A LOOK BACK AT

13th FAIZ PEACE FESTIVAL

فیض امن میلہ

शांति महोत्सव

London

3RD OCTOBER 2026



Faiz Cultural Foundation UK

In association with

SOAS University of London

SOUTH ASIA INSTITUTE

Faiz Peace Festival 2026

Keeping the Flame of progressive ideas and Resistance Alive

Faiz Amn Mela brings together voices of art, literature,
peace, justice, equality and resistance in London

FAIZ AM'N MELA LONDON
over the years



13th FAIZ PEACE FESTIVAL
London
FAIZ AM'N MELA فیض امن میلہ



15 YEARS
2011 - 2026

A journey to promote art, literature,
peace, equality and progressive ideas

FAIZ CULTURAL FOUNDATION UK

in
Association
with

SOAS University of London
South Asia Institute

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کہیں تو بہرِ خُدا آج ذکرِ یار چلے

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The spirit of Faiz Ahmed Faiz came alive in London on October 3rd, 2026, as the Faiz Cultural Foundation, in collaboration with SOAS Southa Asia Institue, Universtiy of London, hosted the 13th Faiz Peace Festival (Faiz Am'n Mela).

The festival brought together a vibrant cross-section of society, students, women, elders, civil society activists, poets, theatre practitioners, sculptors, fiction writers, journalists, intellectuals and political leaders. The capacity-filled hall reflected the enduring power of Faiz's poetry and ideas to cross borders, generations and cultures.

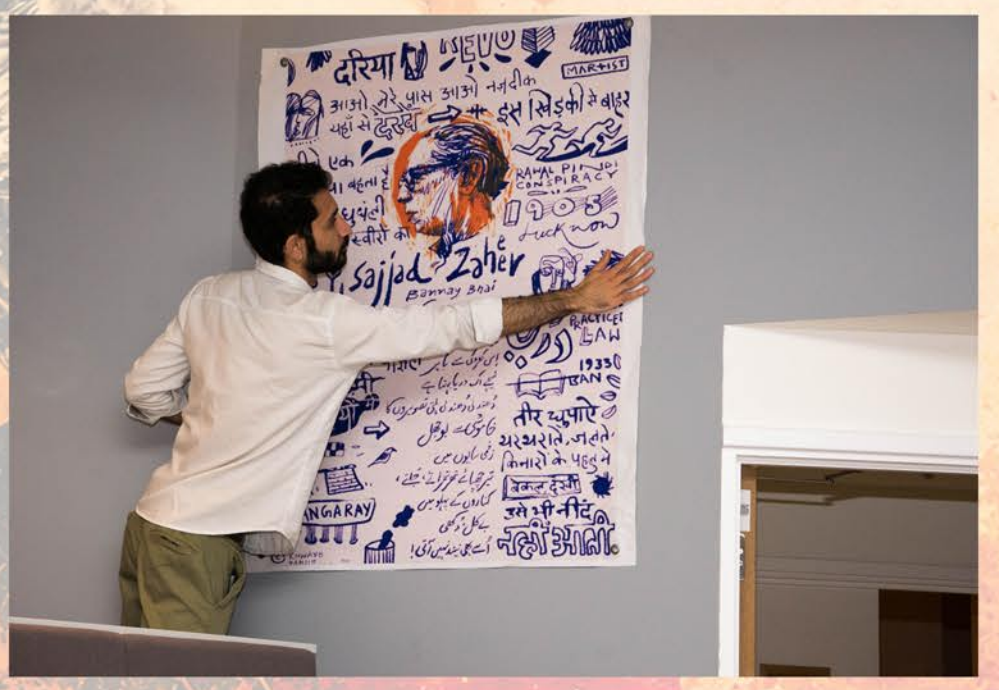




Delegates travelled from Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, Ireland, Scotland, Germany, Pakistan, Manchester, Wales, Birmingham, Coventry, Bradford, Newcastle and other cities and towns as well as various London universitites express their solidarity with the universal ideals at the heart of Faiz's work: peace, justice, freedom, equality, democratic rights and cultural and religious diversity. Civil society organisations and cultural forums also joined the gathering, reaffirming that Faiz's message remains deeply relevant in a world facing renewed conflict, inequality and









The Festival opened with a video presentation of Faiz's iconic poem "Hum Dekhenge", setting the tone for an evening that connected poetry with the struggles and aspirations of generations .

Opening the festival, Asim Ali Shah, Founding Director and one of the principal organisers of the Faiz Cultural Foundation, welcomed the diverse audience and reflected on the enduring relevance of Faiz Ahmed Faiz's message in today's troubled world.

"Not Just a Cultural Event—A Commitment, a Dream and a Resolve"

Shah emphasised that the Faiz Peace Festival was not merely a cultural event or a celebration of poetry; it was "a commitment, a dream and a resolve."



He said the festival was founded on the belief that culture, literature and art have the power to challenge injustice, inspire courage and bring people together across political, geographical and cultural boundaries.

He observed that the world was once again passing through a period of profound uncertainty, marked by wars and conflicts, widening economic inequality, racism, religious discrimination, attacks on democratic values and freedoms, and an increasingly serious environmental crisis. In such circumstances, he said, the ideas of Faiz were not simply part of history—they offered a moral and intellectual compass for the present.

Referring to Faiz's lifelong commitment to hope, resistance and progressive ideas, Shah stressed that keeping the flame of hope and resistance alive is not only a right but also a responsibility. He said that Faiz never separated the struggle for social justice from the struggle for human dignity, and that his poetry continued to give language to those who refuse to accept oppression, inequality and silence as inevitable.

Shah also highlighted the importance of bringing together people from different backgrounds and generations under one roof. The presence of students, artists, writers, activists, academics, political leaders and members of civil society, he said, demonstrated that the legacy of Faiz belonged not to one country, community or generation, but to all those who believe in peace, freedom, equality, democracy and human solidarity.

He stressed that the festival sought not only to remember Faiz but also to keep his ideas alive through contemporary struggles, conversations and cultural expression. At a time when walls of division are being built across societies, the Faiz Peace Festival aimed to build bridges—between people, cultures, generations and movements.

Asim Ali Shah expressed his heartfelt gratitude to SOAS University of London for its support and collaboration in bringing the festival to the SOAS campus. He specifically thanked Deputy Vice-Chancellor Khadir Meer, Subir Sinha, Director of the SOAS South Asia Institute, and colleagues at SOAS for their valuable support, encouragement and cooperation in making the festival possible.

He also acknowledged the contribution of the festival's sponsors, donors, partner organisations and volunteers whose support, he said, demonstrated the strength of collective efforts behind the Faiz Peace Festival.

Among the UK-based organisations he recognised were the Students' Federation of India – UK, Indian Workers' Association, Progressive Writers Association UK, South Asia Solidarity Group, and other organisations, cultural forums andcommunity groups that supported and participated in the event. Shah emphasised that the festival was a collective endeavour and that its success belonged to everyone who had contributed their time, resources, ideas and solidarity. He expressed particular appreciation for the volunteers, artists, speakers, organisers and community members who had helped create a space where diverse voices could meet through poetry, literature, music, political dialogue and cultural expression.

Concluding his opening remarks, Shah called on the audience to see the festival as an act of collective hope—a space where poetry could meet politics, music could meet resistance, and memory could inspire action. The task, he suggested, was not simply to celebrate the legacy of Faiz, but to carry its flame forward into the struggles of the present and the possibilities of the future.



Faiz Am'n Mela & SOAS

Subir Sinha, Director of the SOAS South Asia Institute, welcomed the collaboration with the Faiz Cultural Foundation and emphasised the importance of creating spaces where culture, politics and ideas could come together in meaningful dialogue. He expressed his hope that the partnership between SOAS and the Faiz Cultural Foundation would continue and grow in the years ahead.





He welcomed the festival's distinctive approach of bringing poetry, literature, music and political discussion into the same space, reflecting the intellectual and humanist traditions associated with Faiz Ahmed Faiz.He expressed his commitment that SOAS would continue to provide a home for such conversations and that the partnership would help strengthen networks of solidarity among those working for peace, justice, democracy and social change across South Asia and internationally.

He said the Faiz Peace Festival have become an important annual forum bringing together writers, students and changemakers from across the UK and beyond. At a time when societies are increasingly divided by conflict,intolerance and political polarisation, he stressed the importance of maintaining spaces for dialogue, critical thinking and cultural exchange.





Legends, Arts, Culture





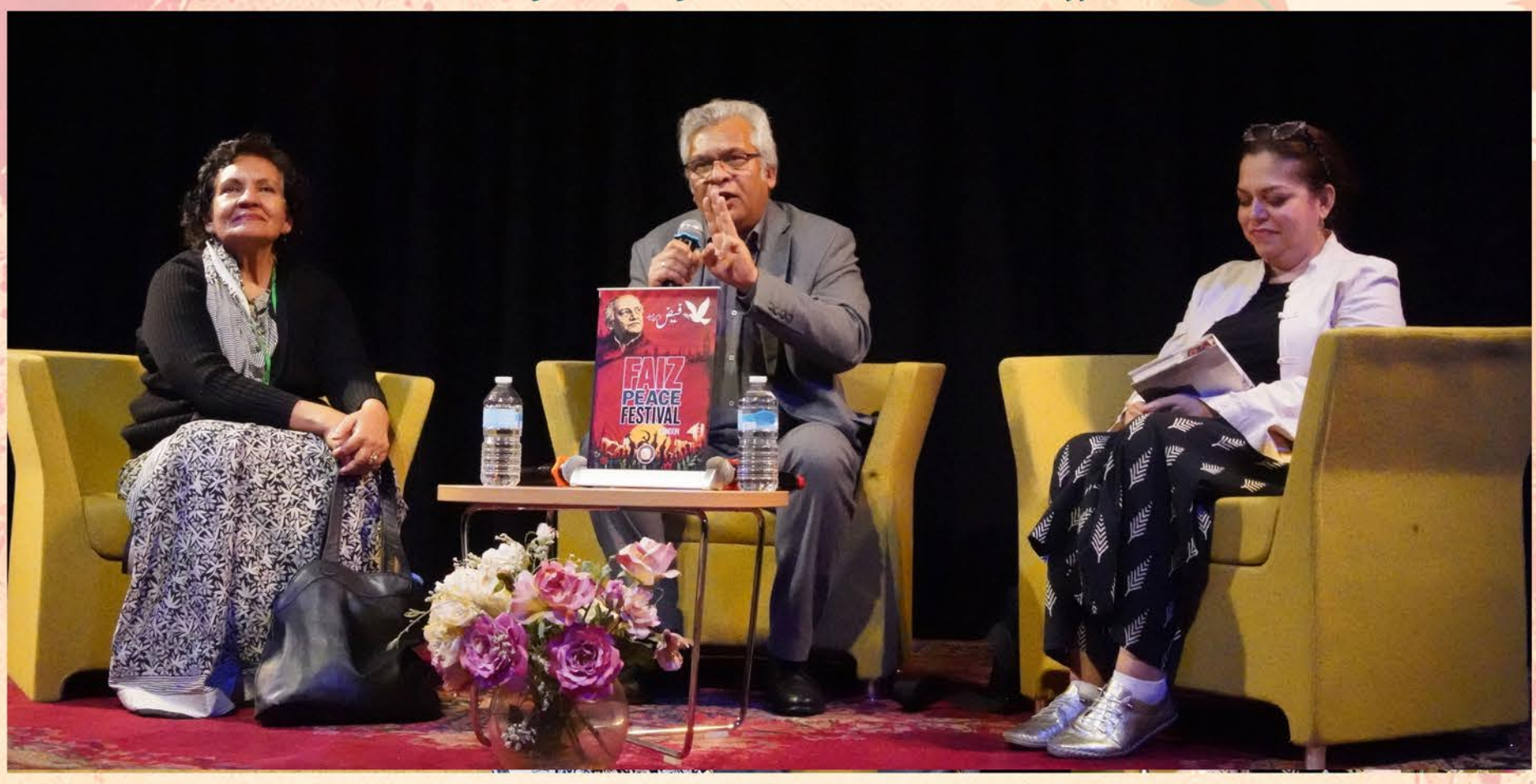
The literary session was jointly conducted by Bilal Warraich and Dr Nudrat, celebrating the intersection of art, culture, history and resistance.

Following this Bilal Warraich and Dr Nudrat introduced the next speaker Naeem Mirza, moving tribute was then paid to the late Professor Amin Mughal by Naeem Mirza, Director of the Aurat Foundation, Islamabad. He recalled Professor Mughal's lifelong commitment to progressive and left movements in Pakistan and South Asia and his contribution to the intellectual and political traditions that continue to inspire new generations.



The Women Behind the Legends:

The untold story of Alys Faiz & Razia Sajjad Zaheer



A special segment, titled "Women Behind the Legends," paid rich tribute to two remarkable women whose lives and contributions were deeply intertwined with the progressive cultural and political history of South Asia: Razia Sajjad Zaheer and Alys Faiz.

The panel featured Noor Sajjad Zaheer, daughter of Razia Sajjad Zaheer, and Mira Hashmi, granddaughter of Alys Faiz, and was moderated by Shiraz Raj .



The segment began with an exclusive video message from Muniza Hashmi, followed by a documentary exploring the life and contributions of Alys Faiz.

Noor Zaheer recalled how her mother, Razia Sajjad Zaheer, organised activities of the Indian People's Theatre while her husband, Sajjad Zaheer, was imprisoned in Pakistan. She also spoke of her mother's work as a translator and her deep commitment to intellectual honesty. Above all, she remembered Razia as a woman who believed profoundly in socialist ideas and the dignity and self-respect of every woman.

One of her most powerful lessons, she recalled, was the importance of disagreeing with politeness a principle that remains strikingly relevant in an age of polarisation and intolerance.



Mira Hashmi read passages from Alys Faiz's writings, highlighting how her work captured the social, cultural and political landscape of Pakistan during the 1960s and 1970s. Through their stories, the audience was reminded that behind many of the celebrated political and cultural figures of South Asia stood women whose own courage, creativity and intellectual contributions deserve recognition.

Poetry, Theatre and a Living Legacy

The legendary actor, screenwriter, dramatist, comedian and satirist Sohail Ahmed then paid a heartfelt tribute to Faiz, recalling his own meeting with the great poet. Reflecting on the contemporary crisis of values in Pakistani society, he argued that the country had drifted away from the higher ideals articulated byfigures such as Allama Iqbal and Faiz Ahmed Faiz, as well as by the great mystic poets Bulleh Shah, Shah Hussain and Waris Shah.

He warned that greed and arrogance had deeply poisoned contemporary society, making the recovery of those humanist traditions more urgent than ever.

Sohail Ahmed, in his own inimitable style, captivated the audience with a delightful blend of wit, wisdom and humour, leaving them entertained, thoughtful and uplifted.





Renowned poet Atif Tauqeer captivated the audience with powerful, motivating and ideologically rich poetry.

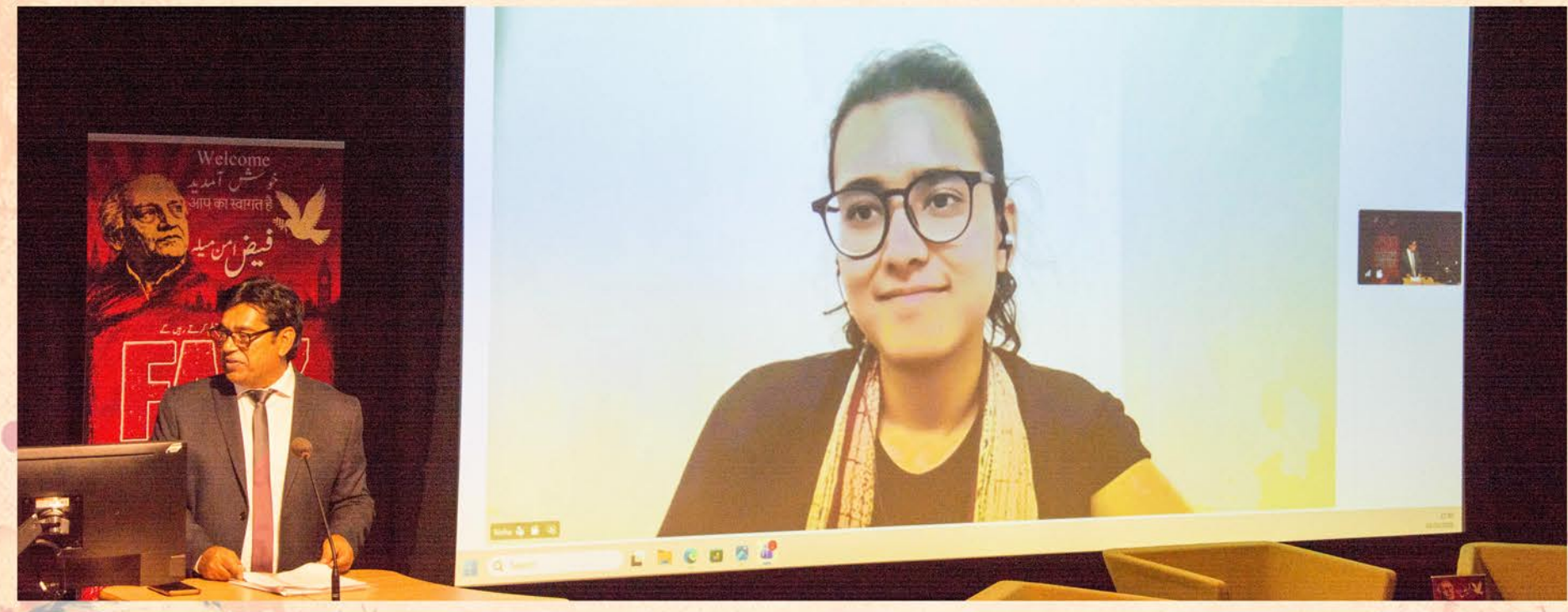
A Dialogue on Authoritarianism, Democracy and People's Resistance

The festival's second major session turned to political dialogue, bringing together three powerful voices from different generations and political traditions: Prominent Indian student leader, Neha Bora Pakistani historian and activist Dr Ammar Ali Jan, and lifelong campaigner for peace and social justice Jeremy Corbyn M.P .

The session was moderated by Asim Ali Shah. Neha Bora, a symbol of courage and resilience, was a special speaker at the Festival - Faiz Am'n Mela. Her presence and inspiring words added meaning and strength to this celebration of peace, poetry, and progressive ideas. Introducing Neha Bora, Shah described her as a voice of courage and dedication challenging systems of racism, patriarchy, fascism and religious extremism. He said she represented the hopes of those struggling for social, political and economic justice and a socialist alternative to system of exploitation.

Release from the Delhi police arrest a short while ago and speaking via livestream from India, Neha Bora, a leading student activist and president of the All India Students Association, spoke about the continuing relevance of Faiz to movements of resistance across India. Shedescribed Faiz as an iconic poet whose words have become a voice for oppressed and resisting communities. His poetry, she said, continues to resonate in the streets, universities and student movements of India.

She also spoke about attacks on women protesters and the intensification of patriarchal violence under the Modi government. In a political climate where disagreement can be branded as anti-national, she stressed the urgent need to reclaim the right to disagree from forces of hatred and authoritarianism. For Neha Bora, that struggle requires both resistance and international solidarity.





Reclaiming History

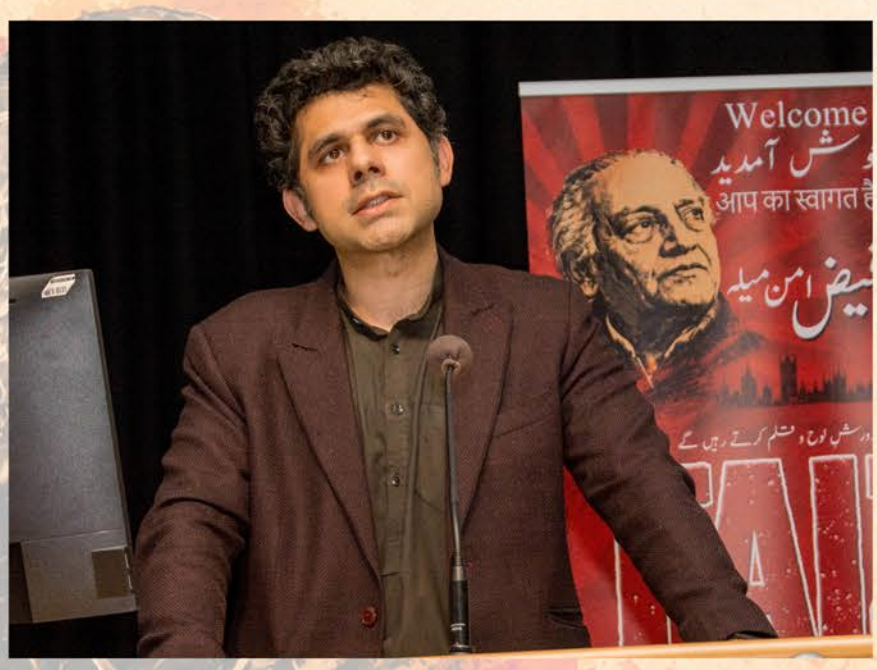
Historian, political observer, social activist and human rights campaigner Dr Ammar Ali Jan praised the Faiz Peace Festival for reconnecting audiences with the political history of Pakistan and South Asia, particularly the history of progressive and left movements.

He argued that disconnecting people from their history contributes to the depoliticisation of society. Reflecting on Pakistan's political trajectory, he criticised the ruling elite's reliance on foreign funding and militarisation, and discussed the consequences of policies pursued during the 1960s and 1970s and their longer-term impact.

He also highlighted the repeated disregard for the will of the people and the repression faced by political activists. Referring to the case of Junaid Hafiz, he drew attention to the plight of a man imprisoned for years under blasphemy allegations and called for greater attention to human rights and justice.

His central message was clear: understanding history is essential if societies are to resist the repetition of their darkest chapters .







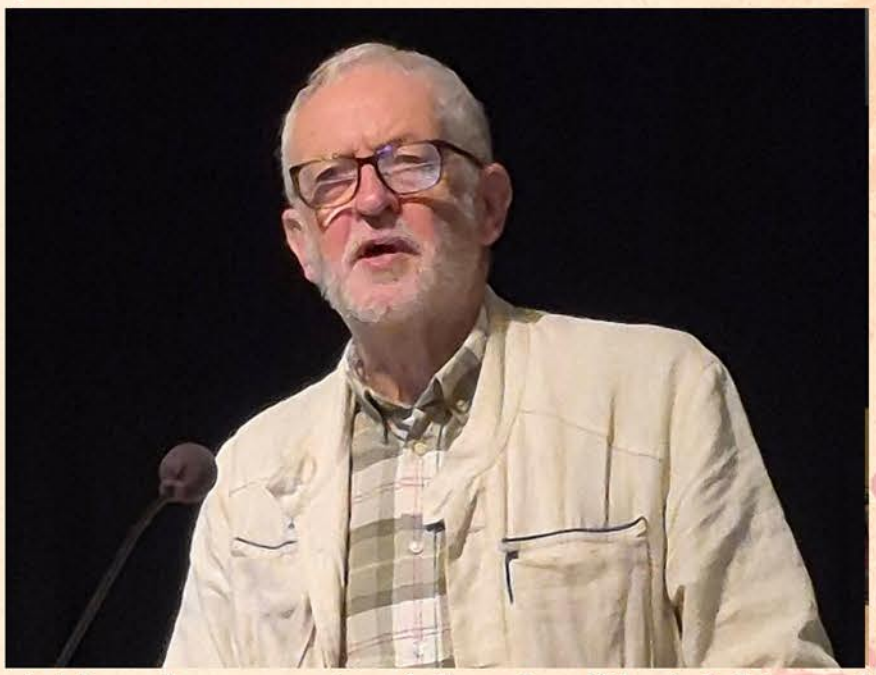
Jeremy Corbyn
“Peace, Justice and Rights Through Arts, Literature and Music”



The arrival of Jeremy Corbyn M.P, a lifelong campaigner for peace, social justice, equality and human rights, was met with a standing ovation from the attendees.

Corbyn began by praising the fundamental idea behind the Faiz Cultural Foundation and the festival’s distinctive effort to connect peace, justice and democratic rights with arts, literature and music.

He spoke passionately about the transformative power of progressive culture, arguing that art, poetry, literature and music can inspire people, bring communities together and motivate them to work for change. He also discussed his newly established Peace and Justice Project, describing it as a space for people to exchange ideas, learn from one another and engage with different social and political causes.





Addressing poverty, civil and political rights and the imbalance of power in Pakistan and internationally, Corbyn called for the release of political prisoners. He also spoke about the continuing crises in Kashmir and Gaza, stressing the need to connect humanist forces across borders.

The way forward, he argued, lies in building solidarity among people and movements working for peace, justice and equality in the face of a global system marked by profound inequalities of power.

When Faiz's Poetry Became Music

The last session of the festival featured live music performed by artists of note.
Internationally acclaimed performers Baluch Twins (Adil and Asim Baluch) and ghazal maestro Wahdat Rameez enthralled the audience with musical renditions of Faiz's poetry as well as Sufi & Folk music.

The performances transformed the hall into a space where poetry and melody came together—reminding everyone that Faiz's words were never confined to the printed page. They continue to live through voices, music, movements and generations.











When Faiz's Poetry Became Music












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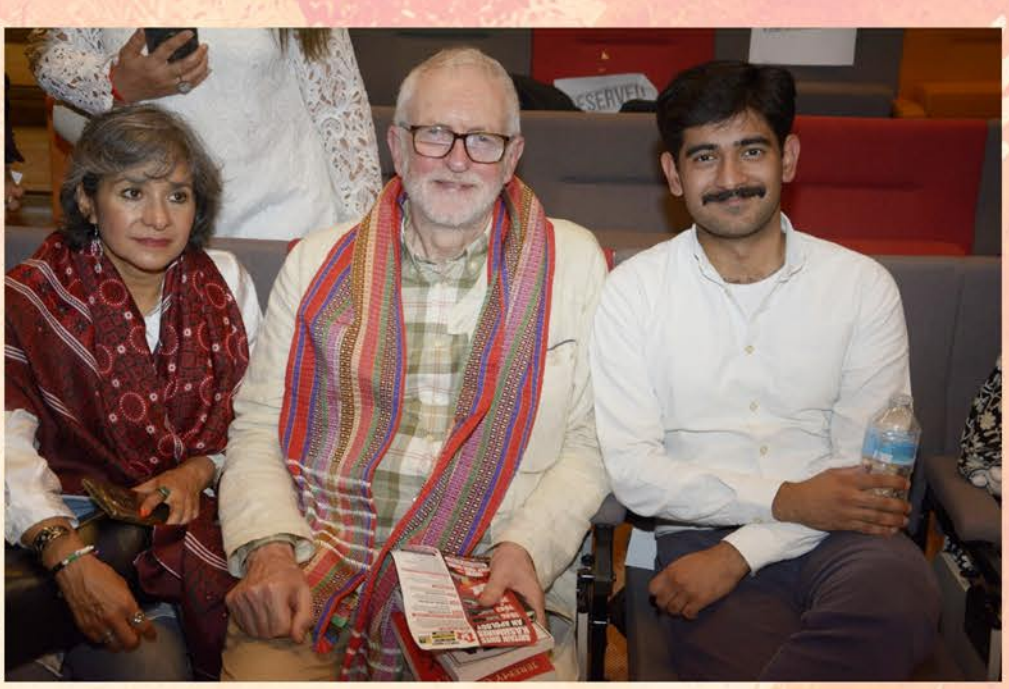















فیض





Welcome
خوش آمدید


SOAS Gallery Lecture Theatre
RIGHT OF ADMISSION RESERVED
PLEAS
NO FOOD O
DRINK
ALLOWED














Welcome




Independence
Democracy
Socialism


Welcome
خوش آمدید
आप का स्वागत है
فیض امن میلہ
FAIZ
PEACE
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FAIZ
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RESERVED
FOR
GUESTS




















Welcome

We would like to extend our gratitude to our partners supporters and volunteers who helped make the 13th Faiz Peace Festival in London, one of the finest gatherings of Progressive people in London's culturalhistory. We look forward to you being part of this tradition for many years and decade s to come.



If you wish to be part of this progressive initiative, please contact us on info@fcfuk.org

www.fcfuk.org