

# a statement

## HALAL

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The Christian Muslim Forum is the national organisation bringing together Christians and Muslims to build better relationships and dialogue with each other, as well as with British society generally. We are therefore concerned about unease, as reported in the media, over the presence of unlabelled 'halal' (i.e. 'Islamically permitted') meat in our supermarkets, and other food outlets. This affects all customers and consumers, those who wish to eat halal meat as well those who not only do not, but also have objections to doing so. There are also concerns about some public authorities which provide only 'halal' products in schools and other institutions, albeit with the best of intentions.

We value attempts in our society to make adequate space for people of different religions, and no religion, and that their values and religious needs are respected. Two values widely shared in British society, openness and non-compulsion, are important to both Christianity and Islam. However, the commercial sector and some public authorities do not always take into account the importance of these values in relation to religious and other sensitivities. There are also concerns about animal welfare in relation to slaughter, as religious people we believe that there should be good treatment of animals up to and at the point of slaughter. We therefore offer the following reflections and recommendations to society in general, and specifically to food outlets, catering organisations and public authorities:

### Non-compulsion:

1. We believe that non-Muslims should not feel, or be, compelled to purchase or consume halal food; nor should Muslims feel, or be, compelled to purchase or consume non-halal food.
2. We ask all non-Muslims to support the right of UK Muslims to obtain halal food (according to their religious traditions), and mainstream provision of halal products, reflecting the multi-religious nature of British society and Muslims as an integral part of that society.

3. We urge all food outlets, catering organisations and public authorities to label halal food properly, for the benefit of both non-Muslim and Muslim consumers, while acknowledging that such halal labelling should be seen as part of a package of wider and more accurate labelling of food products. Otherwise there is a danger that labelling may degenerate into religious discrimination.
4. We believe that appropriately labelled and segregated halal food should be available alongside non-halal food in sufficient retail outlets, eating places and public institutions in any given area.

### Openness:

5. We appreciate the best efforts of UK retailers to provide a wide range of appropriate consumer information on their products, and their responsiveness to consumers.
6. We welcome and support the ongoing efforts of the Muslim community to make halal food widely available through the strengthening of recognised halal food agencies, which will provide self-regulation of consistent, reliable and widespread halal labelling.
7. We encourage halal food agencies to work with the food industry to establish the status of unlabelled meat.
8. We recognise that there are animal welfare concerns (shared by many people of different backgrounds, faiths and ethnicities) relating to methods of animal slaughter, while asking that such concerns be balanced by understanding of issues of religious conscience.

*Signed by the Presidents of the Christian Muslim Forum:  
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Dr Musharraf Hussain OBE, Revd Dr Nicholas Wood,  
Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra, Rt Revd Paul Hendricks,  
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