



PRESS RELEASE

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Tony Blair announces launch of the Tony Blair Faith Foundation and the FaithsAct campaign to end deaths from malaria

Former UK Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Tony Blair, is today announcing the launch of the Tony Blair Faith Foundation and the FaithsAct campaign to unite religious communities in the fight against malaria. Partnering with the Chicago-based **Interfaith Youth Core** and the New York City-based **Malaria No More**, the Tony Blair Faith Foundation's FaithsAct campaign seeks to prevent deaths caused by malaria and to bring members of the world's faiths together in a collaborative, global effort. **Dr. Eboo Patel of the Interfaith Youth Core and Saleemah Abdul-Ghafur of Malaria No More will be presenting the announcement with Mr. Blair.**

The goal of the FaithsAct campaign is twofold: to raise money for one million life-saving bed nets by September 25, 2008; and to forge ties between faiths by inspiring them to work together.

Malaria No More's mission is to end deaths due to malaria. The organization works to raise the profile of the disease among the public, policymakers, and businesses, while engaging the private sector to provide life-saving bed nets and other essential interventions to vulnerable families in Africa. Interfaith Youth Core's mission is to build mutual respect and pluralism among young people from different religious traditions by empowering them to work together to serve others.

Mr. Blair says,

In an era of globalization, there is nothing more important than getting people of different faiths and therefore cultures to understand each other better and live in peace and mutual respect; and to give faith itself its proper place in the future. This generation of young people recognizes the urgency of bridging faith divides in order to solve the world's most pressing problems. Interfaith Youth Core's exemplary model of dialogue through social action and its global leadership with young people of faith make it the perfect partner for this campaign.

Dr. Eboo Patel, Executive Director of the Interfaith Youth Core, says,

The great tragedy of our times is that the headlines are dominated by the violent fringe of religious communities. The Tony Blair Faith Foundation understands that there is a deep yearning amongst the vast majority of people of all faiths to reject this violence publicly and make real their most enduring principle - to protect and enhance the God-given gift of life.

With 500 million cases a year and one to three million deaths worldwide – mostly among pregnant women and children in Africa – malaria is one of the most devastating global health



crises in the world. The disease has no concern for faith groups when it takes lives, and neither should efforts to fight it. Through tasks as simple as increasing worldwide access to bed nets, deaths from malaria are preventable. Durable, insecticide-treated bed nets are powerful first lines of defence against malaria. They create a barrier between humans and mosquitoes at night, when most bites occur, by killing mosquitoes on contact.

Bed nets provide the world's faith communities with a unique opportunity to come together in the form of a robust, multi-faith humanitarian initiative aimed at eradicating deaths due to malaria. One of the most underutilized resources in the effort to increase worldwide access to bed nets is the vast network of faith communities in Africa. Scaling up access in these networks could revolutionize malaria control for the continent, where churches and mosques far outnumber health centers. In Rwanda, churches have begun to be used as health centers, with remarkable success. Since 2005, Rwanda has cut malaria deaths by 66%. These types of efforts against malaria can help ensure that the 21st century is a time of religious cooperation and not religious extremism.

Dr. Patel is hopeful about these efforts:

The Interfaith Youth Core and I are proud to partner with the Tony Blair Faith Foundation and diverse people of good faith all over the world to apply this principle in a campaign to end deaths from malaria. Together, we will ensure that the twenty-first century is remembered not as a time of inter-religious violence, but as a period when people of all faiths cooperated to stop one of the giant ills afflicting humankind.

Background on the Interfaith Youth Core

There are millions of religious young people in the world interacting with greater frequency. That interaction tends either toward conflict or cooperation. Where so many of these interactions tend towards conflict, the Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) aims to introduce a new relationship, one that is about mutual respect and religious pluralism. Instead of focusing a dialogue on political or theological differences, IFYC builds relationships on the values that we share, such as hospitality and caring for the Earth, and how we can live out those values together to contribute to the betterment of our community. The IFYC is creating these relationships across the world by inspiring, networking, and resourcing young people, who are the leaders of this movement. IFYC provides young people and the institutions that support them with leadership training, project resources, and a connection to the broader movement.

For further information, or to speak with Dr. Eboo Patel, please contact:

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