



It was with great pleasure that Shaykh Hisham Kabbani hosted His Royal Highness, Prince Charles, The Prince of Wales as his very very important guest in The Manchester Suite at Manchester United Football Grounds in Old Trafford on the afternoon of Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2010.

As well as His Royal Highness, Shaykh Hisham had invited leaders from the wide spectrum of communities that represent the united colours of the Muslim community.

A delegation of very senior Pakistani Scholars were also invited by Shaykh Hisham, including Minhaj-ul-Quran -who have been staunch supporters and advocates of Shaykh Hisham's initiatives to educate the silent majority on the broader aspects of Islam and provide grass roots initiatives to deter them from being attracted by extremist organisations. Present at our celebration of "Spirituality in Action" were other leaders from this community, including: Shaykh Syed Irfan Shah Mashadi, leading Sufi and Islamic scholar of in the UK; Shaykh Muhammad Rasool Bakhsh Sa'eedi, President of Jamah Ahlu Sunnah UK and Shaykh Rabbani Afghani who holds the post of General Secretary to Jamat Ahlusunnah UK.



People of British origin who have converted to Islam spoke about how they were "rehabilitated" from a life of crime and/or violence or decadence and discussed the appeal of traditional Sufi skills such as art, music and silat in reforming their behaviours. Others in this group told His Royal Highness about their personal experience with Sufism in the search for spirituality and deeper meaning in life.

A group of global dignitaries, including Baron Lorn Thyssen-Bornemisza of Switzerland and the Lord Charles Pelham - Earl of Yarborough, both of whom are avid supporters of Sufism and long time students of Naqshbandi World Leader, His Holiness Shaykh Mohammed Nazim Adil al-Haqqani spoke with His Royal Highness about the impact their education in the Sufi way has had and how it has supported them.

The Somalian delegates discussed current difficulties facing the Somali community in the UK and the West where vulnerable young adults are being recruited into terrorist and extremists groups. They expressed how traditional Somali Islam utilises the Sufi principles of social harmony and how those traditional roots help them rehabilitate and build resilience amongst their vulnerable members.

A Kosovan delegation, led by Shaykh Zimmer Salihi, a Kosovan Imam with his own community mosque. Our Kosovan guests discussed the initial migration of their community to the UK and how it was the Sufi community that has helped them settle, find a welcoming place to pray, housed refugees during the war, etc... They also said that the practice of Sufism is the version of Islam closest to what is practiced "back home" in Kosovo.



The event was also graced by senior guests from other civic and religious institutions such as The Mayor and Mayoress of Manchester, the Lord Lieutenant of Manchester, The Bishop of Middleton, The Rt Reverend Mark Davies and Reverend Hugh Griffiths, The Christian Chaplain at Stockport College. Also attending was June Jacobs, from the Jewish faith who received a CBE in last year's honour's list for services to human rights and interfaith relations. June travelled up from London for the event and was struck by how little is known about the Sufi community who represent at least 50% of the UK Muslim population!

Senior Members of Parliament attending the event included Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, who said she wanted to understand more about the Sufi approach and Hazel Blears – long time champion of the



His Royal Highness was welcomed to the event by Shaykh Mohammed Hisham Kabbani, Deputy Leader of the Naqshbandi Haqqani Sufi Order, together with: Dr Hedieh Mirahmadi, Co-Founder of Centre for Spirituality and Cultural Advancement UK; Doug Gray, Head of Naqshbandi Haqqani Sufi Order - Australian Branch; Mr Shokat Malik, Executive Director of the Sufi Muslim Council and Mrs. Farzana Dean, Director of the Sufi Muslim Council.

Upon entering the Manchester Suite, His Royal Highness was presented with a gift from Shaykh Hisham of a traditional cloak from Uzbekistan worn by Sufi Shaykhs of old. Our world renowned artists also presented gifts to our honoured guest. Shahida Ahmed, a local inspirational artist whose work has been displayed in exhibitions all over the UK spoke about her inspiration to work with clay as a medium given that Allah created man from clay. She presented His Royal Highness with a phrase from the Quran made of clay embossed on a clay mount. Sabah Arbili, winner of calligraphy competitions internationally gifted one of his pieces to His Royal Highness and Samia Tossio gifted a piece of silk embroidered calligraphy designed and created by her in partnership with her sister Hannah.



The Royal Party, having met the delegations and artists, were serenaded by Moroccan musicians as they moved on to the large auditorium to enjoy musical performances by The Naqshbandi Ensemble, The Moroccan Burdah Ensemble and UK favourites, Aashiq-ul-Rasul, who entertained the 500+ audience to the accompaniment of traditional whirlers.

Shaykh Hisham closed the event with an emotional keynote speech that moved many in the audience to tears, and His Royal Highness departed to loud cheers and chants of "Long live our Prince of Wales" from the delighted audience.

