



Summer Reflections

Visits, Voices, and Vision

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Summer Reflections: Visits, Voices, and Vision

This summer, WHAF was honoured to take part in a series of inspiring engagements across Bosnia, Turkey, and the Balkans. Through field visits, youth gatherings, public lectures, and memorial ceremonies, we deepened our commitment to ethical leadership, youth mentoring, and collective memory. These journeys were not only about presence, but about listening — to the voices of the past, the energy of youth, and the lessons that shape the future of humanitarian practice. Throughout these moments, we were privileged to work closely with dedicated partners and local organisations, whose trust, collaboration, and shared vision made each step meaningful. Whether standing in solemn remembrance at Srebrenica, exchanging ideas with young changemakers in Istanbul, or connecting with grassroots initiatives, each experience reaffirmed our belief in leadership grounded in humility, justice, and collective action.

1. Inspire in the Balkans: Youth, Service, and Solidarity

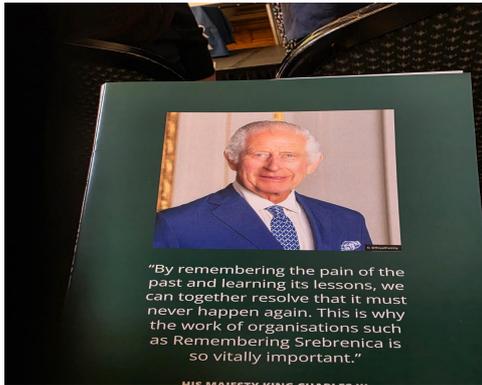
WHAF's summer began with a meaningful partnership with Islamic Relief Canada's Inspire Programme, a youth-led initiative focused on service, learning, and cross-cultural connection. From 20–26 June, in Kosova and Albania, volunteers engaged in a range of impactful activities: running educational workshops for orphans and youth, offering psychosocial support, distributing food and hygiene kits, and helping rehabilitate schools and homes in underserved communities.



The programme offered a powerful introduction to the region's history and resilience, and allowed participants to connect directly with local communities and Islamic Relief projects. It also aligned closely with WHAF's commitment to youth mentoring, ethical leadership, and locally rooted humanitarian engagement.

2. Remembering Srebrenica in Birmingham

As part of the 30th anniversary commemorations of the Srebrenica Genocide, Dr Hany El Banna represented WHAF at a regional memorial held on 1 July 2025 at Birmingham City Hall, jointly organised by Remembering Srebrenica UK and the Bosnia and Herzegovina UK Network. The ceremony brought together regional leaders, diplomats, survivors, and members of the public to honour the over 8,000 Bosniak men and boys killed in July 1995.



Hosted by the Mayor of Birmingham, Cllr Zaffar Iqbal, with support from Birmingham City Council, the event featured powerful testimonies, speeches, and artistic tributes. It served as a reminder of the enduring importance of remembrance, solidarity, and the fight against hatred.

3. Muslim Charities Convention – London

In July, Dr Hany El Banna took part in the second annual Muslim Charities Convention (MCC) in London, hosted by the Muslim Charities Forum (MCF). The event brought together leaders, changemakers, and innovators from across the British Muslim charity sector to explore new ways of strengthening collective impact and ethical leadership.



Through engaging panels and practical workshops, the convention fostered collaboration across organisations, encouraged knowledge-sharing, and spotlighted emerging challenges and opportunities in the humanitarian space. WHAF was proud to contribute to these dynamic conversations that continue to shape the future of faith-based humanitarian work.

4. Inspire Bosnia: Memory, Reflection, and Solidarity

Following the earlier Inspire trip to the Balkans, WHAF joined Islamic Relief Canada's Inspire program once again in July — this time in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The journey was deeply moving, centred around the 30th anniversary of the Srebrenica Genocide.











Alongside partners, including Sheikh Omar Suleiman from Yaqeen Institute, Dr Hany El Banna attended memorial ceremonies, visited historical sites, and engaged with survivors and local communities. Volunteers supported a summer camp linked to an orphans' program, facilitating educational and psychosocial activities which are vital for helping vulnerable children build resilience, emotional growth, and a sense of belonging amid trauma and loss.

This work is carried out through a range of activities designed to support their mental well-being and integration into society, reinforcing our commitment to holistic humanitarian care.

5. Engaging with the Egyptian Community in Istanbul

Dr. Hany El Banna delivered an insightful lecture to the Egyptian Associations Coordination in Turkey (الجمعية المصرية للتعاون في تركيا), where he discussed the vital role of youth in leadership, the importance of succession planning, and key principles of ethical leadership. Drawing on his extensive experience founding and leading Islamic Relief, Dr. Hany shared valuable lessons and challenges faced over the years, inspiring a new generation of community leaders and activists.





6. Muslim Youth Summit – Leeds

On 27 July 2025, WHAF joined the Muslim Youth Summit in Leeds, a powerful gathering of young changemakers, community leaders, and mentors. Dr. Hany El Banna delivered a keynote titled “The Jewels of Our Ummah”, highlighting the irreplaceable role of youth in preserving values, leading with integrity, and shaping the future of the Muslim humanitarian sector.



The summit provided a platform for reflection, dialogue, and intergenerational exchange — reaffirming WHAF’s belief that youth are not just the future, but essential actors in building ethical and community-rooted change today.

Looking Ahead

This summer's engagements reaffirmed WHAF's mission: to support ethical leadership, grassroots collaboration, and community-driven transformation. As we move forward, we continue to:

Wrap up Phase 1 of our Global Zakat Project, which has involved deep consultations with scholars, institutions, and affected communities
Prepare for a new series of local dialogue sessions across Syria, focused on strengthening civil society and advancing inclusive humanitarian approaches
Plan additional field visits, workshops, and collaborative events — all grounded in our commitment to working with, not for, communities. The journey continues — with reflection, responsibility, and hope.