

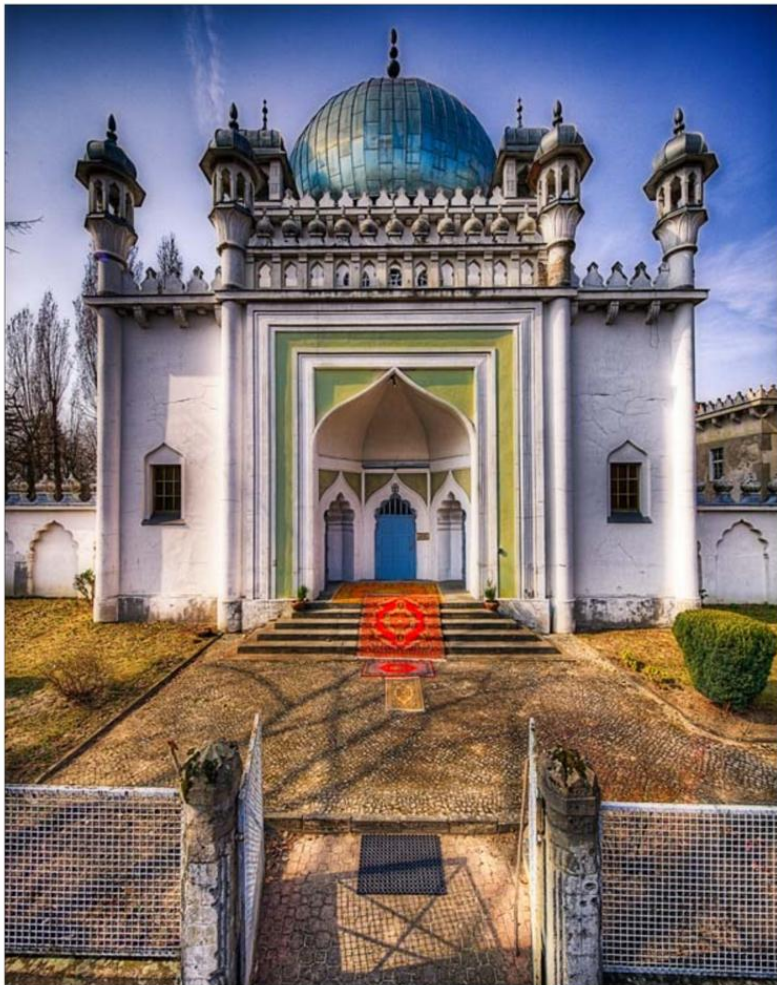
A Lahore Ahmadiyya Bulletin



NEWS & VIEWS

The Berlin Mosque, Brienner Strasse 7/9, 10713 Berlin

“Long Night of Religions”



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“Long Night of Religions” in Berlin

**A unique event
fostering Inter-faith understanding**

**Glimpses of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Mosque in
Wilmersdorf shown on RBB TV Channel**

Ahmed Saadat, B.Com.

The first of September 2012 will go down in the history of the city of Berlin as a "Unique Day", having provided for the first time an opportunity to representatives of all religious institutions to visit one another, observe religious services held, and exchange views.

The organisers of the "Long Night of Religions" should be congratulated for conceiving such a brilliant idea of bringing officials or representatives of all religious institutions to a common platform. Its inauguration by the Mayor of Berlin shows how much importance is being given to inter-faith understanding and harmony. Dr Gerdi Nutzelt and Ms Vykinta Ajami deserve special thanks for organising such a marvellous event, bringing out posters and a beautiful booklet.

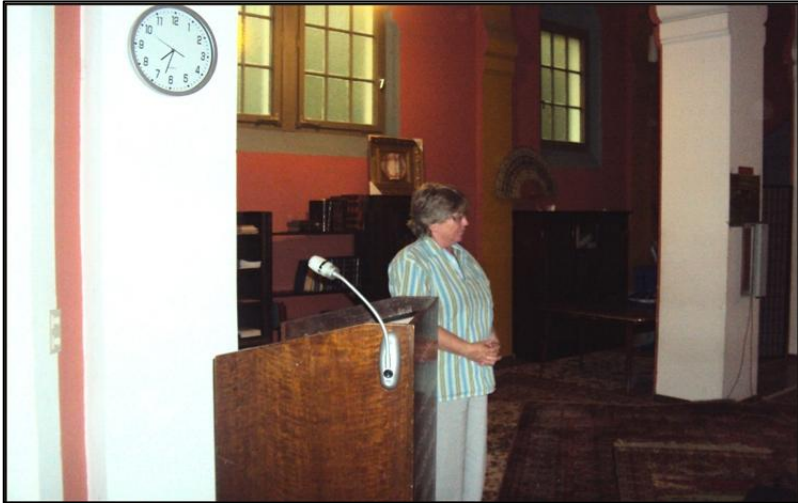
The Lahore-Ahmadiyya Mosque in Wilmersdorf, Berlin heartily welcomes this most needed move when there is so much tension and misunderstanding among religious communities and mutual harmony and understanding are so greatly needed to maintain social cohesion and peaceful co-existence.

The Mosque, right from its inception, has always pursued the policy of "openness". Guarding and promoting religious freedom and inter-faith harmony are the duties of every Muslim, as enjoined by the Qur'an and the practice of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him). The Holy Qur'an says: "If Allah did not repel people by others, cloisters, and churches, and synagogues, and mosques in which Allah's name is much remembered, would have been pulled down. And surely Allah will help him who helps Him" (22:40).

The Berlin Mosque has always welcomed and promoted inter-faith harmony and hope that the present move will become a permanent feature. The Mosque in its own humble way has always encouraged visitors of all religious denominations to visit it and exchange views to promote better understanding and religious harmony. It even celebrated Prophet Jesus' birthday on 25 December at the Mosque so that others may reciprocate the same respect to the Holy Prophet of Islam.

Regarding the "Long Night", we received several enquiries and we promptly welcomed them. In this connection, we would like to specially mention the names of Sister Silvia Macher, founder of Machmer International Consulting Organisation, and Sister Petra of the Carmelite Monastery Maria Regina Martyrum of Berlin,

who accepted our invitation and remained in the Mosque for quite some time along with their colleagues. More than 150 people turned up to attend the "Long Night of Religions" at the Mosque.



Ms Gerdien Jonker addressing the audience



Mr Nasir Ahmad talking to Sister Petra



Members of the Carmelite Monastery Maria Regina Martyrum of Berlin among the audience

The day started with a book exhibition at Humboldt-Box, Schlossplatz 3, 10178 Berlin, in which all religious organisations displayed their books. It lasted from 11 a.m. to 15.30 p.m.



Then an opening ceremony was held at the Berlin City Hall, which is called Berliner Rathauses. The Mayor of Berlin, Mr Klaus Wowereit, officially inaugurated the “Long Night of Religions”. Besides representatives of various religious organisations in Berlin, local media and prominent political figures also attended the ceremony. It last from 4 to 6 p.m.

Visitors started coming to the Mosque promptly at 6 p.m. and most of them stayed on till 12.15 a.m.





During these six hours two congregational prayers were held — *Maghrib*, a congregation prayer just after sunset, which was at 7.00 p.m., and *Ishaa*, a late evening congregational prayer, which was held at 9.30 p.m. Mr Hamad Ahmad made the call to prayer (*Azaan*) and Mr Nasir Ahmad led the congregational prayers.

Both the call to prayer and the recitation during the congregational prayers were melodious and moving. The selection of the Qur'anic verses (2:284-286; 55:1-27) contained impressive supplication to Allah and glorification of His bounties.

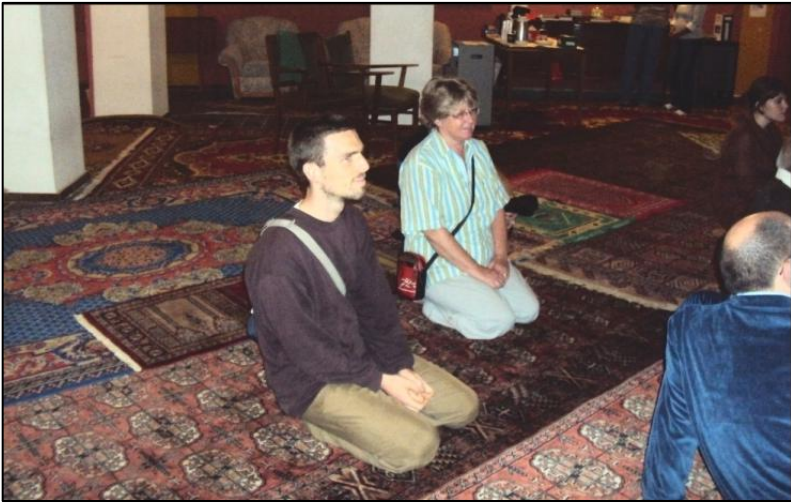
The question-answer session started just after 7.00 p.m. and continued till 12.15 a.m. The questions related to the topics: Concept of God in Islam; The difference between confession and repentance; Why prayers are offered five times daily; Significance of the Friday congregation; Nature of Hell and Heaven and punishment and reward therein; Where women are allowed to offer their prayers in the Mosque; Whether non-Muslim visitors are allowed to enter the Mosque and ask questions, etc.



Mr Ahmed Saadat with visitors

It is encouraging that most of the visitors remained in the Mosque till late in the evening. Mr Shahid Aziz and Mr Nasir Ahmad replied to the questions in English and Br Andreas Muhammad Ismail Mohr, who is an Arabic teacher at Freie University, Berlin, very ably translated the replies into German. Br Ismail also read out the German translation of the Qur'anic recitations to the audience at the end of each congregational prayer.

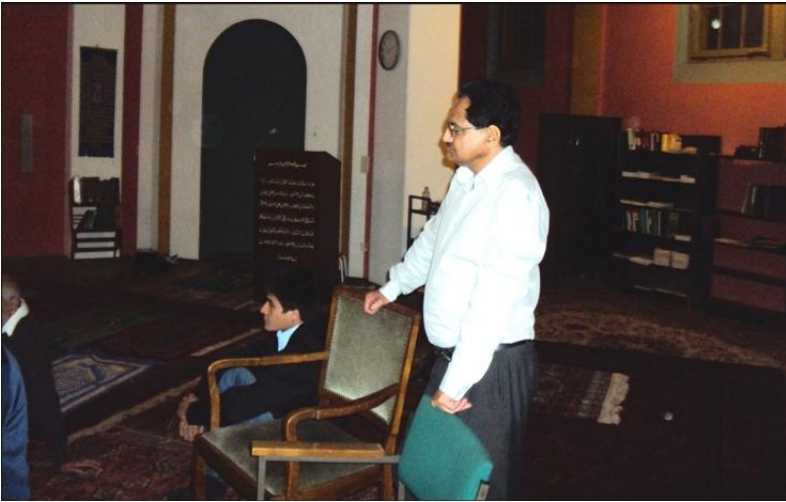




Just before the evening congregational prayer (*Maghrib*) an RBB TV channel camera team arrived and took clips of the call to prayer and then the congregational prayer was offered at sunset (*Maghrib*).



They also interviewed some of the visitors and our secretary from the UK *Jama'at*, Mr Shahid Aziz.



Mr Shahid Aziz

For the interest of our readers, we are giving below a link to the TV clip so that readers can get a glimpse of the activities carried on inside the Mosque and some of the interviews taken by the TV crew, as well as some photographs taken of the audience engaged in discussion. A summary of the television news broadcast has kindly been provided in English by the research scholar and author of several books, Ms Gerdien Jonker, Ph.D., who also gave a brief history of the Mosque and the nature of its activities in German at the start of the meeting.

<http://berlin.ahmadiyya.org/news/lange-nacht.htm>

Summary of the TV clip in English very kindly provided by our learned Sister Gerdien Jonker Ph.D.

Berlin celebrates tonight a very special Long Night, the 'Long Night of Religions'. More than 60 houses (of worship) will be opened: churches, mosques, Buddhist, Saha I and Sikh centres, but not the synagogues since they already had a 'Long Night' in August.

This week, a Rabbi was attacked on the street. To express their resentment, many people took out a procession to show their solidarity.

1. Screenshot: a flash-mob wearing *kippas* showing their solidarity on KurRirstendamm (Saturday 12.00).

2. Screenshot of Brienner Mosque: (Voice) This mosque was built in the 1920s.
 3. Screenshot of a nun: We very rarely come to the mosques. We live in a convent. We cannot go into a mosque all that easily. This is a good occasion to see one from the inside and to meet people.
 4. Screenshot of man standing in the Mosque garden: "I love this initiative; one has a chance to come in places that mostly exercise social closure, and that I would not go into them all that easily. It is very nice here, very open. Otherwise I would not trust myself to go inside."
 5. Screenshot of Mr Shahid Aziz: "Islam means Peace. That is the message that should go from us tonight."
- Rest of film: Presentations of different Sufi-movements at Schlossplatz and the group from Norwegian Church in Wilmersdorf

Summary of brief history of the Mosque by Ms Gerdien Jonker Ph.D.:

This is an oriental styled Mosque, built with the money of very many donors in Lahore, now Pakistan. It was built by the Ahmadiyya with seat in Lahore between 1924 and 1927. Considering the worth of money in India and Germany at that time, it was an enormous sacrifice that went through several crises before the mosque was finished.

Ahmadiyya is a Muslim reform movement that aims at correcting wrong and distorted images of Islam and the Muslim world, both in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent and in Europe. Their missions in Europe are based on intellectual exchange, through publications, lectures and discussions.

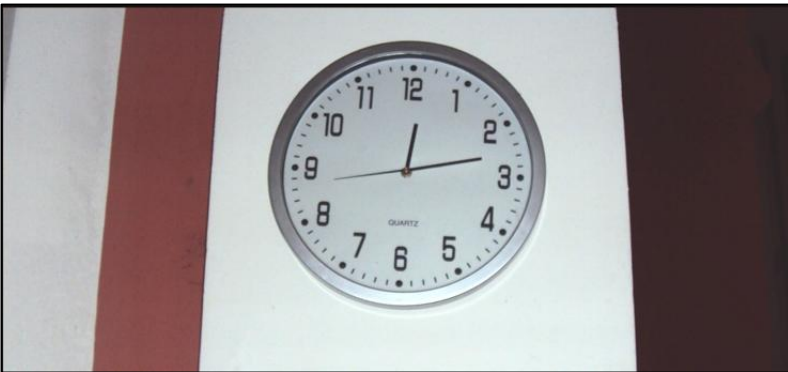
Back in the 1920s and 1930s they attracted a crowd of German modernists ("Lebensreformer") who criticised their society and their civilization and were on the look-out for alternatives. Among these elites (intellectuals, artists, Jews and Christians) Islam was felt to be an attractive alternative. The community thrived; it functioned like a little laboratory in which Muslim modern thinking and European modernity were welded together.

When World War II broke out, the missionaries had to leave the country and the community was scattered. After the War, it was restarted but never found back again to that creative atmosphere of Interwar Europe, which enabled the exchange of religious ideas on an intellectual basis....

Finally, I would like to thank all those brothers who helped in conducting the "Long Night" at the Mosque, especially Br Younis Jacob and our very devoted Br Rayshan from Tajikistan.



Left to right: Visitor, Younis Jacob, Shahid Aziz, Ismail Mohr, Nasir Ahmad, Hamad Ahmad, Ahmed Saadat



“Long Night of Religions” at the Berlin Mosque ended at 12.15 a.m.



**(Reproduced from the Official Bulletin of
Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, ‘The Hope’.
You can also see it with active link of the clip shown on
RBB TV at: www.lahore.ahmadiyya.org under section
‘Berlin Muslim Mission’)**