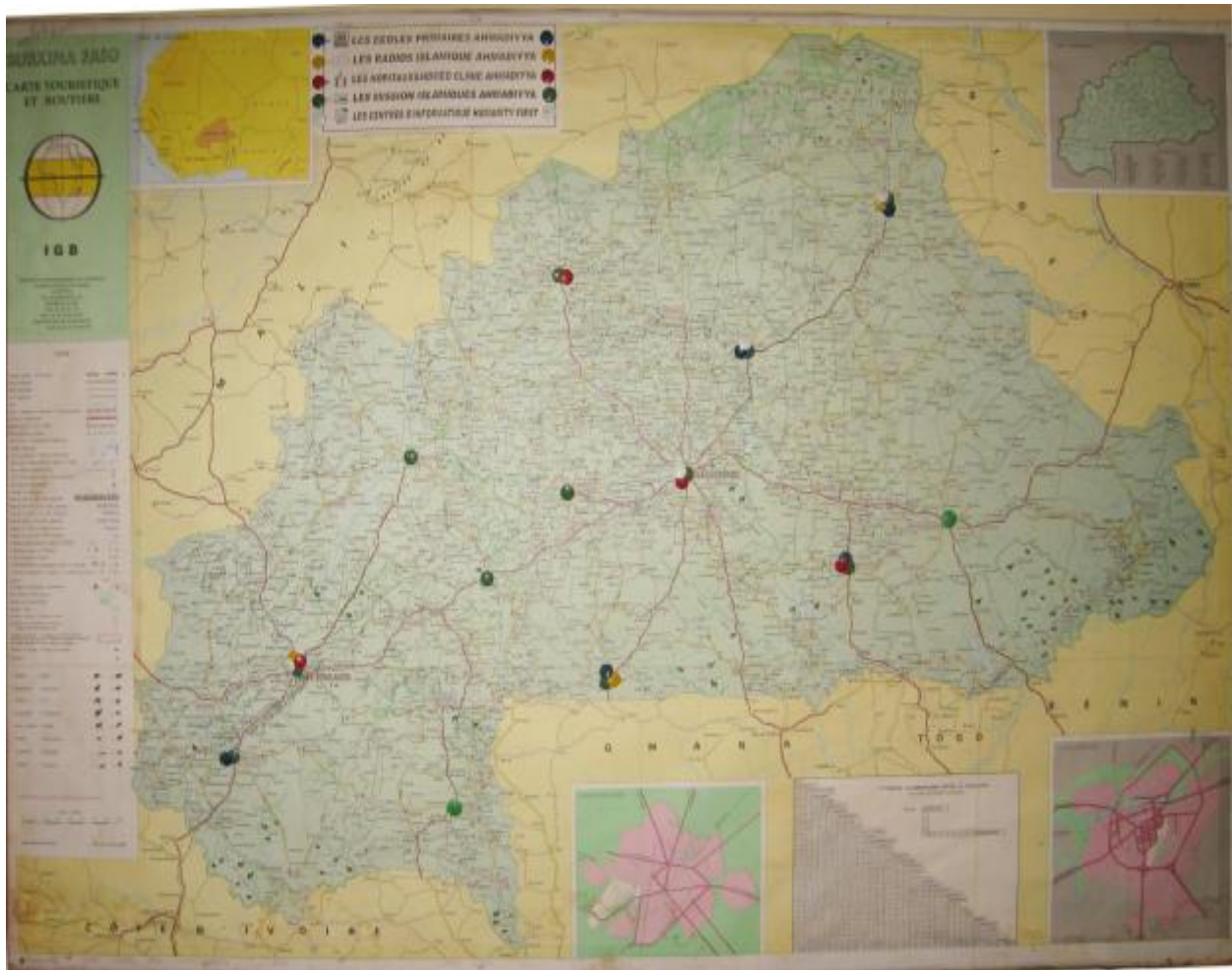


بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

DONATION OF BICYCLES FROM MAJLIS ANSĀRULLĀH, USA, TO BURKINA FASO JAMĀ'AT

Wajeeh Bajwa
Sadr Majlis Ansārullāh, USA

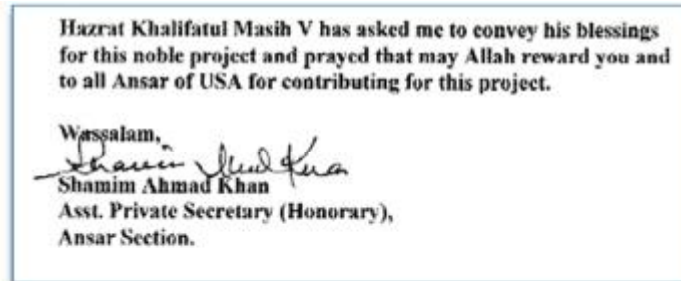


In 2008 a large number of Ahmadī Muslim men from Burkina Faso rode more than 600 miles on bicycles to attend the annual Jalsa Salāna in Ghana which was being graced by the presence of Hadrat Khalīfatul Masīh Al-Khamis (ayyadahullahu ta'ala binasrihil-'aziz). It was heartwarming to see the dedication and devotion of these Ahmadī Muslims to Khilāfat.

Footage of this event showed clearly the condition of the bicycles that these individuals rode and it was not particularly good. On my recent visit to Burkina Faso, Imam Khalid Mahmood Shahid, Amīr Burkina Faso, narrated a story related to this bicycle trip that members of Burkina Faso made to Ghana in 2008. He narrated that during this journey, riders were passing through a hilly area. All the riders obviously expended a great deal of energy going uphill. However, he noticed that when it came to going downhill, a large number of riders got off their bicycles and started walking. He was amazed and curious at this scene since he expected that the riders would have taken advantage of and enjoyed this downhill journey on their bicycles. When he inquired about the reason for walking rather than enjoying cruising downhill, he was told that the bicycles did not have brakes and it would be impossible to control the speed when going downhill!

Hadrat Khalīfatul Masīh Al-Khamis (ayyadahullahu ta'ala binasrihil-'aziz) mentioned efforts of Burkina Faso Ansār, Khuddam and Atfāl in these words in his Friday Sermon of May 9, 2008: "Khuddam [from Burkina Faso] who had arrived on bicycles had travelled for seven consecutive days, camping in between. The group had a few Ansār of 50-60 age group and two 13 year olds. Prior to travelling when the Amīr Sahib of Burkina Faso told these boys that they were too young to make the trip, they were most disheartened and insisted to join and were delighted at being allowed. Sadr Khuddām Burkina Faso, Abdur Rahman, mentioned that they wished to emulate the tremendous sense of sacrifice of the early Muslims at the occasion of the Khilāfat Centenary and planned the bicycle ride. Initially 1,400 people gave their names to join but due to some administrative matter only 300 were chosen. It is not as if they had new, strong bicycles, rather these were old, rickety and dilapidated bikes but their sincerity for Khilāfat which the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) had prophesized was such that they made the journey. A TV correspondent asked one of the bikers from Burkina Faso how had he travelled on such a dilapidated bicycle. The reply was that no doubt the bicycle was dilapidated but the faith was strong. This response was broadcasted on national television with striking headlines. These are not born-Ahmadīs and are not from the family of any of the companions of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace). They live thousands of miles away in places without electricity, without running water, and where there is intense poverty. Yet having joined the Community of the true and ardent devotee of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him), they are resolute in their resolve." The Khalīfatul-Masīh V (ayyadahullahu ta'ala binasrihil-'aziz) prayed that may Allah increase them in their sincerity.

In 2009, Abu Bakr Ladd (St. Louis Majlis) proposed that Majlis Ansārullāh, USA collect bicycles from members, especially from those members who own a bicycle but do not use it. Hadrat Khalīfatul Masīh Al-Khamīs (ayyadahullahu ta'ala binasrihil-'aziz), granted permission to go ahead with this project on December 25, 2009:



In early 2010, the Nāzīm of Gulf States Region, Bashiruddin Shams, was appointed as the lead person to manage this project. After looking into the effort that would be required to collect bicycles from various Majālis in the US and the logistics of collecting, storing, and transporting these bicycles to Burkina Faso, it was decided that collecting funds rather than bicycles would be more efficient in the long run. These funds could be used to purchase new bicycles, either from India or China, on condition that the bicycles be delivered to Burkina Faso.

Bashiruddin Shams spent a lot of time evaluating various models and styles of bicycles and held discussions with numerous vendors to accomplish this task. Vendor selection was completed in September of 2010 and an order was placed for 352 bicycles in October 2010. Unfortunately, we were not able to identify a vendor that could provide tricycles. Therefore, a decision was made for Majlis Ansārullāh to purchase 20 tricycles in Burkina Faso itself for donation. The 352 bicycles were shipped from China in the middle of December 2010 and arrived at the port of Tema, Ghana, on March 1, 2011.

The Amīr of Burkina Faso stated that he would like to hold the bicycle distribution ceremony during Jalsa Salāna of Burkina Faso which was scheduled to be held from April 1 - 3, 2011. With permission from Hadrat Khalīfatul Masīh Al-Khamīs (ayyadahullahu ta'ala binasrihil-'aziz), Abu Bakr Ladd and I planned to travel to Burkina Faso in late March in order to attend Jalsa Salāna and also complete the task of bicycles distribution. However, due to a sudden uprising and civil unrest resulting in a deteriorating law and order situation in Burkina Faso, Hadrat Khalīfatul Masīh Al-Khamīs (ayyadahullahu ta'ala binasrihil-'aziz) permitted Burkina Faso Jamā'at to postpone their Jalsa Salāna. The Amīr of Burkina Faso proposed a new date for the distribution of bicycles which was Monday, April 18, 2011. Based on this information I changed my travel plans and decided to travel on April 15. However, Abu Bakr Ladd continued with his original travel plan and left the US on March 28, 2011. He was planning to spend a month travelling in and around Burkina Faso.

My travel to Burkina Faso started on April 15, 2011 at 7:00 AM in Gainesville, FL, with a 2 hour drive to Orlando International Airport. The next stop on my journey was Chicago International Airport. I arrived at Chicago airport at 2:00 PM. While I was waiting for my next flight (at 5:00

PM) from Chicago to Brussels, Belgium, my wife called and asked if I had heard the latest news from Burkina Faso. I replied in the negative. She told me that the army in Burkina Faso had mounted a mutiny and the President of the country had been forced to leave the capital city of Burkina Faso. This was an interesting dilemma – should I cancel my trip or continue?! Putting personal concerns aside, we knew that the correct decision was to put all our trust in Almighty Allah and to continue my journey as planned.

I arrived at Brussels airport around 9:00 AM on Saturday, April 16, 2011. Departure time for the flight from Brussels to Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) was 11:20 AM (local time). However, Brussels airlines stated that they would only fly to Ouagadougou once they were sure that Ouagadougou airport was open.

My flight to Ouagadougou eventually took off at 1:00 PM. As we were boarding, the airline staff handed each passenger a piece of paper which stated that if the situation deteriorated further during the flight, the airplane would not land in Ouagadougou. It would instead, continue straight to its final destination of Cotonou (Benin) and passengers would then be given the option to fly straight back to Brussels or to stay in Cotonou. By the Grace of Almighty Allah, our airplane landed safely in Ouagadougou around 5:30 PM, local time.

Imam Khalid Mahmood Shahid, Amīr Burkina Faso, and Syed Hammad Raza, *Mubaligh Silsila* (Missionary), Ouagadougou, were waiting at the airport to receive me. I was taken through the immigration very quickly. As soon as we were outside of the airport terminal, a mob of vendors surrounded me. Most of them were selling SIM Cards for cell phones; the scene reminded me of arriving in Pakistan from the US or Europe.



Mosque (left) and office building (right) in the mission house complex at Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

The Amīr Burkina Faso provided the latest update about the riots and protests going on in Ouagadougou. He told me that the usual route from the airport to the mission house went through the center of the city. However, due to the ongoing strife, a curfew had been ordered to go into effect at 7:00 PM. Hence we would not risk going through the downtown area. He instructed the driver to make a circle around the city and take a longer but safer route to the mission house.



Hospital in the mission house complex in Ouagadougou

We arrived at the mission house complex around 6:30 PM, a few minutes before the curfew time. This complex contains the Amīr’s residence, a mosque, mission house (offices), a printing press, and the Ahmadiyya Muslim hospital.



Printing Press in the mission house complex in Ouagadougou

The Amīr of Burkina Faso informed me that the plan for the next day (Sunday, April 17) was to travel to two regions where the Jamā'at has mission houses and very active Jamā'at members. The farthest region where he wanted to travel was a few miles past Dori, a town which is 183 miles (295 km) north of Ouagadougou, very close to the border of Niger and Mali. In order for us to go there, spend some time with

members, and be back in Ouagadougou before curfew time (7:00 PM), we needed to leave Ouagadougou by 6:00 AM. My host, Ataul Habib Ahmad, another Missionary in Ouagadougou, who lives with his spouse and their three year old son, assured me that breakfast would be ready immediately after Fajr Prayer at 5:00 AM. However, he was not so sure about the water for taking a shower. We decided to fill up a large bucket with water for a morning 'shower' – just in case the water was shut down, which happens quite frequently and without warning!

It was 9:30 PM and time to go to sleep –exhausted as I was from 24 hours of travel, this was strange for me –we take technology for granted in the US, but here I was with no computer and no TV to check before bed. Falling asleep became a challenge because of the oppressive heat. There were two fans circulating at full speed in my room and I was still sweating profusely – the inside temperature was around 90°F. I imagined that the outside temperature was a little more bearable but I did not want to risk mosquito bites; malaria is quite common in Burkina Faso. After one to two hours of sleep, I was up again for Fajr Prayer. When I returned from the mosque, I was greeted by an abundant spread on the table: paratha, toast, eggs, halwa, and chicken saalan – on that day this was just the first of five meals served by my very attentive hosts.

Along with the the Amīr, Abu Bakr Ladd and I were accompanied on this trip by Rizwan Ahmad (a Missionary from the Ivory Coast). Most of the Missionaries from Ivory Coast were in Burkina Faso during that time due to the on-going civil war in that country. We travelled in a five seat Toyota Hilux pick-up truck, mercifully equipped with A/C.



Stop at a gas station – Wajeeh Bajwa and Abu Bakr Ladd

The first order of business was to find a gas station that was open. The Amīr told us that, along with other commercial businesses, almost all gas stations in Ouagadougou were closed. We prayed that we find one open on our route. The Amīr of Burkina Faso called Missionaries in the cities en route and asked them to purchase as much gas as they could find.

Al- Hamdu Lillah, we were able to find a gas station in a small town roughly 45 miles outside of the main city. By this time (7:30 AM) the temperature was already hitting around 100°F and I realized that the most comfortable spot was inside the pickup truck with the A/C running at full blast!

Quite often we came across vendors on the side of the main road, in the middle of nowhere, who were selling gasoline in bottles (such as 2 Liter Coke bottles) but obviously their prices were



Vendor selling meat on the side of the main road (most probably goat meat)

much higher. Vendors were also selling meat, vegetables, and fruit on the side of the road.

Bicycles and small 50-cc motorcycles were a common sight and are used as the main mode of transportation. After traveling on highway N3 for roughly 100 miles, the paved road suddenly disappeared and highway N3 became a dirt road. The secret to driving on this dirt road is that one has to maintain a constant speed between 35 and 45 miles per hour, otherwise small ridges in the road make one's vehicle jump and slide with the slope on the road; this eventually results in the vehicle going off road!



Highway N3 - that goes from Ouagadougou to the border of Niger and Mali in the North.

We arrived at Dori at 10:00 AM at the house of Missionary Nasir Ahmad Sidhu. He has been serving this area for the past 11 years and lives with his family. Here we were treated with our second breakfast of the day. As we ate, Nasir Ahmad Sidhu narrated several interesting events about how Ahmadiyyat was accepted in this remote part of the world which made us all anxious to meet local Ahmadi Muslims. The Amīr of Burkina Faso told us that we would be visiting a village that has been recently relocated. A couple of years ago, gold had been discovered near where these Ahmadi Muslims lived and a gold mine was established there. The mining company offered to move the entire village to another location. At the advice of the Khalifatul-Masih V (ayyadahullahu ta'ala binasrihil-'aziz), the location for a new village was selected a few miles south of the existing village near the main road. The Khalifatul-Masih V (ayyadahullahu ta'ala binasrihil-'aziz) named this new village "*Mahdiabad*," (Mahdi's Community).

We arrived at Mahdiabad around 11:30 AM. The Ahmadiyya Mosque is visible from the main road. I was surprised to see a satellite dish in this remote village. The Amīr of Burkina Faso told us that the Jamā'at

provided electricity and water to the entire village through installation of solar panels. This village also houses a large water tower where water is stored using an electrical pump driven by solar energy.

We were greeted by the elders and children of this community. However, the language barrier did not



Ahmadiyya Mosque at Mahdiabad

allow us to communicate freely with members as we would have liked. The situation made me appreciate the value of learning a variety of commonly used languages. In order to ‘converse’ with a local person, we communicated the question to our Missionary, Nasir Ahmad Sidhu, who then turned to the local *Mu'allim* (teacher) of this community, and ask our question, translated into Arabic. The *Mu'allim* spoke Arabic as well as the local language but did not speak French, which is the official language of Burkina Faso. He asked our question in the local language. The response was then relayed back to us via two translators speaking two different languages. Even though it was more time-consuming than any conversation I can recall, it was well worth it and, clearly, nothing was being lost in translation.



Members of the Ahmadiyya Community in Mahdi Abbad, Burkina Faso watching MTA in the local Mosque.

The elders and children were sitting in front of the mosque under a canopy that had a thatched roof. The Amīr told us that to conserve electricity generated by solar panels, the electric lights in this village remain functional for three hours after sunset and for a couple of hours in the morning. MTA is available to this community for four hours a day via a satellite dish outside the mosque which receives the MTA signal. Although they do not understand any of the languages in which MTA broadcasts its programs, the local members watch the Arabic channel with the *Mu'allim* translating transmission in to their local language. The entire community is glued to the television, especially when Friday sermon delivered by the Khalifatul-Masih (ayyadahullahu ta'ala binasrihil-'aziz) is broadcast. This happened during our visit and it was heart-warming to see how everyone's eyes lit up when they saw the Khalifatul-Masih (ayyadahullahu ta'ala binasrihil 'aziz) on the TV.

We toured an elementary school in this village which is very close to the Mosque and has only one room. At the time of the day when we were there, the temperature inside the school



Walk to the water storage tank in Mahdiabad, Bukina Faso

building was 100°F. I decided to take the thermometer outside in the sun and within 60 seconds its reading shot up to 121°F. The walk to the water well and tank was roughly 200 yards and I debated about undertaking this walk under the direct sun. My hesitation about sun exposure was resolved for me when I realized how enthusiastic the Amīr and the villagers were to show us how their water well works and how water is stored. As we started walking towards the water tank, three or four children decided

to follow us. I was amazed to see that two of them were not wearing any shoes or 'flip-flops' (which are quite common). I asked them to go back to the shade and told them that we would be back in 10-15 minutes but they just smiled and kept walking.

All the village elders and children gathered as we were getting ready to leave Mahdiabad around 1:20 PM. As we were saying Salām to the elders, one of them hugged me and said something in his language. His 6 or 7 years old daughter and 3 years old son were with him. I asked our Missionary, Nasir Ahmad Sidhu, to translate what was said. As before, he asked the local *Mu'allim* to translate what was

said into Arabic, after which he was able to communicate to me what was said. Apparently, this man's daughter was saying: "Last time when we met the man with a white beard he gave me sweets. Is this man with a white beard going to give me sweets as well?" Since Abu Bakr Ladd and I both have white beards, we were not sure which one of us she was referring to. At that point, the Amīr realized what this little girl was talking about. In 2008 this family had



an audience with Hadrat Khalīfatul Masīh Al-Khamis (ayyadahullahu ta'ala binasrihil-'aziz) during his visit to Burkina Faso. The Khalīfatul-Masih gave chocolate to this girl who at that time was around 2 or 3 years old. She had remembered getting sweets from the "man with the white beard!" I looked at the Amīr and Abu Bakr Ladd, wondering and hoping that they might have something for this little girl. Luckily, I also remembered that I had something in my travel bag – my trusty granola bars which I always have on hand! I was able to find 4 bars in my bag. I gave one bar to this little girl which of course made me an instant magnet to the rest of the children of all ages. One elder came to my rescue. He took the granola bars from me and started splitting each bar into smaller pieces to divide them between all the children. So if you have a white beard and go to where the Khalīfatul-Masih has been, better take lot of candy bars with you.



We started our travel back to Dori. Getting into the air-conditioned pickup truck was such a welcome escape from the heat. On our way back to Dori, the Amīr stopped in the middle of nowhere and said that we should take a picture of the desert. I remarked that every desert looks similar on its own – we should have people in the photos as well. Although Abu Bakr Ladd had traveled in Burkina Faso in much harsher conditions a few days ago, he

was very reluctant to get out of the wonderfully cool pick-up truck. He said he was feeling sick and possibly experiencing sun stroke. Bad as we felt for his condition, we were relentless about the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and persuaded him to join us for the quick photograph.

We arrived at Missionary Nasir Ahmad Sidhu's house in Dori around 1:45 PM. Another excellent meal (number 3 of the day) was waiting for us. There is an Ahmadi Muslim Mosque (we offered Zuhr and Asr Prayers in the mosque), an Ahmadi Muslim radio station, and a hand pump for water near his house. The hand pump for water was installed by Humanity First through its "Water for Life" Project. I was told that there is usually a long line of women and children around these hand pumps early in the morning. Some of these women walk 5 to 7 miles to get water from one of these hand pumps and carry two to three five-gallon containers (one or two on their heads and one in each hand) for their household needs.



Ahmadiyya Radio Station in Dori, Burkina Faso. Transmission from this radio station covers 45 miles radius and broadcast is in Arabic, French and local language.



Hand pump for water in Dori, Burkina Faso installed by Humanity First under "Water for life" program.



Two views of the Ahmadiyya Mosque in Dori, Burkina Faso

We left Dori around 3:45 PM and now we were racing against time. We still had one more Jamā'at to visit in Kaya and make it back to Ouagadougou before the curfew time (7:00 PM). We arrived at Missionary Hamid Maqsood Atif's house around 5:20 PM. And yes, a wonderful fourth meal of the day awaited us.

The Amīr gave us a brief history of this Jamā'at. There is a Missionary's residence, Ahmadiyya Muslim school and an Ahmadiyya Muslim Mosque in Kaya as well as a large parcel of land adjacent to these buildings that the government of Burkina Faso has given to the Jamā'at for further development. The Ahmadiyya Muslim School in Kaya is much larger than the school in Mahdiabad and offers classes from first to sixth grades.



Ahmadiyya Mosque in Kaya, Burkina Faso

We started the final stretch of our daylong trip at around 6:10 PM. We had to cover another 60 miles and also stop to get gas. Cows, goats and donkeys do not care about rules of the road. These animals, especially donkeys, behave as if they are alone in even the heaviest traffic – they start crossing the road wherever and whenever they want to. At this time it was a true test of Amir Sahib's driving. It was a real



Ahmadiyya School in Kaya, Burkina Faso

challenge to avoid hitting not only these animals but also the people on bicycles or motorcycles, and still make it to Ouagadougou before 7:00 PM.

As soon as the pickup truck stopped in the mission house compound in Ouagadougou at 7:10 PM and we alighted, Abu Bakr Ladd said to me, "You must have been scared sitting in the front



Abu Bakr lad is getting ready to enjoy his fourth meal of the day.

(seat) – I had my eyes closed all the way here." I laughed and told him that I have driven in similar circumstances before and was not worried at all. I also told him that my family tells me that they have to keep their eyes closed in the same way sometimes when I am driving, and that is in Florida!

After enjoying our fifth meal of the day we offered

Maghrib and Isha Prayers in the mosque. I headed to my host's residence which was a 5 minute walk from the mission house complex. Before leaving the mission house complex we made sure that there were no army trucks nearby and constantly watched over our shoulders as we were now in violation of the curfew.

Monday, April 18, 2011 was the day for the distribution of bicycles. My host, Ataul Habib Ahmad and I went to the mosque at 5:00 AM to offer Fajr Prayer. The mosque was almost full at this time because the annual refresher course for all *Mu'allimin* in Burkina Faso was being held during that week. A young *Mu'allim* who was attending the refresher course gave a Dars of the Holy Qur'an (in French) after the Fajr Prayer.



Bicycles are being assembled in the Mission House compound in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

I should mention here that the bicycles distribution would not have been possible without the hard work required to complete the assembly of bicycles. Bicycles were shipped from China completely disassembled and were then put together in Burkina Faso.



View of the Stage. Front Row (left to right) Dr. Wajeeh Bajwa, Sadr Majlis Ansārullāh, USA; Imam Khalid Mahmood Shahid, Amīr Burkina Faso; and Amadou Soumana, Nā'ib Amīr Burkina Faso

The bicycle distribution ceremony was scheduled to start at 10:00 AM and two marquees were set up in the mission house complex: a small marquee to accommodate the stage area and a large marquee to accommodate men and women who were taking part in the bicycle distribution ceremony. Some adjustments had to be made in the program because of the recent disturbances in the city. The President of Burkina Faso had removed all his ministers from their offices on the day I had arrived in Burkina Faso. This was done in order to placate demonstrators who were demanding a change in the government. The Minister of Social



Recitation of the Holy Qur'an



Recitation of poem of the Promised Messiah (alaihis salam)



Dr. Wajeeh Bajwa, Sadr Majlis Ansarullah, USA addressing the gathering. Dr. Mahmood Bhunnoo (on the right with microphone) doing simultaneous translation.



Rachid Traoré, Sadr Majlis Ansarullah, Burkina Faso, addressing the gathering.



Moussa Ouattara, head of Red Cross, Burkina Faso addressing the gathering



Imam Khalid Mahmood Shahid, Amīr Burkina Faso addressing the gathering.



View of the large marquee where guests were seated.



Tricycles (20) and bicycles (352) donated by members of Majlis Ansārullāh, USA ready for distribution.

Services was to have been present at the bicycle distribution ceremony but all government officials were forbidden from attending any function. The majority of the Jamā'at members who were to receive bicycles were also told by the Amīr not to travel due to the unstable situation.

The Amīr and I decided to move forward with the abbreviated ceremony and give bicycles to the heads of each auxiliary (heads of Lajna, Ansārullāh and Khuddām auxiliaries) who in turn

would be responsible for distribution of bicycles to their members. It was decided that the bicycles that we were planning to donate to the Minister of Social Services would be kept at the mission house and donated when the situation improved and the government became functional again.



Photos showing distribution of tricycles and bicycles

350 bicyclettes et 20 tricycles offerts

La communauté Ahmadiyya des Etats-Unis a fait un don de 350 bicyclettes et 20 tricycles à la Jama'at islamique Ahmadiyya du Burkina Faso. Cette remise de don a été faite le 18 avril 2011 à Ouagadougou par le président de la communauté Ahmadiyya des Etats-Unis, Wadjid Bajwa Sahib.



Les officiels : Devant, de la gauche vers la droite, le donateur Wadjid Bajwa Sahib; le président de la communauté du Burkina, Amir Sahib Kalid Mahmood et son vice-président, Asadim Soumans



Une partie des bicyclettes qui ont fait l'objet de don.



Les témoins de la remise des bicyclettes et des tricycles



La photo de famille après la remise

Le 18 avril 2011, a eu lieu, à Ouagadougou, une remise de don de 350 bicyclettes et 20 tricycles. Ce don est l'oeuvre de la communauté Ahmadiyya des Etats-Unis au profit de la Jama'at islamique Ahmadiyya du Burkina Faso. D'entrée de jeu, l'assemblée présente à la cérémonie de don a eu droit à la recitation du Saint Coran. Concernant le don, tout a commencé par les jeunes ahmadis qui ont effectué un voyage Burkina-Ghana à vélo en vue de participer à une conférence.

Vu la détermination de ces jeunes, le donateur Wadjid Bajwa Sahib, président de la communauté Ahmadiyya des Etats-Unis, a jugé bon de leur donner un coup de main. Ainsi, il avait été convenu de collecter de vieux vélos aux Etats-Unis pour ces jeunes. Dieu faisant bien les choses et malgré les difficultés qu'elle rencontre, la

communauté Ahmadiyya des Etats-Unis a pu offrir des bicyclettes et des tricycles tous neufs au Burkina Faso. Il s'est affirmé que ce don est le premier du genre. Tout compte fait, la communauté Ahmadiyya des Etats-Unis s'investit dans la réhabilitation de 70 forages au Burkina Faso. Wadjid Bajwa Sahib, à la fin de ses propos, a demandé à la communauté du Burkina de prier pour les frères des Etats-Unis et pour la paix dans le monde.

"Donner un vélo à un Burkinabè, c'est lui donner le moyen de s'épanouir"

Amir Sahib Kalid, président de la Communauté Ahmadiyya du Burkina Faso, a laissé entendre que selon le Saint Coran, les vrais croyants, même s'ils sont dans le besoin, donnent aux nécessiteux sans discrimi-

nation. D'ici la justification de ce don. De ce fait, il a demandé d'être reconnaissant envers Dieu et les Hommes. Le représentant de la Croix rouge, Moussa Ouattara, a reconnu que la Croix rouge et la Jama'at islamique Ahmadiyya œuvrent dans le même sillon, à savoir le bien-être de ceux qui sont dans le besoin. Pour cette raison, il souhaite que le bien-être de la population soit toujours au coeur des oeuvres qu'ils mènent souvent dans des conditions difficiles. Razid Traoré, président des Ansars (hommes âgés de 40 ans et plus), a salué le geste à sa juste valeur. Pour lui, donner un vélo à un Burkinabè, c'est lui donner le moyen de s'épanouir. Il a souhaité que les heureux bénéficiaires prennent soin de ce matériel afin qu'ils puissent en tirer grand profit. Par ailleurs, la présidente des femmes Ahmadi du Burkina Faso, Aicha Traoré, a dit que cette aide

Nord-Bur leur va droit au coeur. Elle se dans le même sens que le président des Ansars, Razid Traoré, en affirmant que le vélo est indispensable. Elle a assuré que les bicyclettes seront réparties dans toutes les communautés Ahmadiyya du pays existant dans les 13 régions. Pour elle, être ahmadi, c'est savoir partager. De ce fait, Aicha Traoré a souhaité que Dieu donne au donateur la force de pouvoir subvenir aux besoins des plus pauvres.

Françoise DEMBÈLE (Brazzaville)

Répartition des bicyclettes et des tricycles

150 bicyclettes pour les jeunes ;
50 bicyclettes pour les vieux ;
50 bicyclettes pour les femmes ;
50 bicyclettes et 20 tricycles pour le ministère de l'Action sociale et de la solidarité nationale

Local Newspaper "Le Pays" published a full page article about bicycles distribution on April 20, 2011

Some guests were delayed due to traffic in the city so the ceremony started at 10:30 AM with the recitation of the Holy Qur'an followed by recitation of a poem of the Promised Messiah (peace be on him). After some announcements, the Amīr of Burkina Faso invited me to say a few words. I gave the background of the project, why it was started, and how generously members of Majlis Ansārullāh, USA contributed towards this project which enabled us to complete it within one year, *Al-Hamdu Lillah*. I spoke in English and Dr. Mahmood Bhunnoo (who manages the Ahmadiyya Muslim hospital in Ouagadougou) translated my address into

French. Rachid Traoré, Sadr Majlis Ansārullāh, Burkina Faso, then spoke for a few minutes. He thanked Majlis Ansārullāh USA and said that these bicycles may not seem a big thing to someone living in the West but in Burkina Faso, it is like having a Mercedes Benz car. Moussa Ouattara, the Head of Burkina Faso Red Cross, spoke for a few minutes emphasizing the importance and significance of these kinds of projects. At the end the Amīr of Burkina Faso addressed the gathering. He quoted a verse of the Holy Qur'ān that states that the real believers, even if they are in need themselves, give to the needy without discrimination. He then read the 9th condition of Bai'at which states: "That he/she shall keep himself/herself occupied in the service of God's creatures for His sake only and shall endeavor towards the beneficence of mankind to the best of his/her God-given abilities and powers." He said that members of Majlis Ansārullāh USA are truly fulfilling this condition of their Bai'at through their willingness to take on this project that will provide much needed help to the community in Burkina Faso.

Following the address of the Amīr of Burkina Faso, the tricycles and bicycles were presented to Sadr Majlis Khuddāmul Ahmadiyya, Sadr Majlis Ansārullāh, and Sadr Lajna Imā'illah (Aicha Traoré). The Amīr of Burkina Faso received tricycles and bicycles on behalf of the Ministry of Social Services.

At the end of the ceremony, refreshments were served. All invited guests, the Missionaries, Abu Bakr Ladd and I had lunch at the Amīr's residence. During the lunch the Amīr asked if we would like to visit another Jamā'at in the south of the country to which we agreed. The Amīr told us that we would depart after Zuhr/Asr Prayers and travel to Leo, a small town roughly 105 miles south of Ouagadougou, very close to the Ghanaian border. He said that we would stay there overnight. However, for some reason or due to several conversations going on simultaneously, some members did not hear the last part that we will spend the night in Leo, including our host, Missionary Zia ul Rahman Tayyab. Abu Bakr Ladd and I quickly collected our belongings for spending the night at another place. On this trip, we were also joined by Mahmood Nasir Saqib, Missionary from Ivory Coast. We were half way through the journey when both Saqib Sahib and our host-to-be in Leo actually realized that we were intending to spend the night at Leo. Our host immediately called his spouse in Leo to let her know about the five unexpected guests arriving at her doorstep in a couple of hours and staying there for a night. I was uncomfortable about putting the family to this much trouble and suggested that we cancel this trip. However, Zia ul Rahman Tayyab insisted that everything was under control and we should go ahead as planned.

We arrived at Zia ul Rahman Tayyab's residence in Leo around 5:30 PM. Tea and fried fish were waiting for us. It was surprising to see that fish was served at every place we went to because Burkina Faso is a landlocked country and there are no local water reservoirs where fish can live.

We were told that it was all imported fish – this meant that our hosts truly went out of their way to take care of our meals. May Almighty Allah reward them abundantly for their hospitality, Āmīn. I also noticed that there were baked potatoes at every meal. Apparently, at some point, Abu Bakr Ladd had mentioned that two things he liked were baked potatoes and

tea with lemon. Apparently this information was conveyed instantly to our hosts from the northernmost corner to the southernmost corner of Burkina Faso. Abu Bakr Ladd was served baked potatoes and lemon tea wherever he went. He was in heaven.

The Jamā'at in Leo has a Missionary's house, a school, a radio station, and a mosque. We offered Maghrib and Isha, and next morning Fajr Prayer in the mosque. Darsul-Qur'ān after the



Ahmadiyya Mosque in Leo, Burkina Faso

Fajr Prayer was given by Zia ul Rahman Tayyab. The Amīr advised us that we should leave Leo by 9:00 AM in order to reach Ouagadougou by lunch time. This would allow sufficient time for me to get to the airport in time for my return flight. Originally my return flight was leaving at 9:30 PM from Ouagadougou but, due to the curfew going into effect at 7:00 PM, the airline changed the departure time to 5:00 PM and also advised that check in time should be by 12:00 noon.



Live interview at Ahmadiyya radio station at Leo, Burkina Faso



Visitors, host, and workers outside the radio station in Leo

We had a quick breakfast at Zia ul Rahman Tayyab's house and toured the compound of the mission house. We also visited the Ahmadiyya Muslim radio station in Leo. Transmission of this radio was very similar to the radio station in Dori and covered a radius of 40 miles or so. The Amīr asked us to give a live interview. We spoke about our experiences in Burkina Faso in English and the Amīr translated our comments in to French.

We left Leo around 9:45 AM and arrived in Ouagadougou around 12:45 PM. Lunch was served immediately upon our arrival after which it was time to say Salām to everyone and head to the airport.

Before we left for the airport I asked the Amīr what he thought would make the biggest difference for Ahmadi Muslims in Burkina Faso if Majlis Ansārullāh were to take on another project in the future? We had talked previously about donating clothes; helping Ahmadi Muslims start small businesses; sending medical supplies; installing or restoring water-wells; and a host of other ideas. Without hesitation the Amīr said: "Water Wells". *Where there's a will (or a well!), there's a way...*

Majlis Ansārullāh, USA is humbled and grateful to Almighty Allah for giving us the ability to take on the bicycle project. We are also deeply obliged to Hadrat Khalīfatul Masīh Al-Khamis (ayyadahullahu ta'ala binasrihil-'aziz) for allowing Majlis Ansārullāh, USA to take on this project. I wish to thank to all the members of Majlis Ansārullāh, USA who generously contributed to this endeavor and without whom the bicycles could not have been acquired. May Almighty Allah reward them all, Āmīn.

On behalf of Abu Baker Ladd and myself, I must express immense gratitude to Khalid Mahmood Shahid, Amīr Burkina Faso, for his hospitality and for making excellent arrangements for every stage of our trip. In addition, our sincere appreciation goes to all Missionaries and their families in Burkina Faso [Ataul Habib (Ouagadougou), Abdul Razzaq (Ouagadougou), Syed Hammad Raza (Ouagadougou), Hamid Maqsood Atif (Kaya), Nasir Ahmad Sidhu (Dori), Masoor Ahmad Chandio (Ouahigouya), Wasif Shahzad (Koudougou), Ijaz Ahmad Shams (Dedougou), Muhammad Amin Baloch, (Banfora), Riaz Khan (Bobo), Nasir Iqbal (Bobo), Zia ul Rahman Tayyab (Leo), and Muhibbullah Khalid (Tenkodougou), Zafarullah Salam (Fada) and the Missionaries from Ivory Coast Mahmood Nasir Saqib, Basit Ahmad, and Rizwan Ahmad, who were stationed in Ouagadougou temporarily, for their warm welcome and hospitality. May Almighty Allah reward them all abundantly, Āmīn. We were very blessed to make this once-in-a-lifetime trip and will remember it for years to come, In Sha' Allah.