



PRESS STATEMENT – IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Manchester 26 October 2023 – ALFURQAN Centre Responds to Misleading Allegations and concerns about a Prayer for the Palestinian People.

The Alfurqan Centre is a place of worship with a large Muslim congregation in Manchester, serving Muslim communities for over 25 years. We provide several services to our diverse community including regular prayers, talks, classes, counselling, and community outreach. As well as preaching our faith, we must respond to the spiritual wellbeing and health needs of our congregations. Muslim communities in the UK and around the world are currently suffering from a collective trauma at the huge scale of death, destruction, and humanitarian tragedy they see in Gaza and the West Bank, including the destruction of Mosques and Churches. Praying to God for the removal of oppression is a feature of all major religions, rooted in their respective scriptures, and Islam is no different.

A guest Imam visiting our centre on 20th October 2023 delivered a Friday sermon which included a lengthy prayer. We have reviewed the prayer (dua) with specialists, advisors, and concluded the following:

1. Places of worship have a religious duty to provide counselling, solace, and give hope to people so they do not fall into despair, which can lead to hate and violence. It is the role of a place of worship to have prayers to strengthen their faith in God as the source of ultimate peace and justice. In the Muslim faith, this is done through regular prayers and additional prayers for all oppressed people, calling for God to deliver justice and bring an end to oppression.
2. There was no support for any group or terrorist group in the prayer. This was a general prayer for the protection, justice, and liberation of all oppressed people, including those in Gaza. There was no endorsement for killing any innocent people. Nor does the centre support the killing of innocent people in any circumstances as this is grossly against Islamic principles.
3. The use of the word *Mujahidin* in the prayer, like the word *Jihad* historically, has been misunderstood in the West to mean combatants and those participating in an armed struggle. In fact, in the Arabic language, *Jihad* can mean many forms of struggle and those striving in different ways can be classed as *Mujahidin*. In this context, it simply refers to all the innocent civilians who are currently struggling in Gaza including medics, aid workers and all those struggling to live and lead normal lives under the heavy and relentless bombardment.
4. Alleging that the prayer was antisemitic in any way or targeted Jews directly is a misunderstanding of the language used. We must clarify that the Arabic wording *al-yahud al-ghasibin* used in the prayer specifically referred to “Oppressing Jews” i.e., those who justify the taking of innocent lives, so this cannot be understood as a blanket statement directed at all Jews. We have shown over a decade of good relations with members of other faith groups in the Manchester area, and to undermine an entire religious group has never been our practice nor our sentiment as a centre.



5. We should not deny each community the right to pray in their own way, to provide solace to their own people, and to attempt to police the sacred prayers of others and their grief. If we deny people the right to pray according to their own faith traditions to God, then we leave the gates open to others who will exploit that grief for hatred, violence, and other agendas.
6. The Imam was a guest who was visiting and not our own resident Imam. We expect our Imams to follow our guidance on sensitive issues, which is opposed to preaching any violence, hate, and racism including antisemitism. We will be reviewing our policies and guidance to ensure that speakers are much clearer in future even in their prayers to avoid any misinterpretation or misunderstandings.
7. These are testing times for all, and we would remind the media to be fair and accurate in their reporting. Antisemitism and Islamophobic hate incidents have risen dramatically and mosques have received attacks and threats. We all have a responsibility to not fuel further tensions in our communities, and we take our duty to do so very seriously.

Alfurqan Centre

End of Statement

The prayer –dua (For Reference)

“O’ Allah, support our weak, **those struggling (mujahidin)**, and our poor brethren in Gaza. O’ Lord of the Worlds, O’ Allah, grant them victory over your enemy and the enemy of Islam, O’ Lord of the Worlds. O’ Allah, we ask you to help them, O’ Lord of the Worlds. O’ Allah, protect them all, O’ Lord of the Worlds. O’ Allah, heal their sick, O’ Lord of the Worlds. O’ Allah, we ask you to heal their sick, O’ Lord of the Worlds, and to defeat the enemies of the believers, O’ Lord of the Worlds, from **Oppressing Jews**, O Lord of the Worlds. O Allah, take them as You are mighty and capable. O’ Allah, we ask You to do this for the entire nation of Muhammad, peace be upon him.”