

PRESS RELEASE

ACTIVISTS INVITE PEOPLE TO 'FAST FOR THE PLANET'

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To encourage deeper action towards caring for the environment, two organisations based in London are taking a novel approach by asking people to fast. By drawing attention to the way that fasting from food has been used by key figures in human history to facilitate large-scale social change, the London Islamic Network for the Environment (LINE) and St Ethelburgas Centre for Reconciliation and Peace launched their *Fast for the Planet* website today, which sets out the details of their message. In addition they are organising a participatory event scheduled for Sunday October 19th 2008 in the City of London.

By encouraging people to voluntarily fast from something essential, albeit temporarily, the organisers consider this to be a form of direct action that will nurture our collective ability to let go of patterns that are not only *not* essential to our survival, but in fact are rapidly destroying the planet. Using this approach, the organisers believe that people can better strengthen their intention to move away from consumerism and other unhealthy patterns, and instead move towards life-styles and community relationships, that are nurturing to people as well as to the earth.

In the build-up to the day of fasting, their website invites people to take part in a choice of actions, including mending any damaged clothing they may have, purchasing only if they really need something, and letting go of using a credit card. The main event will end with the sharing of food and personal experiences, and people who are unable to attend are invited to fast at home or organise an event of their own.

Muzammal Hussain, initiator of Fast for the Planet, and Chair of LINE said:

"There is no doubt that we need a radical approach like this, because although intellectually most of us know what needs to be done, old patterns of living continue to dominate, and green-house gas emissions continue to rise. Now, here's a way to really get our bodies and hearts directly involved in a process that will help break us out of outdated destructive patterns and lead to a better world".

Helen Gilbert, co-organiser of Fast for the Planet, and events coordinator at St Ethelburgas said:

"We are pleased to be hosting this event at St Ethelburga's because it challenges us at a deep level to consider what reconciliation means in the

context of humanity's troubled relationship with the earth. As a practice that has deep roots in many spiritual and faith traditions, fasting is a powerful and unifying resource we can draw on in challenging, both the personal and societal, status quo."

(ENDS)

For further information or to set up interviews, please contact: Helen Gilbert (Events Coordinator, St Ethelburgas) on 020 7496 1610; Muzammal Hussain (Chair of LINE): 0845 456 3960

NOTES FOR EDITORS:

1) Fasting from food and drink has been practised by social activists throughout human history. Gandhi frequently engaged in fasting and integrated it into his political activism. Abdul Ghaffar Khan, an activist who raised history's first "non-violent army", had fasted for similar reasons to Gandhi. Fasting is also an important aspect of many Faith traditions.

2) LINE (The London Islamic Network for the Environment) is the UK's first local Islamic environmental group and is open to people of all faiths and beliefs. It was set up in 2004. LINE'S activities include educational talks and workshops, dialogue and discussion at monthly forums, climate change campaigning, and nature outings. Website: www.lineonweb.org.uk

3)) St Ethelburgas Centre for Reconciliation and Peace inspires and equips people to pursue reconciliation and peace in their own lives and communities. We run a programme of events that brings people of different faith backgrounds together to explore the connections between global and environmental awareness and the building of collaborative relationships to serve the common good. Website: www.stethelburgas.org

4) Fast for the Planet Website: www.fastfortheplanet.net

5) Fast for the Planet aims to facilitate two kinds of movements. A movement *towards*, and a movement *away from*. Through participating, people will be expressing an intention to move *away from* submission to: i) corporate domination; ii) consumerism; iii) the dominant, interest-based and fictitious monetary-system; iv) a dependence on fossil fuels. Simultaneously, by fasting participants hope to strengthen their inner resources, with an associated intention to move *towards*: i) simplicity, sharing and community building; ii) economic systems that are nurturing to life, soul and community; iv) non-polluting energy, and sustainable use of the earth's resources.

6) Whilst this is a concept that will be ongoing, the main event will be held at: St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, 78 Bishopsgate, London EC2N 4AG. It will be an opportunity for participants to end their fast together, share reflections and network. It will start at 4pm and end at 8pm.
