

Learning to be a  
Peacemaker



## Learning to be a Peacemaker is...

a course for young Muslims to understand that Peacemaking is the very heart of Islam, that if you are not a Peacemaker, you are not a Muslim.

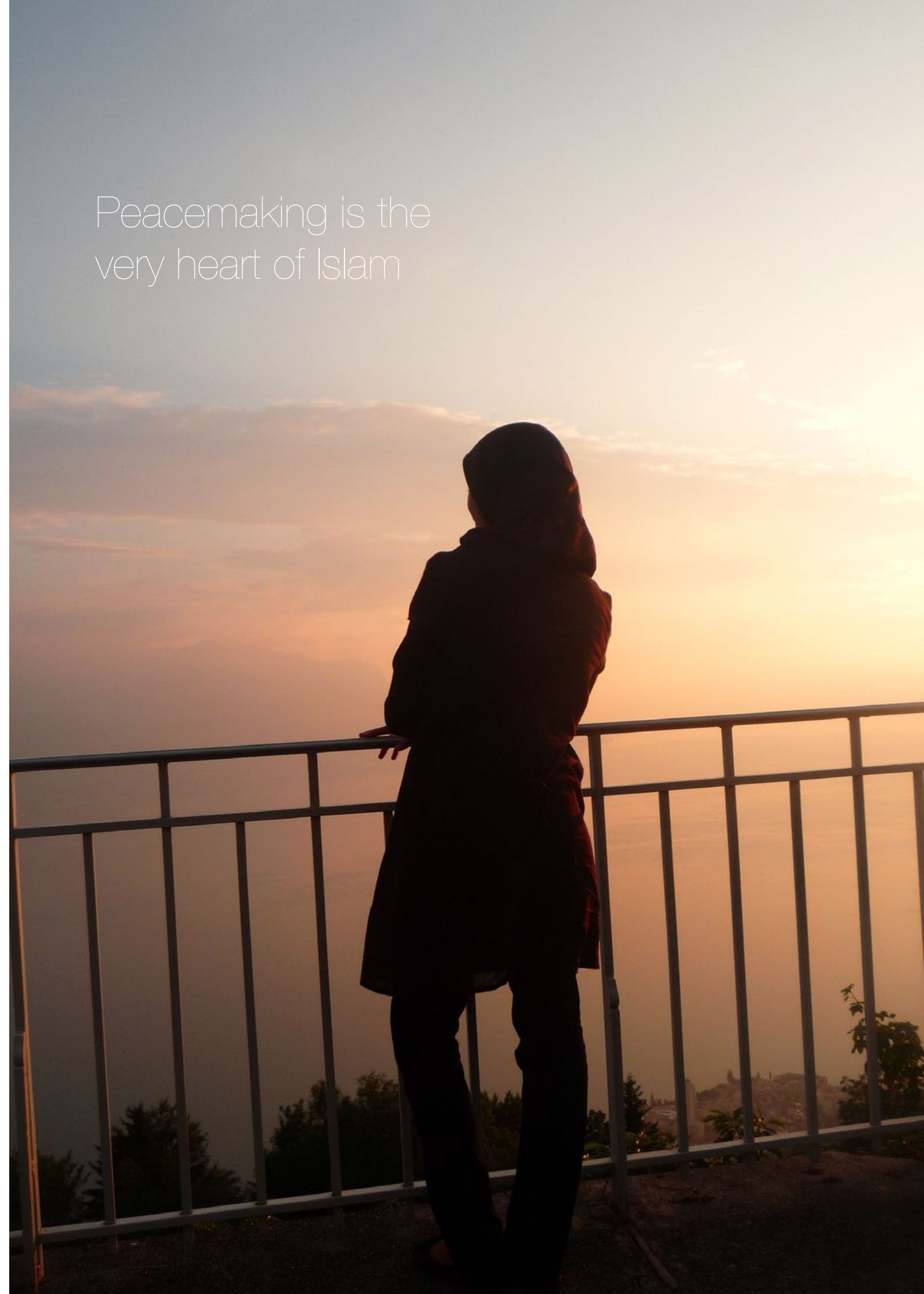
This is vital to the future of the integration of Muslims into European society because if young Muslims grow up with the thought that humanity is divided into the 'House of Islam' and the 'House of War', which some Muslims would have us believe, they will hesitate to engage wholeheartedly with the society in which they live.



Yet when the holy prophet Mohammed was asked 'Who is your neighbour' he replied, 'The person whose door is closest to yours' - in other words, regardless of religion or ethnicity, we have a duty of care and service to those around us.

When young Muslims learn this, and discover the rich resources for peacemaking in Islam, they are liberated to engage with the society in which they live, empowered to overcome obstacles in their way, and enabled to fully develop their gifts and talents, in serving their community.

Peacemaking is the very heart of Islam





## Context

In the coming decades, the proportion of those of Muslim background in Europe is forecast to grow substantially. According to a Pew <sup>1</sup>study, the Muslim share of the European population is expected to grow by nearly one-third over the next 20 years, rising from 6% of the region's inhabitants in 2010 to 8% in 2030.

According to Prof. Philip Jenkins, writing in 2007, 'While long-term demographic trends favor stability, European societies will have to live for some years with the large cohort of young people born before the recent decline in fertility, the youth bulge that will not shrink until after 2020.'<sup>2</sup> He warns that 'The intervening years could well provide a bumpy ride. If the poor and deprived come to link their condition to their religious identity—if the young, poor, and Muslim overtly confront the old, well-off, and Christian—then Europe would face a turbulent future.'

1. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2011/jan/28/muslim-population-country-projection-2030>

2. Prof. Philip Jenkins, Islam and Muslims in Europe today: some key issues (Cambridge Interfaith Programme, June 2007)

## Aims

The Learning to be a peacemaker programme is a catalyst in clarifying concepts and inspiring young European Muslims to make a constructive contribution to society and positively engage with the wider European public. It aims to

- build the capacity of young Muslims to understand their faith in the European context and within sometimes challenged non-Muslim communities
- take the participants through a journey of identifying with the common thread that binds them, and motivating them to reach out to build stronger and more stable bridges with other communities.
- equip young European Muslims with an in-depth understanding of the Islamic approach to peace-making, examples of peace-making initiatives past and present, and skills of facilitating honest conversation.

The target is to train 1000 young European Muslim peacemakers by 2020 united in one vision: a shared Europe.

## Curriculum

The programme consists of two courses each of five days:

**Elementary course** - to lay the basis of an understanding and practice of peacemaking

**Advanced course** - to train those who have passed the Elementary course and who wish to become trainers and facilitators of future Elementary courses.





## Elementary course

### 1. What is peacemaking?

- Definition and Terminologies
- Key Principles of Peacemaking
- Qualities of a Peacemaker

### 2. Peacemakers and peacemaking

- Renowned Peacemakers of the World
- Prophet Muhammed (saw) - The Peacemaker
- Examples of Peacemaking from the Life of the Prophet
  - Constitution of Medina*
  - Treaty of Hudaibiyah*
  - Prophet's letter to St Katherine's Monastery*

### 3. The Jurisprudence of peacemaking (fiqh) - the relationship between Islam and Peacemaking

- A Basic Introduction to Islam
- Objectives of Islamic Law (Maqasid As-Shari'ah)
- Five Pillars of Peace in Islam
- The Ethics of Differences and Disagreements in Islam (Ikhtilaaf)
- War and Peace in Islam - Verses in the Qur'an and Ahadith
- Qur'an on Peace and War
  - Justifications and Conditions for War*
  - Proportion and Discrimination in Fighting*
  - Cease Hostility*
  - Prisoners of War*
  - Cooperation with Others*
  - Jihad - Concepts and Practice*

### 4. Why is there a need for Peacemaking?

- Violence and Extremism - Causes and Effects
- DNA of an Extremist
- Group work: Imagine if the Prophet was around in the world today:
  - How would he judge the modern world?*
  - How would he solve its problems?*
- Managing Conflicts - Role Play

### 5. How to become a Peacemaker

- Attributes and Characteristics required for peace-agents
- Self-assessment using SWOT analysis
- Aspiration – Drawing up a wish list
- Challenges and Opportunities – What is stopping you from realising your dream?

### 6. Loyalty and Citizenship

- Understanding the terms - Global Community (Ummah) & Local Community (Qawm)
- Rights, Responsibilities and Priorities
- Relationship Between State and Individuals
- Understanding Citizenship
- Exploring Loyalties?
- Exploring Humans rights - International and Islamic perspectives

## Advanced course

### 1. Developing a better understanding of human nature - inner & outer (Fitrah)

### 2. The Self (nafs)

- The Commanding Self (nafs ammara)
- The Blaming Self (nafs lawwama)
- The Self at Peace (nafs muthma'inna)

### 3. The outer nature of human beings (akhlaq)

- Dignity
- Contentment

### 4. Fear (khawf) and Hope (raja'a) in Islam

### 5. Emotional Intelligence

- Islamic framework of Emotional Intelligence (Self-awareness, Managing Emotions, Social Awareness)
- Anatomy of Anger
- Ways of Responding to Anger
- Social Skills
- Communicating Aspirations

### 6. Life purpose



## Record

Since 2005, the course has been delivered to over 330 young Muslims from nine European countries.

- 2005-9** A course on peacemaking in Islam, designed by imam and broadcaster Ajmal Masroor, was delivered to young Muslims in Sweden and the UK, with some funding from central and local governments.
- August 2009** The pilot Learning to be a Peacemaker course was delivered to 65 participants from France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom, at the international Conference Centre of Initiatives of Change (IofC) in Caux, Switzerland. A BBC report<sup>3</sup> on Radio 4's PM and the World Service described the programme as 'ground breaking' and commented that 'This combination of orthodox Islamic teaching and multi-faith spirituality is an unusual mix - but it is one the organisers believe reflects the complex European society in which these young Muslims live'.
- 2009 - 2010** Networks of alumni formed in the Sweden, the Netherlands and France
- August 2010** 15 alumni of the 2009 course received training in Caux to act as Facilitators during the course in 2011. Further Facilitation Training took place in the Netherlands.
- March 2011** A UK launch<sup>4</sup> of the programme took place in the House of Commons, hosted by Tom Brake MP, LibDem spokesman for Home Affairs, Justice and Equalities. Alumni of the programme spoke to an audience which included Andrew Stunell MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Community Cohesion, the Duke of Montrose and other members of both Houses of Parliament.
- August 2011** The second Learning to be a Peacemaker Elementary course was delivered to participants from nine European countries at the IofC conference centre in Caux, Switzerland<sup>5</sup>. The local daily newspaper 24 heures carried a ¾ page article entitled 'Proud to be Muslim to reconcile the peoples' with a sub-title 'In Caux, young Muslim Europeans take confidence in their identity in order to promote peace'. The accompanying photo was of Imam Ajmal Masroor leading Friday prayers in the Great Hall of the conference centre. There were also positive interviews on TV and radio.
- July 2012** An Advanced course was delivered in Caux for 14 participants.

3. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8195574.stm>  
4. <http://www.uk.iofc.org/node/54769>  
5. <http://www.iofc.org/young-muslim-peacemakers>

## Testimonies

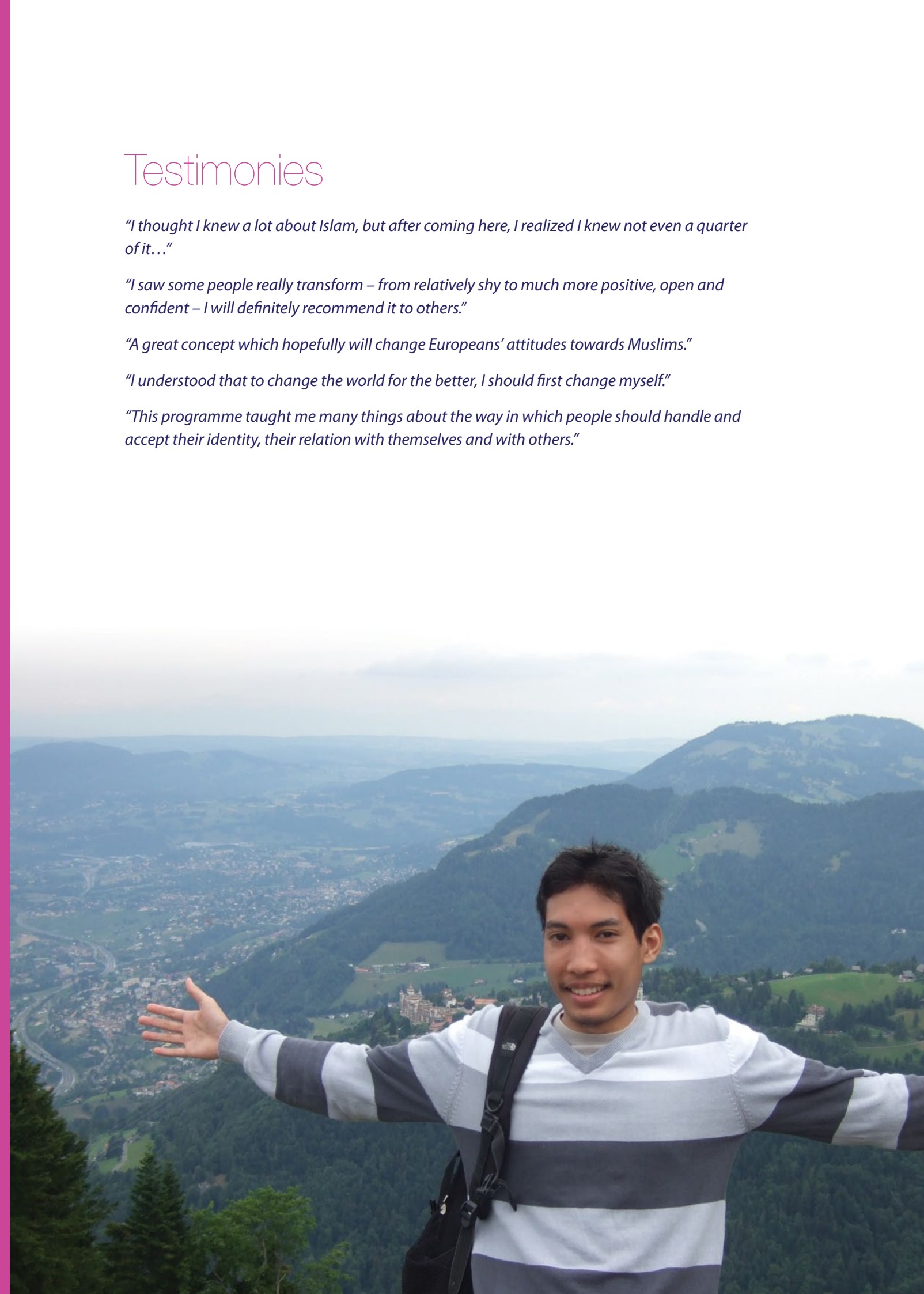
*"I thought I knew a lot about Islam, but after coming here, I realized I knew not even a quarter of it..."*

*"I saw some people really transform – from relatively shy to much more positive, open and confident – I will definitely recommend it to others."*

*"A great concept which hopefully will change Europeans' attitudes towards Muslims."*

*"I understood that to change the world for the better, I should first change myself."*

*"This programme taught me many things about the way in which people should handle and accept their identity, their relation with themselves and with others."*





## Acknowledgements

The programme has been a partnership between Imam Ajmal Masroor and Initiatives of Change (IoC) in Switzerland and in the UK. IoC teams in a number of European countries have helped make it possible for participants to attend from those countries. We are also grateful to the Amnah Foundation and the Irene Prestwich Trust for sponsoring participants, and to Sheikh Ibrahim Mogra and Ahtsham Ali, Muslim Adviser to the UK Prison Service, for delivering modules of the programme.



## Plans for the future

In order to achieve the objective of training 1000 young European Muslim peacemakers by 2020, we need to train a further 670 in the next six years. This becomes even more important when economic and other stresses risk causing divisions and the rise of popularist discourse.

The next phase will be to deliver courses in countries where it has not been delivered before.

The cost per person of taking part in one of the courses is approximately £1,200 (including board and lodging for participants, travel and fees for trainers, administrative staff and guest lecturers, travel and accommodation for volunteer facilitators and interpreters, overheads).

We are seeking organisations or individuals who would be interested to host or sponsor a course anywhere in Europe where the need is evident.



## Joint coordinators

### **Imam Ajmal Masroor**

Communities in Action

[masroor@btinternet.com](mailto:masroor@btinternet.com)

+44 (0)7956 987398

### **Peter Riddell**

Initiatives of Change-UK

[peter.riddell@uk.iofc.org](mailto:peter.riddell@uk.iofc.org)

+44 (0)7713 251631







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