



# Inter Faith Network Newsletter

February 2024 – Extra

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This edition is an ‘Extra’ issued on 8 February 2024. The usual newsletter will be published in due course.

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## INTER FAITH NETWORK FOR THE UK LIKELY IMMINENT CLOSURE

On 7 February, the Board of the Inter Faith Network for the UK took, with great regret, an in principle decision to move towards closure of the organisation.

That will be confirmed, on 22 February and greater detail provided subsequently – unless by that time the funding offered by the Government on 7 July 2023 for work from July 2023 to March 2024, subject to conditions, is made available or funds at an equivalent level are received from other quarters.

The background to this decision can be seen in a statement issued by IFN’s Board on 24 January, following a letter of 19 January from Secretary of State Rt Hon Michael Gove MP saying that he was ‘minded to withdraw’ the funding offered in July 2023. The Board’s statement can be seen [here](#), and key points made by its Co-Chairs in response to Mr Gove’s concerns about IFN having a Trustee who is a member of the Muslim Council of Britain can be seen [here](#).

Continued uncertainty regarding Government funding to the Inter Faith Network has had a hugely damaging effect on the charity. Continuing to operate without the £155,000 offered over six months ago has not proven possible, despite other fundraising efforts and IFN’s widely acknowledged importance as a trusted and effective UK-wide body working to deepen understanding about and between different faiths and inter faith cooperation and to share information and good practice.

The Board is grateful to all the many individuals and organisations who have written to MPs and Ministers, started or signed petitions, made donations, and in other ways shown deep and often humbling support to IFN across the last year. It is also grateful to those parliamentarians who, on a cross-party basis, have offered support across this period – as

well as across the period April to June 2023 where no funding was given following a 31 March letter from DLUHC saying that there would be no funding from 1 April.

In preparing for IFN's likely closure, the Board will be looking across the coming weeks, with input from members and others, at whether and how particular strands of IFN's work, including Inter Faith Week, may be taken forward for the future, as part of ensuring that positive inter faith relations in the UK can continue to be promoted effectively, particularly in the challenging environment we collectively face.

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A copy of the above was also issued as a press release and can be seen, with its 'editors' notes', on the IFN website at <https://www.interfaith.org.uk/news/inter-faith-network-for-the-uk-imminent-closure>

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## **IS ACTION STILL POSSIBLE TO SAVE THE INTER FAITH NETWORK AND ITS WORK?**

There are two weeks until the Board meets on 22 February to make a final decision on closure. As the press release explains, that decision rests on whether funding has been secured. There is still time to raise your voice about this.

### *Writing to MPs and the Secretary of State*

A number of individuals and organisations have been writing to their local MPs to ask that they raise urgently with the Secretary of State, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, the matter of IFN's funding. Some are also writing to the Secretary of State directly asking him to release the funding offered last July.

You can find contact details for your MP at

<https://members.parliament.uk/members/Commons> Details for the Secretary of State are: The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, South West Quadrant, 2nd Floor, Fry Building, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF and [Ministerial.Correspondence@levellingup.gov.uk](mailto:Ministerial.Correspondence@levellingup.gov.uk)

### *Public statements, open letters and social media posts*

Some organisations have chosen to make public statements about the position IFN finds itself in, or to post open letters on Facebook or X (formerly Twitter) to the Secretary of State and others with influence.

Many individuals and organisations have been posting on X, Facebook, LinkedIn and elsewhere about their shock and concern about the Secretary of State's decision and/or noting their support for IFN. If you are doing this, it can be particularly helpful to note the ways in which IFN has added value to your or your organisation's inter faith work. You could also choose to tag the Secretary of State and/ or his Department.

Some organisations and individuals have also let IFN know that they will be contacting the press, either to send them copies of statements/ open letters, or to try and place opinion pieces about the value and importance of IFN and its work. It is also possible that, as the news of IFN's position becomes more widely known, some member bodies may be

approached by journalists for comment directly. If you intend to engage with the press and would like IFN to check the accuracy of any material ahead of this, please contact the IFN office by emailing [ifnet@interfaith.org.uk](mailto:ifnet@interfaith.org.uk).

#### *Online petitions*

One local inter faith practitioner has set up a petition on the Change.org website. You can view and sign the petition at <https://www.change.org/p/urge-michael-gove-to-maintain-funding-for-the-interfaith-network-in-the-uk>

Thank you for any action that you may choose to take.

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### **SUPPORT THE INTER FAITH NETWORK'S WORK TO INCREASE INTER FAITH UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION IN THE UK**

The Inter Faith Network for the UK works for inter faith understanding and cooperation in the UK. As of 8 February, its closure looks imminent, for the reasons explained in this newsletter.

If you would like to enable IFN to close its work in ways which strengthen the likelihood of its legacy being one which feeds helpfully into new channels for inter faith engagement in the UK, please do make a donation today at: <https://www.interfaith.org.uk/donate> (with debit/credit card, PayPal and BACS options).

If Government funding does come through in time to save the work of the Inter Faith Network, or if other major funding is instead secured by 22 February, your gift would be used to continue IFN's work.

Donations can also be made by cheque payable to 'The Inter Faith Network' and sent to: The Inter Faith Network for the UK, Mary Sumner House, 24 Tufton Street, London, SW1P 3RB.

Thank you for helping make a difference in this way.

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