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The Muslim News

Clare Short praises Islamic Relief work



Clare Short with Islamic Relief staff

(Photo: Ashfaq Ahmad/Muslim News)

By Shenaz Kermalli

In an official visit to the Birmingham headquarters of Islamic Relief, Clare Short MP, praised the aid organisation, saying she felt that Islamic Relief was a "centre of goodness" in an increasingly violent and irrational world.

"I'm enormously impressed by the

Birmingham, saying it added to the multi-ethnic and multi religious tapestry that makes up the city. "There are now mosques, synagogues, black and white churches here, and a Buddhist temple has just opened. When I visit countries torn apart by national or religious hatred, I often point out Birmingham as an example of a city, where communities live side by side, not only tolerating each other, but actually enriching it."

"It's also a good way to counteract the prejudice people have of Muslims," she added.

The reception was the first of its kind for Islamic Relief, an attempt to introduce the international relief and aid organisation to Government officials and the media.

Founded in 1984 as a response to the widespread famine at the time in Ethiopia and Somalia, the charity grew rapidly. It now spans four continents, and initiates emergency and long-term development projects in some of the poorest countries in the world.

Ayesha Ball, who has been working at Islamic Relief since 1995, introduced the organisation as a "bridge between themselves and others with greater needs." She also stressed the need to develop Muslim communities within the

UK as well as those abroad."

The UN-recognised NGO is noted for its 4.5 million relief program in Chechnya - the only British-based non-governmental organisation that has remained in the country because of poor security and continuing lawlessness.

"Refugees are now living in overcrowded rail carriages and tents, as they flee from their homeland. We are happy to be representing the British community there," said Ms Ball.

Established sixteen years ago by Dr Hany El Banna, Islamic Relief has regularly received assistance from the Government's International Development Department, for community-reintegration projects in Sudan, Palestine, Kosovo, and a prevention of blindness program in Bangladesh and India.

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By Abdul Adil

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