



President of Turkey Hosts Reception for the Centre



On Thursday 2 May the Centre was honoured at a special dinner, hosted at the Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul, by His Excellency Mr Abdullah Gül, President of the Republic of Turkey. Set directly on the Bosphorus, at the historic gateway between Western Europe and the Islamic world, the palace provided an ideal setting for the event. The guests included many of President Gül's fellow Trustees, as well as senior government officials, businessmen and scholars. They were addressed by President Gül and by the Director of the Centre.

President Gül emphasised his personal commitment to the Centre's work, which he considered of great importance in spreading a true picture of Islamic culture and civilisation to new generations in both East and West. The Director announced in cooperation with the British

Ambassador in Turkey, Sir David Reddaway, and with the support of the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office, the establishment of the Abdullah Gül Chevening Award which will enable a Turkish scholar to spend up to a year at Oxford as a Visiting Fellow at the Centre.

In his speech, the President said:

"I am glad to host many friends from different corners of the world who have come to celebrate the achievements of the Centre in this beautiful city at this historic Ottoman palace. I would like in particular to thank those of my Fellow Trustees who are with us here tonight. I am proud to be counted alongside them as a keen supporter of the Centre's work. I would also like to express my heartfelt thanks to all prominent businessmen from abroad and Turkey that are present here despite their very busy schedules. I hope you have already had or will have time to enjoy the beauties of Istanbul in its most charming season.

"By supporting the Centre we can manifest our shared values of tolerance, harmony and mutual understanding"

Distinguished Guests, I should start by thanking the Centre, its Trustees and the British Government for so generously agreeing to name an Award after me. I am most honoured.

The Centre is truly a unique and remarkable institution. It operates at the very interface of cultures and civilisations.



President Gül with the Centre's trustees



President Gül speaking at Dolmabahçe Palace

It is an academic centre of excellence for the study of Islamic culture and civilisation at the heart of Western learning, in Oxford.

In doing so, it relies entirely on the goodwill and generosity of its friends around the world. From small beginnings I have watched it grow to an academic institution of global significance.

The Centre's home is in Oxford, but its influence and partnerships spread widely across the Islamic world and beyond. It stands for good scholarship, for partnership and for dialogue. It is uniquely placed to champion the values of harmony and mutual understanding that are so deeply needed in our modern world. It plays an invaluable role in encouraging a sound understanding, in both East and West, of the true values of Islam.

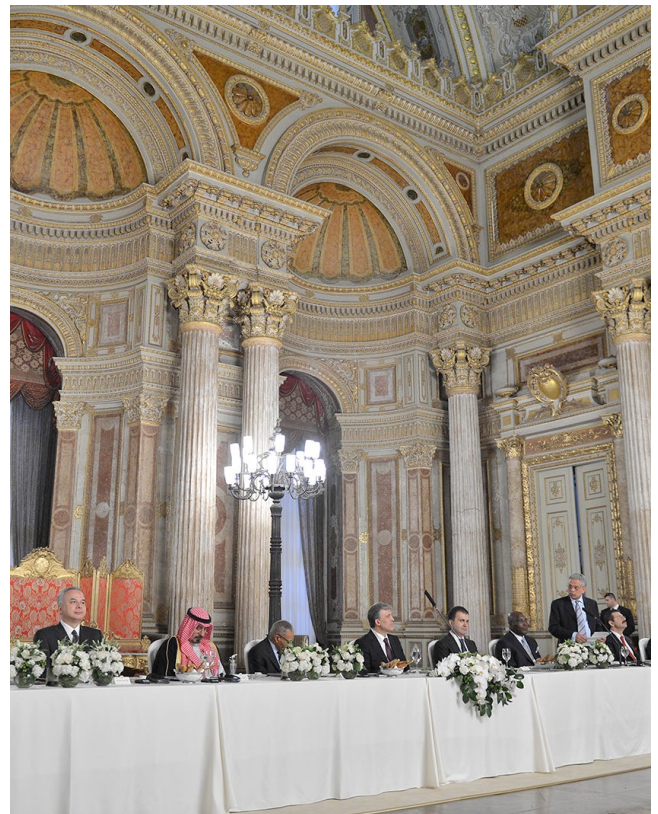
Distinguished Guests, the Centre has achieved many "firsts". It is the first Islamic academic institution in the 800 year old history of Oxford. It is the first to be granted the Royal Charter by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second. Its academic approach is both innovative and inclusive. It is truly an institution for our time, poised to play an even more influential and beneficial role in the years ahead. But with these successes have come increased responsibilities of many kinds. Without additional resources it will be unable to fulfil its true potential. Now is the time for existing friends to renew their engagement in a shared and noble, scholarly cause. It is the time also for new supporters to come forward and play their part. I do hope you will do so tonight. Some of my guests here this evening have already joined in supporting the Centre's work. To you I would like to address a word of warm appreciation for your contributions – but also the hope that you could redouble your efforts, in particular

to help the Centre complete the new building. It has been under construction for too long. We are all impatient for a glorious opening ceremony. To those who are newly introduced to the Centre's work, I would urge you to give the most generous support that you are able to offer.

“The Centre is truly a unique and remarkable institution...its academic approach is both innovative and inclusive. It is truly an institution for our time, poised to play an even more influential and beneficial role in the years ahead.”

By supporting the Centre we can manifest our shared values of tolerance, harmony and mutual understanding. It means doing something constructive and practical to promote them now and for many generations to come. This is, I believe, a noble cause with which we should all be proud to be associated.

Once again, thank you for joining us tonight at this historic setting in Istanbul. I do hope I can count on your support...”



The Director of the Centre, Dr Farhan Nizami, addressing guests