

KEYNOTE SPEECHES - DIALOGUE SOCIETY'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER AND AWARDS CEREMONY

Thank you very much. It's a real pleasure to follow Shahid with that excellent speech. I'm also conscious that Julian, Chris, and I are keeping you all from your dinner. So, we got a pact that we're going to be relatively brief. But I just want to genuinely congratulate the Dialogue Society on your 10th anniversary. It is a cliché imported to talk about the biggest challenges that we face. But I passionately and genuinely believe that the challenge of interfaith and intercultural dialogue is probably the most pressing challenge of our own. If we do not get it right, if we cannot reach out beyond our faith base, our ideological base, our community base, then probably we're going to hell in a handcart.

Among the most depressing things to me as a politician is a when you go and talk to a group of people who are isolated and are held in by their own faith, their own belief system, in their own community, and they part each other. And that's the challenge I think that we face. And we do need to focus on the fact that what unites us is not more important, but what divides us is about our essential humanity and that is one of the most effective rebuttals to violent extremist. What I have learned over the years is that part of dialogue. It doesn't happen easily. You have to work it. You have to organise it. I think that's where the work of the Dialogue Society is so important up and down the country.

Now, the last time I met and talked with your communication minister, responsible amongst other things the community in the region, and I'm minister of the armed forces and I honestly think we have a role to play as well, ensuring that our armed forces in this country are as inclusive and is represented in every community and the whole of society. That's why we've established the imams alongside military chaplains. It's why we look at our recruitment procedures. It's why we look at diet and so many other things so that we ensure that we are as represented as possible.

So, I'm delighted to be here this evening. I'm really grateful for the work that you are doing. I think it is the forefront of that huge challenge that we face 10 years in. I hope that you will carry on for many more years. Thank you very much.

UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT

EVENT TYPE

AWARDS CEREMONY

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SPEAKER(S)

BILL RAMMEL MP,
MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE
ARMED FORCES

DATE & VENUE

17 NOVEMBER 2009
RENAISSANCE CHANCERY
COURT, CENTRAL LONDON