim are required to offer these prayers at their specified times which are as follows:

- **Fajr:** Morning prayer – before sunrise (dawn).
- **Zuhr:** Early afternoon prayer – starts just after midday.
- **Asr:** Late afternoon prayer – between late-afternoon and sunset.
- **Maghrib:** Evening prayer – immediately after sunset.
- **Isha:** Night prayer – starts around one and half hours after sunset.

Although it is preferable for Muslim men to perform their prayers in congregation in a mosque, they can pray wherever they are, eg. at home, in the workplace or whilst travelling. Offering a pray does not need to take a long time and can be completed within a few minutes.

Fasting

The Islamic calendar follows the lunar calendar which is usually ten days shorter than the solar calendar, which is the calendar used in the UK and across most of the world. Ramadan

is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar and it is an important month because the first revelation of Quran took place during this month. Throughout this month, Muslims are required to abstain from food, drink, smoking and sexual intercourse from dawn to dusk. They also need to try their best to abstain from all bad actions, speech and thoughts in their day to day life. This month is considered an annual training course for Muslims. They believe that this month brings them closer to God and helps them correct any bad habits they have been practicing, and to develop self-control. Therefore, Muslims who do not practice regularly during the rest of the year, may adhere more strictly to their faith during this time.

The people who are ill or on a journey, and women who are pregnant, breast feeding or menstruating are not required to fast. However, they are obliged to make up an equal number of days later in the year. Permanently ill and elderly people who are physically unable to fast are exempt from fasting. People who are permanently exempt must feed one poor person during the whole month.

Compulsory Charity

In Islam, every Muslim is required to pay 2.5 percent of his/her annual savings (not earnings) to the poor and needy. This payment is called Zakat (or Zakaat) and Muslims believe that it is a means to financial purification and economic growth. It is also considered an important

ingredient of the Islamic welfare system and socio-economic development. In addition to Zakat, there is another voluntary charity known as Sadaqah. There is a clear distinction between Zakat and Sadaqah, the former being compulsory whilst the latter is optional.

Pilgrimage to Makkah

Pilgrimage to Makkah is known as Hajj and is the fifth pillar of Islam. This pilgrimage is compulsory only once in a life time. Hajj occurs every year during the last month of the Islamic calendar. It is compulsory for every Muslim who is physically and financially able to perform it. Nearly four million people go to Makkah in Saudi Arabia each year from every corner of the world to fulfil this religious duty. Hajj provides a unique opportunity for people to meet with those from every ethnic, social, economic, cultural, linguistic and geographic background. Pilgrims wear special clothes called Ihram. These are simple garments which strip away all distinctions of class, culture and socio-economic status so that each pilgrim looks equal at that holy place and time. This reflects the importance of equality and diversity in the sight of God.

Important Aspects of Fasting

Fasting during Ramadan is considered one of the five pillars, but it is not simply food and

drink which are strictly prohibited for every Muslim during daylight hours. There are several other religious regulations which apply to it. Muslims believe that there are a large number of benefits they acquire during the Ramadan month:

- it is an act to strengthen personal and communal devotion and commitment to seek closeness to Allah and His forgiveness;
- helps in the attainment of spiritual piety;
- promotes obedience to the Divine commandments;
- it is an annual spiritual training programme, which helps Muslims to refocus and strengthen their faith;
- helps them to appreciate the bounties of Allah, rather than taking everything for granted;
- helps to understand the hunger, thirst and sufferings of poor people;
- strengthens the elements of self-confidence, self-control, tolerance and patience;
- promotes physical, mental and spiritual disciplines; and,
- medical research has proved that fasting is good for health.

Appendix One

Fasting for the Human Body and Spirit

Fasting is not only a physical activity; rather its spiritual dimensions are far more important than the physical aspects. Thus fasting is an important source of purification for the human spirit, which provides the base and direction for an individual to lead his/her life. One important aspect of fasting, therefore, is that a Muslim should keep his/her mind and thoughts pure of all kinds of bad and sinful thoughts. If the mind is pure, it will direct the body's actions towards the right path.

When a person is fasting, his/her whole body is in a state of abstinence. Not eating and drinking

is a small part of the overall package of fasting and just extends to fasting of the stomach. This situation can better be understood when we consider, for instance, that the eyes are also in a state of fasting which means a person is strictly prohibited from watching an evil or sinful activity or scene. Similarly, the ears should also be in a state fasting and should not be listening to negative speech or conversations, such as gossip and backbiting. The hands should not be involved in sinful activity and feet should not be used to walk towards actions that may be sinful, and so on.



There are specific actions which break a fast, including:

- eating and/or drinking intentionally during fasting time;
- intentionally letting thick smoke or dust to enter into the throat (eg. smoking);
- sexual intercourse and/or discharge of semen;
- not having a compulsory shower (ie. shower after the discharge of semen in the case of men, after the monthly period in the case of women and after sexual intercourse in the case of both men and women); and,
- intentionally violating the basic guidance of Islam and falsifying Allah and His prophets.

In these cases, the individual must compensate for the broken fast by fasting for 60 consecutive days after Ramadan, or if they are unable to so, then feeding 60 poor people. It is noteworthy that the fast will not break if a Muslim eat or drinks unintentionally, uses eye drops, perfumes, gives bloods (thumb or intravenous), or gets an intra muscular injection.

The Eid Festival

Eid ul Fitr is one of the two major festivals in Islam and is also known as the end of Ramadan celebration. The end of Ramadan begins with a special morning prayer on the first day of Shawwal, the tenth month of the Islamic calendar. It is strictly forbidden to fast on the day of Eid because it is a time for celebration and thanks. During Eid, Muslims greet each other with the phrase 'Eid Mubarak', meaning 'Blessed Festival' or Blessed Celebration.

Appendix Two

Useful Terms for Fire Service Managers and Employees

A.H. (Islamic calendar) (After Hijrah): *Hijrah* means migration. The Islamic calendar starts from the year the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), migrated from Makkah to Madinah in 622 A.D.

Adhan: The Islamic call to the five daily prayers.

Alhamdulillah: A phrase that Muslims often use in conversation, especially when thanking God for blessings. It literally means 'All praise be to Allah.'

Allah: An Arabic term which Muslims use to refer to Almighty God. This is a unique term used for God with no plural, masculine or feminine forms of this word in Arabic. It denotes the One True God, the Almighty Creator and Sustainer, Who is neither male nor female.

'Asr: Late afternoon prayer, ie. in between mid-afternoon and sunset.

Assalaamu 'Alaikum: A common greeting among Muslims, meaning 'peace be with you.' The appropriate response is: Wa 'Alaikumus Salaam Wa Rahmatullah (means: 'and also upon you be peace and blessing of Allah').

Direct Discrimination: A state in which an employee or perspective employee is less favourably treated because of his/her race, faith, gender or sexual orientation.

Eid Mubarak: Literally means 'blessed festival' - a phrase of greetings said among Muslims to greet each other on Eid celebration.

Eid al-Adha: Eid al-Adha, also known as the Festival of the Sacrifice, is the most important festival in the Islamic calendar. It falls in the last month of the Islamic calendar, ie. after the time of the Hajj pilgrimage.

Eid al-Fitr: The festival at the end of month of Ramadan.

Eid: There are two main festivals in Islam and each is generally known as Eid.

Fajr: First of the five daily Islamic prayers, performed before the break of dawn.

Hajj: Fifth pillar of Islam - pilgrimage to Makkah once in a lifetime performed during specific days of the last month of the Islamic calendar.

Halal: An Arabic term which literally means permissible. It includes the code of conduct for a Muslim's life. However, the term is mostly used for foods which are permissible for Muslims (opposite: Haraam).

Haraam (Haram): An Arabic term which literally means prohibited. In the case of food, certain items are Haraam, eg. food and

products derived from the pig, the blood of all animals, animals not slaughtered in an Islamic way and, all alcoholic foods and drinks.

Hilal: The very slight crescent moon that is first visible after a new moon. Muslims look for the Hilal when determining the beginning and end of Islamic months.

Iftar: A meal served at the end of the day during Ramadan, to break the fast.

Ihram: Special but simple garments worn by pilgrims at the occasion of Hajj consisting of two pieces of unstitched white cloth for men, and covering clothing for women.

Indirect Discrimination: Opposite to direct discrimination; indirect discrimination occurs where the effect of certain rules, requirements, conditions or practices imposed by an employer has an adverse impact disproportionately on one specific individual or group.

Isha: Night prayer which starts around one and half hour after Maghrib.

'Itikaf: A spiritual stay by Muslim men in the mosque which is performed during the last ten days of Ramadan.

Jumu'ah: Mid-day prayer on Friday in which Muslims men must pray in congregation usually at a local Mosque.

Juz': A section of the Quran equal to 1/30 of the whole book. During Ramadan, one section

is read each day during Taraweeh prayers, so that by the end of the month, the entire Quran has been read at least once.

Laylat al-Qadr: Literally means 'the night of fate/ power/ destiny'. This is a special night that falls on one of the odd nights of the last ten nights of Ramadan, ie. the 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th or 29th night. It is not known exactly which night this falls on so Muslims exert extra efforts on each of these nights in the hope of meeting with its rewards. It commemorates the night when the first verses of the Quran were revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The Quran describes it as a night that is more valuable than a thousand months of worship (Quran: 97:3).

Maghrib: Evening prayer performed immediately after sunset.

Masjid: Mosque is the English name for a place of Muslim worship. The Arabic term for a place of Muslim worship is Masjid, which literally means 'place of prostration'.

Qibla: Also written as Qiblah or Kiblah means the direction of prayer. Muslims face the Ka'bah (House of God) in the city of Makkah in Saudi Arabia when they pray.

Quran: Sometimes also written as Koran. This is the sacred text of the Islamic faith, which Muslims hold to be God's words, unchanged since it was revealed and which contains guidelines for humanity.

Appendix Two

Ramadan: The ninth month of the Islamic calendar, during which Muslims spend the daylight hours in a complete fast.

Sadaqah: Voluntary charitable giving.

Salaat or Salah: Five daily prayers.

Sawm: Arabic word for Fasting practiced in Islam during the month of Ramadan, which entails abstinence from food, drink, smoking and sexual intercourse during daylight hours. All those fasting are to steer away from anger, bad language, and bad deeds.

Shahadain: The Declaration of faith. The 'Shahadah' is the first pillar of Islam.

Shari'ah: Islamic law; a prescribed code of conduct which stipulates rulings and recommendations in every aspect of a Muslim's daily life.

Shawal: Tenth month of the Islamic calendar - the month after Ramadan. Each year, the first of Shawwal is the day of Eid al-Fitr, also known as the end of Ramadan festival.

Sha'ban: The eighth month of Islamic calendar, followed by Ramadan.

Suhoor: A small meal eaten before dawn during the month of Ramadan before fasting begins.

Taraweeh: The word Taraweeh is the plural of the word Tarweeha which literally means

'to rest'. In the context of Salat Al-Taraweeh, it means to rest between every four units of prayer. This Salah is special late evening/night prayers performed during Ramadan. Taraweeh are performed after the Isha prayer. During each day prayer, one Juz (1/30) of the Quran is recited, so that by the end of the month, the entire Quran is completed.

Wudhu': Compulsory ablution before prayer, which includes washing the hands, mouth, nose, face, arms (up to the elbow), wiping the head and ears and washing the feet (to the ankle). A Muslim is required to perform this before praying. However, if between this and the next prayer they do not break their Wudhu (ie. by going to the toilet, passing wind, vomiting, sleeping, touching the private parts, or heavy bleeding) they do not need to repeat it until they break it again.

Zakaat al-Fitr: A specific amount given in compulsory charity to the poor just before end of Ramadan or in the morning of Eid day before the Eid prayer.

Zakat: Compulsory charity and one of the five pillars of Islam. Muslims who have wealth remaining over the year must pay 2.5% of that to aid those in need. While it can be paid anytime during a year, many people prefer to pay it during Ramadan.

Zuhr: Early afternoon prayer which starts just after midday when the sun begins to decline.



THE MUSLIM COUNCIL OF BRITAIN

Muslim Council of Britain

The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) is a national representative organisation with over 500 affiliated institutions, mosques, charities and schools. The MCB is pleased to endorse this guidebook, which has been approved by the MCB Education Committee. It is a very informative document and is significantly helpful in promoting mutual understanding and community cohesion through providing accurate and to the point information with regard to respective key elements of the Islamic faith. Its excellent style and content make it a text pertinent to all organisations in general and FRS in particular which employ many Muslims across the country. The MCB hopes that this practical guide will help both employers and employees to promote a better environment at work and community safety at large.



Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA)

AFSA was formed in 2003 by four Asian firefighters who wanted to see better representation and progression within the workplace particularly in the uniformed roles. Over a period of time, AFSA grew into a larger association, recognising and taking account of the vast span of religions and cultures from across the whole of the Asian continent. This has enabled AFSA to provide excellent consultation to fire and rescue services, government and others with regard to many issues ranging from recruitment, fire safety, clothing, and research. It has also enabled AFSA to support the development of new policies and strategies.