

# BRITISH HAJJ PILGRIMAGE 2008

Foreign Secretary David Miliband with HE HRH Prince Mohamed Bin Nawaf Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, Ambassador of Saudi Arabia, Lord Patel of Blackburn, Leader of British Hajj Delegation and Dr Syed Mohuid-Din, Chief Medical Advisor to the British Hajj Delegation at the 2008 launch held in London, 12 November 2008.

Launching the tenth British Muslim Hajj Delegation, Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, praised the Delegation as an example of "shared purpose and partnership between both the Government and British Muslims".

David Miliband said that the support of the Foreign Office to British Muslim pilgrims showed the Government's very "strong commitment" to Muslim heritage and religion.

## Annual pilgrimage

It's one of the largest annual pilgrimages in the world attracting three million Muslims to one spot, which is one of the reasons why the FCO set up the Hajj Delegation nine years ago.

At the Hajj last December the Hajj Delegation helped British Muslim make a safe sacred journey to Mecca. Much of the job involved co-ordinating and providing frontline consular and medical support to British citizens to Mecca. Once there, the BHD moved with the pilgrims as they travelled to the cities of Mina, Mudzalifah and Arafat where further sacred rituals are performed.

## A unique operation

The UK's Hajj Delegation is unique. It's the only operation in the Western world to give its citizens on the spot support. Other countries do not have the resources on the ground during the pilgrimage to provide the crucial support that we do.



BHD prepares for the Hajj throughout the year, working with organisations, like the Civil Aviation Authority, that makes sure all UK tour operators offering Hajj packages have an Air Travel Organiser's Licence.

## Voluntary

At the last Hajj, the BHD team included three FCO staff and eight British doctors who worked on a voluntary basis at the field clinic in Mecca. All were deployed on the front line treating numerous casualties including many dehydrated patients and dealing with queries ranging from finding missing friends and relatives, to helping bereaved families.

## Hajj Fact file

- In 2008 18,604 pilgrims entered Saudi Arabia on their British passports
- It's one of the biggest annual pilgrimages in the world, embracing some three million pilgrims
- It's the fifth pillar of Islam and every Muslim who is physically and financially able is encouraged to perform it once during their lifetime
- It takes place from the eighth to the twelve day of Dhul Hijjah, which is the 12th month of the Islamic calendar

It represents the solidarity of Muslim people and their submission to God.