

HUMANITY FIRST – WIPING AWAY THE TEARS OF THE DISTRESSED

Official Transcript of the Address by the Worldwide Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community at the Humanity First International Conference 2021.

On Sunday, 31st October 2021, the Worldwide Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, the Fifth Khalifa (Caliph), His Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba), delivered an address to conclude the Humanity First International Conference. The two day event, which was held at the Baitul Futuh Mosque in London on Saturday, and then in Islamabad, Tilford, UK on Sunday was themed as 'poverty alleviation through empowerment'. The Humanity First silver jubilee conference, delayed a year due to COVID-19, was attended either physically or virtually by more than 1200 people, comprising Humanity First delegates and members from over 60 countries around the world. Prior to the keynote address, the Chairman of Humanity First presented a brief report on the works of Humanity First over the past 26 years. The official transcript of the keynote address delivered by His Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba) on this occasion is presented below.

After reciting *Tashahhud*, *Ta'awwuz* and *Bismillah*, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba), Worldwide Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, said:

'With the grace of Allah, this weekend you have been able to hold the Humanity First International Conference. As has been mentioned in the report as well, you intended to hold this event last year to mark the Humanity First silver jubilee. However, due to COVID, it was delayed until now. Whilst some people have been able to attend in person, due to the ongoing effects of COVID, the majority of members of Humanity First are partaking in this event remotely and are listening to my address from other countries.

It has now been 26 years since Humanity First was first formally registered, and with the grace of Allah, ever since its inception, Humanity First has continued to grow and develop and has conducted a lot of impactful work in many parts of the world. It has served in some capacity or the other, in over 60 countries, including in the Americas, Europe, throughout Africa, the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific. In some countries, Humanity First has responded to natural disasters and provided rapid relief to the local people; whilst in others, it has established permanent structures and ongoing programmes designed to fulfil the basic needs of the local people.

Amongst its various projects, Humanity First has set up food banks in various countries, and arranged sacrifice of animals on a large scale at Eid, for the sake of helping underprivileged people. It has established programmes to support extremely vulnerable members of society, such as the homeless and orphans. Additionally, many of its programs are designed with sustainability in mind. For example, it is providing farming and agricultural support, it is

giving medical training and teaching a range of skills, as well as providing frontline healthcare services. Similarly, Humanity First has been running the Gift of Sight programme for several years. Through its Water for Life programme, Humanity First is providing clean drinking water to people living in remote parts of the world. As mentioned, it is providing disaster and emergency relief in countries afflicted by earthquakes, flooding or other natural disasters.

In terms of permanent institutions, Humanity First has established schools, hospitals, orphanages, and care shelters. Thus, with the grace of Allah, Humanity First is now a very well-established and well respected international charitable organisation. Indeed, Humanity First has now reached the stage where external NGOs, or similar humanitarian organisations, are seeking to partner and collaborate with it, to fulfil their own charitable obligations and objectives. For example, in one country, an international NGO linked to the United Nations expressed its desire and intention to give funds to Humanity First, in order for it to carry out humanitarian work and projects on its behalf. This demonstrates that, with the grace of Allah, Humanity First has earned the respect and trust of other humanitarian agencies, including those associated with the United Nations.

Of course, this was destined to happen, as the Holy Prophet (sa) said that if your etiquettes and conduct are good, then people will appreciate you and you may consider that you have contributed positively to society. Whilst we harbour no desire for recognition or reward, except from Allah, increasingly, as I have said, external organisations and even certain governmental agencies have recognised and appreciated the efforts of Humanity First, which testifies to the beneficial works conducted. It reflects the fact that Humanity First has earnestly strived to fulfil the noble objective, which Allah the Almighty has commanded us to pursue in the Holy Qur'an, and which ought to be the life-long objective of a Muslim – to serve humanity and to fulfil the needs of those who are facing any adversity.

Repeatedly, the Holy Qur'an has instructed Muslims to help and aid those who are vulnerable or in need, irrespective of their caste, creed or colour. Furthermore, there are countless traditions and sayings of the Holy Prophet (sa) that illustrate how he spent his entire life serving mankind, and striving to inculcate the same spirit of sympathy for others within his followers. Certainly, the Holy Prophet (sa) was an everlasting source of mercy for mankind, and through his blessed words and deeds, he shone an illuminating and everlasting light upon the magnificent teachings of Islam and demonstrated that serving mankind is an inherited, and truly fundamental part of our faith.

For example, Islam instructs us to protect and support orphans, to help those who are travelling, to provide for the needy and underprivileged and to care for those who are suffering from ill-health. Also, Islam teaches that one's neighbours have great rights upon them. Muslims have been taught that they must treat their neighbours with grace and compassion, and be ever-ready to help them in their times of need and grief. In one well-known tradition, the Holy Prophet (sa) said that the Angel Jibril (Gabriel) had so strongly emphasised fulfilling the rights of one's neighbours and treating them with love and sympathy, that he came to think that, perhaps they may be included amongst a Muslim's rightful heirs. Furthermore, the definition of a neighbour is extremely vast and far-reaching.

It not only includes people who live nearby, but also includes people who live much further afield – a person’s travel companions, work colleagues, subordinates and many others besides. In reality, the scope of one’s neighbours is so vast, that all members of society can be considered our neighbour.

And so, striving to help all members of humanity to overcome their anguish and pain is the religious duty of an Ahmadi Muslim. With the grace of Allah, through the work of Humanity First, many Ahmadi Muslims have had the chance to serve their neighbours and fulfil their needs, including those who are nearby, and also those who live much further afield in other nations and continents.

Moreover, Allah the Almighty and His Messenger (sa) have instructed Muslims to seek to alleviate the pain of those who are suffering from ill-health, to provide them with medical treatment, to tenderly care for them, and to regularly inquire after their health. In this regard the Holy Prophet (sa) said, whosoever visits a sick person for the sake of Allah, a heavenly caller will announce, ‘May your every step be blessed, and may you be rewarded with an abode in paradise’. Not only has the Holy Prophet (sa) instructed Muslims to provide relief and treatment to those who are unwell, but he has also given the glad tiding, that those who make heartfelt efforts to care for the sick will be rewarded in the hereafter. Consequently, those who spend out of which Allah the Almighty had provided them, to build hospitals and clinics, or to provide healthcare. are those who are actually building their homes in paradise.

In light of these Islamic teachings, the Ahmadiyya Muslims Community has built many hospitals and schools in different countries. However, where it is not possible for us to directly build such facilities due to the religious opposition we face in some countries, Humanity First has provided an excellent avenue for us to fulfil our obligations and our ardent desire to serve others.

Likewise, the Holy Qur’an states that those who protect and feed orphans are those who gain the nearness of Allah, whilst those who ignore their needs are those who become the recipient of His wrath. The Holy Prophet (sa) also repeatedly emphasised the importance of caring for orphans, and supporting all weak and vulnerable members of society. Indeed, it is reported, that the Holy Prophet (sa) once said, ‘Find me amongst the weak and poor. Surely, you are provided for and helped only due to your support of the weak and deprived’. Here, the Holy Prophet (sa) proclaims that he stands shoulder to shoulder with those who are weak and defenceless, and that if a person desires to attain his love and the love of Allah, he should seek to help those who are helpless, and who are the victims of misfortune.

Unquestionably, the blessed and noble teachings, and practise of the Holy Prophet (sa) stand as a timeless example for the Muslim community, and the world at large. It was his way to care for those who were weak, deprived, or who had lost their parents or guardians at a young age, and he desired the same from the followers. Thus, never let any opportunity to serve those who are mired in poverty, or subjected to hardship, slip through your fingers. And never, God forbid, allow even a trace of pride to enter your mind, thinking that you are doing such people a favour; rather, it is they who are doing you a favour, because they are

providing you with an opportunity to gain the pleasure of God, and to reap His blessings in both this world and the next.

With the grace of Allah, Ahmadis sacrifice their wealth generously, in order to ease the plight of those who are in distress, or who are the victims of privation, and it was to serve this purpose that Humanity First was established. In a similar vein, the Holy Prophet (sa) said, that those who are hungry should be fed, and so Humanity First has established food banks, through which thousands of people are benefitting. Some countries have done a particularly good job in this regard, such as Canada and the UK, whilst others are also working according to their capabilities. Humanity First United States is also running food pantries, where thousands of peoples are benefitting from that.

In terms of giving generously to those in need, it is narrated that the Holy Prophet (sa) of Islam once said, each day, two angels descend; one of them says, “O Allah, grant even more to the one who spends in charity and may there be many others who follow in his stead.” Thereupon, other angels say, “O Allah, may he who withholds charity and is miserly be destroyed, and may all his wealth and riches come to an end.” It is purely with this intention of being able to serve others, that Humanity First seeks to raise funds, and having observed this spirit, many non-Ahmadis and non-Muslim individuals and groups have donated significant amounts, and placed their trust in Humanity First. They acknowledge that compared to the humanitarian relief agencies they had seen, how Humanity First uses its volunteer army to ensure that administrative costs are kept to a minimum, so that the maximum amount of money can be used to provide support and assistance to those who need it the most.

Always, the primary focus and desire of every member of Humanity First should be to serve the interest of the weakest members of society, rather than to serve their own self-interest in any way whatsoever. Rest assured, that if you serve Allah’s creation selflessly and for His sake alone, then surely, He will reward you in this world and the hereafter. The fact that Humanity First is administratively independent of our religious administration, ensures no one can question our motivations, or suggest that we gain some religious benefit or other advantage through our humanitarian service.

Nonetheless, never forget that your true inspiration is, and always will be, the benevolent teachings of Islam. Do not shy away from the fact that it is your religion and your belief in Allah the Almighty that motivates you to serve the cause of humanity. Accordingly, wherever Humanity First provides any service, or wherever it invites donations, strive to ensure that the people know that you are inspired by Islam’s beautiful teachings and it is your religion that obligates you to serve others with empathy and a spirit of generosity.

I have already spoken about how the Holy Prophet (sa) inculcated amongst his followers, a desire to help those who were oppressed and afflicted by hardship. Following in his blessed footsteps, in this era, the Promised Messiah (as) constantly emphasised service to humanity, and instructed the members of his community to serve the poor and underprivileged. It is for this reason that within the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, there is a special passion and

desire to serve mankind. On one occasion, whilst speaking about fulfilling the rights of mankind, the Promised Messiah (as) said:

“The most perilous and arduous challenge is to fulfil the rights of mankind, because this is a test and trial that one is faced with at all times and remains constantly before a person.” He says, “Therefore, one ought to tread very carefully and be mindful when taking any step in this regard.” The Promised Messiah (as) further said, “It is my firm conviction, that even with one’s enemy, one should never act with undue severity.”

At another place, the Promised Messiah (as) said, “To love mankind and to show compassion to others is an immense form of worship of God Almighty and an outstanding means of attaining His pleasure and rewards.”

Enlightening us on how to serve humanity, the Promised Messiah (as) said, “Allah the Almighty repeatedly commands that, irrespective of religion or ethnicity, you should show love and compassion to all people. Allah commands us to feed the hungry, free those shackled in bondage, pay off the arrears of those mired in debt, shoulder the burden of others and truly fulfil the duties owed to mankind.”

It was to fulfil these objectives that Humanity First was founded. It was established to serve mankind, irrespective of one’s beliefs or background. It was established to provide medical treatment and care to those who are afflicted with ill-health. It was established to protect and shelter orphans, and to help those engulfed in debt. It was established to feed those who are hungry, and to quench their thirst. It was established to provide relief to those who find their worlds turned instantly upside-down, following natural disasters and calamities, or who are living in desperation through no fault of their own.

On one occasion, whilst instructing his followers to show true and everlasting sympathy for mankind, the Promised Messiah (as) said, “Each day, every person should analyse himself, and see to what extent he is concerned for others, and to what extent he shows love and compassion to his brothers. Compassion for others is a huge demand and responsibility that weighs heavy on mankind.”

Further, whilst mentioning a hadith that gives light to the true magnitude of serving others, the Promised Messiah (as) said, “In one hadith it is narrated that on the Day of Judgement, Allah will say, “I was hungry and you did not feed Me, I was thirsty and you did not give Me water, I was sick and you did not meet or comfort Me.” Upon this, those being addressed will ask that, “O our Lord, when was it that You were hungry and we did not feed You? When was it that You were thirsty and we did not quench Your thirst? And when was it that You were sick and we did not comfort You?” In reply, God Almighty will say that, “A person dear to Me was suffering in this way, and you did not show any compassion or kindness to him. To show love to him would actually have been to show love to Me.” Similarly, to another community, Allah the Almighty will say, “I thank you, as you showed love and compassion to Me. When I was hungry, you fed Me, and when I was thirsty, you quenched My thirst.” The members of that community will ask, “O our Lord, when did we serve You in this way? We do not know

ourselves.” In response, Allah will say, “When you showed love and compassion to a person dear to Me, you were actually manifesting your love for Me.”

Thus, to love Allah’s creation is something truly great and deeply appreciated by Allah the Almighty. Hence, it is up to the members of Humanity First to strive earnestly, seeking the betterment and well-being of mankind. Never rest easy, or feel satisfied with what has gone in the past, rather, look to the future and see how and where you can increase the scope of your service for humanity. It should always be your objective to provide the maximum possible service, whilst utilising the minimum possible resources.

As I have mentioned, Humanity First has attained a good name, whereby many external organisations recognise that Humanity First is achieving much more from a far smaller budget in comparison to much bigger charities or NGOs, due to its volunteer force and the spirit with which its members serve. Certainly, I am pleased that the workers and volunteers of Humanity First, throughout the world, are serving with great zeal and determination, and a true spirit of service and devotion. It is my prayer that this spirit never diminishes, but only ever increases.

I also wish to reiterate, that you must never entertain even a trace of arrogance in your hearts, to think that you have done great work, or that you have done a favour to those who benefit from the various Humanity First projects. Rather, at all times, absolute humility and gratitude to Allah the Almighty should course through your veins. Focus, always and forever, on attaining the pleasure of God Almighty, and keep in mind that serving others is our religious obligation, and that without fulfilling the rights of mankind, we cannot fulfil the rights of God Almighty.

At the end, I also wish to offer my heartfelt congratulations and thanks to the volunteers and team members of Humanity First, because during its first quarter-century, they have served in an exemplary way, with great sincerity and loyalty to the cause of serving humanity. The passion of its volunteers has enabled Humanity First to live up to its name, and to become a well-established and renowned charity and disaster relief agency. *Alhamdulillah*, each year, the scope of work of Humanity First has continued to expand, and I pray that this always remains the case.

May its members and volunteers be those who stand ever-ready to wipe away the tears of those who are in distress or hurting in any way. May you always be ready to help those blameless souls who are the victims of their circumstances, to overcome their grief, desperation and heartache. May you always stand up for the rights of the weak, deprived and vulnerable.

May Allah enable all of you to play your role in serving the cause of humanity and helping those tormented by abject poverty and deprivation, to stand upon their own two feet. May Allah the Almighty bless the efforts of Humanity First, and may it never take a backwards step; rather, I pray it always marches forward in its efforts to humanity – *Ameen, JazakAllah.*

