

...education is in-
fected by being put in isolation? Kausar
replied: "My obligation is with Allah

...High School Rein Ford told *The Muslim News*. He acknowledged that two pupils were put into isolation for wear-

the issue on the weekend. During the weekdays I am busy with my school work. I made the decision on my own.

make suitable alternative arrangements for pupils who, for religious reasons are required to dress differently or mod-

house in Marmion Road in Southsea as a mosque. **School prohibits hijab p 12**
Editorial p 2

British Muslims take a lead in relief work for Chechens

By Ahmed Versi

Once again British Muslims have taken a lead in responding to a humanitarian disaster. This time it is Chechnya. Western aid agencies have refused to go to the region because of fear of kidnappings and killings of foreigners, making the situation for the Chechens all the more difficult. However, British Muslim aid agency, Islamic Relief, has a presence in the region. In Ingushetia, the neighbouring country, where there are almost 300,000 refugees, Islamic Relief has offices and has set up Chechnya Refugees Relief Project. "The suffering of the Chechen Muslims is enormous. The situation is catastrophic and beyond comprehension," Managing Director of Islamic Relief Dr Hanu al-Banna, who recently returned from his ten day visit to the Caucasus region, told *The Muslim News*. He added that the Ingush Government is unable to cope with the situation due to lack of experience, resources and support from international donor agencies. International Red Cross, UNHCR, Medecins du Monde with Islamic Relief are the few agencies taking the risks and helping the refugees.

Islamic Relief has launched a £1 million emergency relief operation to provide food and non-food items, clean water and to implement and maintain mobile clinics for up to 4,000 families (20,000 people) who are living in seven camps within a ten mile radius of the border with Chechnya.

Dr al-Banna praised the work done by the local Muslim charities and the Russian Emergency Committee and appealed to the international NGOs for their support: "The local authorities can't cope with the huge number of refugees, which has almost doubled the Ingush population. There is an urgent need for international humanitarian or-

ganisations to work in the area before the severe winter sets in."

Dr al-Banna said 296,438 officially registered refugees are within Ingushetia, thousands of refugees are stranded at the borders due to border closures and 200,000 are internally displaced within Chechnya. Refugees face numerous difficulties and challenges including inadequate shelter, sub-zero temperatures and lack of food and medical facilities.

Islamic Relief has supply offices in Nalchik, capital of Kabardin Balkaria and in Stavropole Republic. Dr al-Banna praised the Russian Government for giving them permission to work with the refugees in Ingushetia and other areas in the Russian Federation.

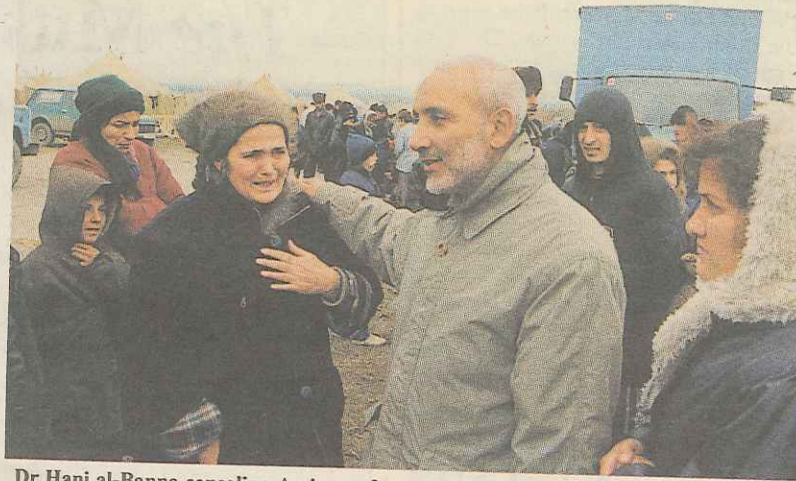
Dr Hanu al-Banna had a letter from the Prime Minister of Ingushetia to visit the country and was given protection by the Ingushetia Government during his stay there. "I was not frightened as I never thought about it," Dr al-Banna told *The Muslim News*. Islamic Relief has offices in Nazran, the capital of Ingushetia and in Naksahn, where the majority of the refugees are situated. In addition, the Islamic Relief has offices in Naksahn which is 90km from Nazran, since 1997.

Islamic Relief was also involved in Chechnya before the recent fighting began (see *The Muslim News* 75) until August when they had to close down their offices. They also sent four ambulances to a hospital in Grozny, capital of Chechnya.

As we go to press, a summit meeting of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) - in charge of security from the Atlantic to the Urals - is taking place in Istanbul despite the fact that the meeting is taking place against a backdrop of the invasion of Chechnya, leaders will not be discussing the humanitarian disaster in Chechnya, but the security of Europe.



'I have been sleeping in the open for the last five days waiting for a tent for me and my young grand children.' Zohra, refugee from Grozny now at Sputnik Camp, Ingushetia



Dr Hanu al-Banna consoling Amina, refugee from Chechnya, who came with 12 grand children, is now sheltering at Sputnik Camp, Ingushetia

To make a donation or to obtain further information, please contact:
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Tel :0870 444 3132. Email: iruk@islamic-relief.org.uk

Hajj support finalised

By Sarah Sheriff

A Muslim delegation comprising Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain, Iqbal Sacranie, a member of the Association of British Hujjaj (ABH) Dr Ahmed Yar Choudary, and Secretary of the ABH Khalid Pervez, has just returned to the UK from successful meetings in Saudi Arabia to finalise arrangements for the establishing of a 'Muslim Desk' or 'Office' to look after pilgrims' affairs during the Hajj season.

As revealed in the last month's issue of *The Muslim News*, there have been ongoing negotiations to put in place an office which would assist Muslims from Britain who run into difficulties during Hajj - loss of money or travel documents or the failure of Agents to provide promised facilities such as accommodation.

The delegation met the Minister of Hajj, Iyad Madani and officials from his Ministry as well as the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs. The meetings were also attended by British Consular General, Innes Ray and Deputy Ambassador, Simon McDonald. Commenting on the discussions on his return, Sacranie expressed "deep appreciation for the excellent and improved facilities being offered to the Hujjaj" and described the meetings held as "very positive and constructive. The Ministers gave their fullest support and assured us of providing facilities which will lessen the burden on the British Hujjaj." Asked whether all the facilities will be in place for this Hajj, Mr. Sacranie expressed the hope that some of the planned facilities will be in place, but discussions were ongoing and there was "a lot of work to do at the British end."