

Report On Outcomes from Visit of National Muslim Prison Board of South Africa to Australia

Date of Visit:

Friday 18th September 2015 to Tuesday 29th September 2015

Purpose of Visit:

A delegation of Muslim Scholars from South Africa visited Australia in order to:

- Attend the International Prison Chaplains' Association (IPCA) held in Sydney from Saturday 19th September 2015 to Thursday 24th September 2015.
- Provide information about the work being undertaken by the National Muslim Prison Board of South Africa to Muslim communities in Australia based in Sydney, Brisbane, Gold Coast and Perth with a view to:
 - Gaining an understanding about the prison system in Australia and provision of chaplaincy support to Muslim inmates.
 - Providing information about the experience of negotiating and maintaining ongoing institutional arrangements in prisons in South Africa to support the rehabilitation of Muslim inmates and providing this as a template for adaptation in an Australian context.
- The Muslim scholars from South Africa that formed the delegation were as follows:
 - Moulana Mohammed Azeem Khatieb of Cape Town
 - Moulana Shabeer Ahmed Asmal of Durban
 - Moulana Shiraaz Dawood Desai of Port Elizabeth

Key Outcomes from Visit by South African Ulama:

- The scholars from South Africa visited Muslim inmates during their visit to Australia and noted that visits were occurring and that scholars in Australia were providing some level of pastoral care.
- The scholars from South Africa conducted workshops with Australian Muslim Scholars and community members. During the workshops they provided their observations about support currently provided for Muslim inmates in Australia and opportunities to further develop capacity in view of the work undertaken in South Africa since the early 1980's.
- The scholars also attended the IPCA conference in which they shared their perspective and networked with other chaplains of other faith traditions to inform and further develop their work.

Benefits of South African Delegation of Ulama for Australian Ulama Based in Queensland:

- Members of the Council of Imams Queensland (CIQ) were honoured host the South African delegation of Ulamas. CIQ would like to put on record that in particular it was most beneficial for members of CIQ to participate in a workshop held in Brisbane. The workshop covered a number of critical issues where support for Muslim inmates held in prison in Australia could be further developed and be adapted from the South African Muslim Prison Board. Key areas that CIQ members were able to consider in view of the presentations delivered at the workshop were as follows:
 - The development of a structured and consistent approach to providing spiritual support and appropriately regulated prayer facilities for Muslim inmates in Australia to ensure that mainstream teachings of Islam are taught with a view to minimising risks of re-offending and becoming engaged in violent extremism.
 - Arrangements during Ramadan in relation to fasting and prayer times.
 - Dietary provision i.e. Halal food
 - Special programmes for Eid and other significant dates
 - Counselling support for inmates and their families given the pressure that incarceration places on detained persons and their families.
 - Follow up support in the community on release from prison by providing mentoring and skills development opportunities to enable individuals to re-integrate, secure employment and become productive and re-habilitated members of society.
 - Adaptation of policies, procedures and protocols in line with relevant prison policies and legislation.
- The scholars also conducted community lectures on the Gold Coast and in Brisbane in which they explained their work in South Africa and the need for the Australian Muslim community and scholars to work proactively by putting in place early intervention approaches that prevent Muslims from entering into the criminal justice system.
- The lectures were well received by the community and made a very positive impact on young people in the community. The lectures also provided Australian Ulama a template to engage with the community in regard to this

sensitive topic which is increasingly become a social issue that is faced by Muslims in Australia.

- In view of the highly beneficial visit from the National Muslim Prison Board of South Africa it was agreed that CIQ would continue with further discussions between scholars, community organisations and government both in Queensland and across Australia to put in place crime prevention programmes, relevant support in prisons for Muslim inmates and community based support and rehabilitation upon release from prison.

Next Steps:

- It was agreed that ongoing dialogue and relationships with the National Muslim Prison Board of South Africa would be maintained by Australian scholars providing support to Muslim inmates in Australian prisons.
- That further discussions would be held in Australia between scholars, community organisations and government to put in place prevention programmes, relevant support in prisons for Muslim inmates and community based support and rehabilitation upon release from prison.