

National

Muslim Live8 brings home Darfur crisis

More than 10,000 at Wembley charity concert

Islamic pop stars raise money for stricken region

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Chaotic scenes at Wembley Arena are nothing new for concertgoers. There is the frantic rush to get to the front of stage area, and queues build up for food and drinks. Last night was different. The queues were for the makeshift mosque in the arena's 200-seat restaurant and the rush was for prayer spaces before the show began as more than 10,000 Muslims attended a charity concert for Darfur.

Billed as the Muslim Live8, the sell-out event was the first of its kind at the venue and drew artists and fans from around the world. To respect Islamic dietary requirements, Wembley became dry and halal for the night.

Once the concert began, the audience quickly abandoned the decorum and restraint normally associated with Muslim events.

Acts such as Outlandish and Sound Of Reason drew claps and cheers from the crowd. Glowsticks were waved. The biggest applause was reserved for the star attraction, Sami Yusuf, who has sold more than 3m albums, but is virtually unknown outside Muslim communities. As he took to the stage, the crowd erupted in screams and wolf-whistles and chanting.

Sami, who was born in Iran, but grew up in Britain and is one of the Muslim pop scene's biggest stars, has spoken about



The biggest applause at the concert were for Sami Yusuf, who has sold more than 3m albums Photograph: Felix Clay

how uncomfortable he feels with hero worship and adulation, describing it as un-Islamic. But this was no deterrent to his fans; only a few in the audience refused to clap or cheer.

The crowd were less enthusiastic about a video message from Gordon Brown who praised the audience's compassion and commitment to the people of Darfur. He said: "The fact that so many of you are here shows how deeply people from

communities from all over Britain care. An injustice anywhere is an attack on injustice everywhere and we will continue working together with all of you to bring this suffering to an end." He was booed and jeered throughout. There was more warmth for David Cameron who recorded a video while visiting the region. At least £40,000 was raised in five minutes, with three £10,000 donations.

Kareem Salama, America's only Muslim

country singer, said: "When I was a kid I came to London and I asked my mother if I could go see a show at Wembley, she said 'maybe you'll get to play there one day'.

"Sami Yusuf is a real inspiration. He's like George Clooney, saying that if the cameras are going to follow him he's going to go somewhere it makes a difference. That's why Sami went to Darfur, so people could know the terrible things that are happening there. It's a great initiative."