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LOCAL NEWS

Ismail Joosub (25): A smalltown boy helping to shape a better future for SA

Joosub of Ermelo is one of 32 influential people picked by President Cyril Ramaphosa to help make a difference. Sometimes, he asks himself: 'Goodness what am I doing here?', Azra Hoosen reports.

The young constitutional lawyer from Ermelo, Mpumalanga, was recently handpicked by President Cyril Ramaphosa to serve on the National Dialogue Eminent Persons Group – a team of 32 influential South Africans working to develop a long-term plan for the country.

Among some big names in the group are SA Rugby team captain, Siya Kolisi, Judge Edwin Cameron and humanitarian Dr Imtiaz Sooliman. But Joosub stands out, not just for being the youngest, but for the clarity and conviction he brings to the table.

Joosub told *Al-Qalam* about a moment that left a lasting impression during

the group's inauguration. "President Ramaphosa straightened my tie in a recent meeting. A small gesture that felt huge," he said.

Despite sitting in high-stakes meetings filled with national icons, Joosub remains grounded. "I sometimes ask myself, 'Goodness, what am I doing here?' But I stay grounded by holding close the roots that shaped me and the purpose that drives me," he said.

Joosub's confidence stems from his upbringing and deep grounding in constitutional values. "I grew up in a small town, in a Muslim household where I learned that fairness and justice start at home. My father and mother instilled in me the values of honesty, compassion and standing up for what's right," he said.

Joosub's love for justice was shaped early. Even as a young boy flipping through the Constitution, he did not see a dull book, he saw a promise that every person

deserves dignity and equality. "My heroes, like President FW de Klerk and my late relative Chief Justice Ismail Mahomed, left legacies rooted in principle, not position," he said.

Doting on his father's advice, Joosub said he wants his name to stand for integrity, fairness and service – values that now fuel his work as Manager of Constitutional Advancement at the FW de Klerk Foundation and in his role as Co-Chair of Public Mobilisation for the National Dialogue, a massive civic process that he believes could redefine South Africa's path. "I hope to inspire others to lead with their values and make a real difference. That's the legacy I want to leave," he added.

As a young Muslim in a high-profile role, Joosub said his Islamic faith was central to how he approached justice and leadership. "My faith also emphasises shura, or consultation, which means leaders should listen and include others in

decision-making. That principle is at the heart of the National Dialogue," he said.

Joosub noted that the National Dialogue is not just another talk shop for politicians. "It's a conversation by the people, for the people. We're aiming to hear voices from all 23,000 wards of the country. It's a bottom-up approach like we've never seen," he said.

He hopes the plan sparks real change in practical terms: "Quality education. Jobs for our youth. Safe, thriving communities. If we do this right, the next generation will inherit a country on the rise."

His passion for the constitution comes from seeing how it empowers ordinary people. "I come from a small town and a minority community, so I know what it's like to feel your voice is small. The Constitution says: 'Yes, you matter. You have the same rights as everyone else,'" he explained. To young Muslims who may



feel politics or public life are not for them, Joosub has a clear message: "You absolutely belong in public life and your country needs you."

Politics can be messy, but that's exactly why principled people must step in." His advice is to simply start where you are. "Join a student council, a community

board, or speak up about an issue you care about. Bring your values with you – honesty, justice, compassion. These aren't just Islamic values; they're assets in any field. Staying true to my faith has earned me respect from people of all backgrounds. Don't be afraid to dream big," he said.

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Another Muslim leader may quit interfaith council over Gaza genocide

Islamic scholar Shaikh Rafeek Hassen says he would quit the KZN Inter-religious Council (IRC) unless it condemns the Gaza genocide. Last week, Dr A.V. Mahomed, head of the Juma Masjid Trust, resigned for the same reason, *Ismail Suder reports.*

In a dramatic turn, another prominent Muslim personality, Shaikh Rafeek Hassen has warned that he was ready to quit the KZN Inter-religious Council should it not publicly condemn the genocide in Gaza.

Last week Dr A.V. Mahomed, the head of the Juma Masjid Trust, resigned from the Durban-based interfaith group because he claimed its executives continue to “remain silent” against Israeli genocide that has decimated close to 60 000 Palestinians, mainly women and children.

In an exclusive interview with *Al-Qalam*, Shaikh Hassen said he was co-opted to join the KZN Interfaith Council about three weeks ago. He joined because he believed his expertise in the

field of interfaith dialogue would make a difference in local communities.

However, a few days after its first meeting on July 6, Shaikh Hassen said he was taken by surprise by Mahomed’s announcement that he was resigning from the KZN Inter-religious Council because, he claimed, the interfaith body plainly refuses to condemn the genocide in Gaza.

In a searing letter to the Council, Mahomed said he and the Juma Masjid, as an entity, was resigning from the inter-faith body because of the inability of the executive members to publicly condemn the genocide and mass starvation of 2.2million people in Gaza.

Mohammed told *Al-Qalam* that despite engagements with the council to condemn the mass killings of some 60 000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, the Council remains unmoved. Mahomed served for four years as a senior member of the KZN Inter-Religious Council, a body representing

the Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Bahai, Hindu and other faiths.

Explaining his decision to resign, Mahomed said: “I simply could not accept the non-committal stance adopted by the Council members in the face of an ongoing genocide. As a humanitarian, my conscience would not allow me to stay on and I decided ‘enough was enough’

“As head of the largest mosque in the southern hemisphere, how would I have explained my participation in the Council which was unwilling to move on its rigid position,” he asked.

In a statement, Mahomed said: “It is shameful that an institution claiming to represent religious leadership can remain silent in the face of such blatant inhumanity. How can we purport to uphold divine values while ignoring the suffering of our fellow human beings? This is not just a failure of leadership but a betrayal of faith itself.” According to the minutes of the meeting of July 6, the Council said

it acknowledges Mohamed’s pain pertaining to the Gaza “tragedy”. However, it pointed out that “singling one tragedy instead of acknowledging and calling for just peace in all areas of conflict is the approach that doesn’t isolate anyone.”

Hailey Fudu, the general secretary of the KZN Inter-religious Council said the Council regrets the resignation of Mahomed.

She added: “We affirm our collective concern for the global humanitarian crisis, including the ongoing conflict in Gaza, and advocate for peace, the protection of human life, release of those held in captivity and the urgent delivery of humanitarian aid. Though our approaches may differ, our shared values compel us to stand for justice, compassion, and unity”. Meanwhile Shaikh Hassen said he was hoping the KZN Inter-religious Council would make a public statement to condemn Israel’s genocide in Gaza. If not, he would have no option but to also resign from the KZN Inter-religious Council.



“I was co-opted onto the KZN IRC a week before the first meeting on 26 June 2025. No issue about the genocide in Gaza was discussed or raised at this meeting. A few days later, I learnt that A.V. Mohammed had sent his letter of resignation. Everyone, including myself, was taken aback. In discussion with the Exco of KZN IRC I made it clear that should the IRC go contrary to my personal position of condemning Israel for the genocide, starvation in Gaza and Occupation of Palestine, I will have no option but to quit KZN IRC. This is because, as religious people, we value all human life as sacred, and what Israel is

doing is going against all norms of humanity – and as people of God – we have to condemn it. “I have been working in the inter-faith arena for over three decades. Post democracy I formed my institute iiFRi – Islamic Interfaith Research Institute – to work with other faiths to provide the moral balance to the many programmes leading to the decline of morality in our new democracy. There is a lot of goodwill among the various faiths in our country and thus its only by working together with all the other faith-based organisations that we can promote the moral compass to prevent our country from spiritual and moral decay.”

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OPINION

Seizing land, erasing Kashmiri identity: The other face of Youm-e-Istehsalin Gaza

Kashmiris are not just losing property, they are being written out of their own story, writes Mian Zikria

Every year on August 5, Youm-e-Istehsal is observed to mark the beginning of a systematic campaign to strip Jammu and Kashmir of its land, rights, and identity following the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019.

The revocation of Kashmir's limited autonomy by the Indian government was not merely a constitutional act; it was the prelude to a deeper colonial project, one that aims to seize land, alter demography and erase the cultural and religious identity of the region's Muslim-majority population. The stories of farmers in Dirhama, Shopian, and Kadder stand as living proof of this quiet war on land and livelihood.

Take the case of Ghulam Mohammad Bhat, a 70-year-old farmer in Bijbehara, who now watches helplessly

as his two-acre apple and rice farm, his family's only source of income, is earmarked for a new railway line to Pahalgam. This massive project, never demanded by locals, is one of many infrastructure schemes forced upon Kashmiris without consent or consultation. As Bhat says, "We will not allow them to construct this railway line." But his defiance meets a deaf ear in New Delhi, where policies are driven by political ambition, not people's needs.

In Shopian, another planned railway will slice through flourishing orchards of apples, pears, and almonds, destroying decades of generational farming. The Modi government defends these projects as "development," yet the voices of thousands of Kashmiris whose lands are being confiscated say otherwise.

What use is development that leaves people destitute and their land barren? Between 2021 and 2024 alone, over 576 hectares of forest

land were diverted for commercial and infrastructural purposes, according to the Ministry of Environment.

These seizures are part of a larger pattern. Since August 5, 2019, the Indian state has used laws like the Jammu and Kashmir Development Act and the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) to expropriate land under the pretext of national interest or security. But in practice, this land grab has disproportionately targeted Muslim-majority areas, feeding a growing sense of siege and disenfranchisement.

The railways and highways are not just physical structures; they are symbolic tools of control. They connect Kashmir to the Indian mainland, not to empower Kashmiris but to facilitate troop movements, surveillance, and demographic changes.

When Aga Ruhullah Mehdi, a sitting MP from Srinagar, criticized these projects



as "cultural invasions," he was denounced by ruling party officials. But Mehdi was right, these so-called "developmental works" are designed to change the land, the people, and ultimately, the identity of Kashmir. This is the heart of Youm-e-Istehsal, the systematic exploitation of Kashmiri land, labour, and legacy. It is not

just about revoked autonomy; it is about enforced silence, appropriated territory, and an existential threat to a people's future.

As orchards are bulldozed, homes raided, and farmland turned to concrete, Kashmiris are not just losing property, they are being written out of their own story. As

we mark Youm-e-Istehsal, the world must recognize that the abrogation of Article 370 was not an end, but the beginning of a brutal chapter of land seizure and identity erasure, one that Kashmiris continue to resist with dignity and courage. Kashmir's exploitation is not only political, it is personal, intimate and every day.

THE DAY TO REMIND THE WORLD OF HUMAN RIGHT VIOLATIONS IN KASHMIR

Youm-e-Istehsal "Kashmir Exploitation Day"

5 August 2025

"ALL OF US REMAIN CONCERNED THAT THE ISSUE OF JAMMU & KASHMIR SHOULD BE SOLVED THROUGH PEACFULL NEGOTIATIONS AND SHOULD BE WILLING TO LEND ALL THE STRENGTH WE HAVE TO THE RESOLUTION OF THIS MATTER"

Muhammad Arfan Dhudi
Well-Known Businessman & Community Leader

Youm-e-Istehsal, Observed annually on 5th August, as an international day of protest against the Indian government's actions following the revocation of Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian Constitution. This action stripped Jammu and Kashmir of its special autonomous status. Human rights activists view this revocation as a strategic maneuver to alter the demographic and political structure of Indian Illegal Occupied Jammu & Kashmir, and have consistently advocated for international scrutiny and a plebiscite, as mandated by UN resolutions. We express solidarity with the people of Kashmir.

STAND WITH JUSTICE, STAND WITH KASHMIR

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Stand With Justice Stand With Kashmir and Palestine

5 August 2025

Youm-e-Istehsal "Day of Exploitation"

"ALL OF US REMAIN CONCERNED THAT THE ISSUE OF JAMMU & KASHMIR SHOULD BE SOLVED THROUGH PEACFULL NEGOTIATIONS AND SHOULD BE WILLING TO LEND ALL THE STRENGTH WE HAVE TO THE RESOLUTION OF THIS MATTER"

Qaiser Mehmood Bhatti
Renowned Businessman & Community Leader

On 5 August 2019 The revocation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution by the Indian government which had previously granted special status to the state of Jammu and Kashmir, thereby ending its autonomy, serves as a reminder of India's actions and a rejection of the alteration in the region's status. Pakistan and various Kashmiri groups express their support for the Kashmiri people and their right to self-determination. Furthermore, the observance also brings attention to concerns regarding human rights violations within the region.

RAISE YOUR VOICES FOR KASHMIR AND PALESTINE

Fatima Hendricks book ‘Forgive Me: 70 Ways to Ask’ moves audience

By Azra Hoosen

Distinguished South African Islamic scholar, academic and author Dr Fatima Hendricks launched her spiritually uplifting book *Forgive Me: 70 Ways to Ask* at the Suleman Lockhat Auditorium in Overport, Durban, last weekend.

Dr Hendricks moved the audience with one fundamental question: Where is Allah in my life?

The evening began with the sweet recitation of Qur’an from the author’s young son and moved into a layered program of spiritual remembrance and reflection. Brother Abdul Malek’s melodious praises of Allah in Arabic, Zulu and Chichewa echoed through the auditorium.

The launch of *Please Forgive Me* became a sacred gathering – one-part literary celebration and one-part spiritual awakening. A heartfelt introduction by Hendricks’ daughter, Iman

Sulaiman, and chair for the evening, Maryam Patel, unveiled Hendricks as not just an author, but as a woman of resilience, reflection and revolutionary love.

Originally from South Africa, Dr Hendricks’s academic and spiritual journey spans continents and callings: She is a scholar-practitioner with over 25 years of experience working in health, leadership and education in SA, Saudi Arabia & the USA. With a doctorate in Occupational Therapy and multiple postgraduate qualifications in Islamic Studies, Information Management, International Education and Business, she is now preparing her PhD in Religious Studies.

“I have spent the last 3 decades investing in my own student scholarship; honing my thinking and writing skills, engagement and curiosity around people and their lives. Islamically my journey has been filled with curiosity from a young age,” she said. More than her credentials, Hendricks is also a survivor of Guillain-Barré

Syndrome and cancer – experiences that deeply inform her writing and worldview. She spent 30 days on life support and over a year in recovery while living in Saudi Arabia.

“I couldn’t move. I was completely paralysed. I spent four months in hospital and 18 months in rehabilitation. I mention this because when something drastic happens, we truly return to seeking nearness to Allah, and with a yearning to be close to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW),” she said.

During her illness, Hendricks returned to South Africa. Reflecting on that time, she said: “We often carry delusions of grandeur, but when something significant happens, it strips us down and all that’s left is us sitting with Allah. The more I asked, ‘Where is Allah in my life?’ the more I realised how absent He was. I called out to Allah in the hospital for help to turn my life around. That illness was my wake-up call,” she added. According to Maryam Patel,

chairperson of the evening: “Fatima draws on spiritual practices for health and well-being and shares her journey with many others, from whom she continues to learn.”

Written over four years and seeded during the isolating silence of COVID lockdowns, *Please Forgive Me* is described by the author as “intimate”. It is a series of whispered conversations with Allah, drawing from the teachings of her mentors and the wounds of her own life.

Hendricks reminds readers that forgiveness is never far: “Just one breath, one conversation with Allah away.”

She emphasised a strong theme in the book – Love. “Not the commercialised, sentimental kind, but love as a verb. Love as obedience. Love as remembrance. Love that is revolutionary,” she said.

According to Patel, what makes Hendricks stand out is her unique voice. “Where many writers may focus



solely on intellectual analysis or personal narratives, she grounds her work in classical Islamic thought, while ensuring that it remains deeply personal and spiritually resonant. Her writing doesn’t just aim to inform; it reaches the heart,” she said.

Patel believes this kind of storytelling is essential. “In today’s fast-paced world filled with noise and constant distraction, many of us find ourselves searching for something deeper, something that brings us back to who we truly are. These

heart-centered stories nourish the soul, offering peace, introspection and a renewed sense of direction,” she added.

All proceeds from the book sales went toward humanitarian aid for Palestine, a powerful reminder that faith, art and activism can be woven together.

She posed a soul-piercing question to the audience: “Each of us is only given a limited number of breaths. What will we do with the dash between our birth and our death?”

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#Africa4Palestine: ‘Cold blooded killer’ Grayson Beare should not be allowed to escape justice

The human rights organization #Africa4Palestine joins fellow South Africans, the Hos-sen-Preston family, Palestine solidarity activists in Durban and the broader global Palestine human rights advocacy community in utter dismay after learning of the recent presentation by psychiatric evaluators at the Durban Magistrate court that cold blooded killer Mr. Grayson Beare is unfit to stand trial.

In June 2024, Mr. Grayson Beare entered the

home of the Hoosen-Pres-ton family in Durban, wielding a knife, stabbing mother and wife Halima Hoosen-Preston to death and fatally wounding her husband and son with multiple dozen stabs. Subsequently, the murder-er confessed to his crimes and that his motivation was the Preston’s family solidarity with Palestine and disdain for Israel and its killing machine, the Is-ra-eli defence Forces.

In his initial appearances in the Durban Magistrate court, the killer was referred to medical evalua-

tions and a state surgeon found that he was fit and proper to stand trial. The defence later challenged the report, presented an inconsequential medical history and convinced the court to mandate a further psychiatric evaluation of the criminal. On Tuesday the 15th of July, the court heard a report from the Fort Napier Psychiatric Hospital stating that Mr. Beare was unfit to stand trial citing his cognitive inability to judge right from wrong.

We are fiercely opposed to this report and believe

it does not represent the facts in this case. It is our strong conviction that this report ignores Mr Beare’s state of mind when he planned and executed this heinous murder. Accord-ing to him, his irritation with the Hoosen-Prestons’ constant show of solidar-ity with Palestine was motivation, this shows a clear premeditated plot to inflict maximum pain and casualty, an action of a sane man although with an evil mind. We can only imagine the pain and suffering this report has brought to the Hoos-en-Preston family, an in-

sult to their intelligence and ignorance of their reality in those moments that led to the loss of their beloved mother and wife.

The prosecutors in this case are discussing with their superiors on how to proceed given this new in-formation and we are con-fident that similar to how the defence challenged the initial medical report, they will challenge this recent psychiatric report and withstand that Mr. Beare is fit and proper to stand trial for his crimes that he has confessed to. It is in the best interest

of justice to hold him accountable and for the Hoosen-Preston family to find closure.

#Africa4Palestine will work with sister organi-zations in Kwa-Zulu Na-tal and Durban in particu-lar, to give the family the necessary support in these difficult times. We remain confident in our legal justice to deliver justice where there is wrongdo-ing.

**Alie Komape
Communications and
Campaigns Manager
#Africa4Palestine**



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*Ibn Umar (r.a.) narrates the Nabi (SAW) said: “The place of prayer (salah)
in religion is like the place of the head in the body.”
Tabarani*

Parliamentary inquiry needed to solve SAPS crisis



Ramaphosa must think again! We need urgency, transparency, and accountability, not another legal charade, writes Imam Dr, A. Rashied Omar

On Sunday evening 13 July 2025, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the establishment of a judicial commission of inquiry into the appalling allegations of criminal capture and political interference in the South African Police Service (SAPS). While this decision rightly acknowledges

the gravity and seriousness of the crisis, it regrettably misses the mark and squanders what the urgency of the moment demands: transparent, and decisive action.

The current crisis we face is not merely a governance failure it is a catastrophic collapse of public trust in policing and justice. In communities across our country, from Mitchells Plain, Westbury, Gugulethu, and Zwide, people are burying their children, living in fear of gang violence, political assassinations, and the daily erosion of law and order.

The public cannot be asked to endure yet another drawn-out and costly judicial process, especially when recent history, most notably the Zondo Commission, has shown us how such processes can produce exhaustive reports that are shelved, delayed, or selectively ignored, allowing corruption to fester. Justice delayed in these communities is not

just procedural failure, it is a moral betrayal of the most vulnerable in our society.

Judicial Commissions: Prolonged Process, Elusive Justice?

Judicial commissions too often provide the appearance of action, while allowing political actors to sidestep immediate accountability. As the tragic experience of the Zondo Commission showed, forensic brilliance does not automatically translate into political will or policy change. Many of Zondo's recommendations gather dust while corruption festers. The legal powers of a judicial commission are considerable, but its ultimate authority remains tethered to the Executive.

A judicial commission reports to the President, not Parliament, leaving its findings vulnerable to delays, redactions, or outright political suppression. This is particularly dangerous when the

allegations strike at the heart of ministerial misconduct and political interference, areas where Parliament, not the Presidency, has constitutional oversight.

With SAPS, we do not face a technical or legal dilemma, we face a political and governance crisis. The allegations made by Lieutenant-General Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi have exposed gross ministerial interference, the gutting of anti-crime units, and the entrenchment of organized criminal networks within the police hierarchy. These accusations cut to the heart of political ethics and ministerial accountability, matters squarely within the constitutional oversight powers of Parliament.

Parliament inquiry: Urgent, Transparent Accountable

The people of South Africa deserve to see their elected representatives leading the charge. A Parliamentary

Inquiry, driven by the Portfolio Committees on Police and Justice, with multi-party representation and open public hearings, is the proper vehicle to address this crisis. Such an inquiry offers three clear advantages:

- **Speed:** It can be instituted immediately, with live proceedings, compelling real-time testimony from implicated officials.
- **Transparency:** Live public hearings allow victims, whistleblowers, and communities to witness justice in action, restoring a measure of trust in democratic institutions.
- **Cost-efficiency:** In contrast to judicial commissions, parliamentary inquiries utilize existing infrastructure, sparing taxpayers from exorbitant legal fees, that have become the hallmark of recent commissions.

Moreover, Parliament can compel ministers to account under oath, recommend suspensions, initiate legislative

reforms, and refer cases to the prosecuting authorities without undue presidential interference. This is not the time for another bureaucratic commission that delays difficult decisions. It is a time for decisive, democratic oversight, for Parliament to fulfil its constitutional duty to the people, to the law, and to the future of this fractured country.

President Ramaphosa Must Think Again

We appeal to the conscience of the President: revise your approach. Empower Parliament to act boldly and swiftly.

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- 1 tsp sugar
- ¼ tsp salt
- 2 Tbsp oil
- ½ tsp Osman’s Taj Mahal cumin
- ½ cup onions, very finely chopped
- 2 Tbsp coriander leaves or celery, finely chopped (for garnish)
- 1 tsp soya sauce

Method:

- Blend together garlic, chillies, sugar, salt, and vinegar with 2 to 3 tbsp water to a smooth or coarse paste.
- Heat a pan with oil and add cumin seeds.
- When the cumin seeds sizzle, add onions and sauté until golden.
- Regulate the heat to medium. Add the sauce and cook until it thickens and the oil separates.
- Reduce the flame completely and taste the sauce.
- Add paneer and gently mix well to coat the sauce. Sauté for 2 to 3 minutes. Garnish with coriander or celery.
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The AAK and IMASA restore sight to eight patients

By Azra Hoosen

Eight elderly patients between the ages of 50 and 62 were given the gift of sight on Mandela Day, thanks to a collaboration between Ahmed Al-Kadi Private Hospital (AAK) and the Islamic Medical Association of South Africa (IMASA). The surgeries formed part of the Mission Cataract Project, in partnership with IMASA's long-running Gift of Sight initiative.

The procedures were carried out by Resident Ophthalmologist Dr Bashir Laheu, anaesthesiologist Dr MFR Khan from The Sleep Doctors and the dedicated AAK Theatre and Surgical Ward teams.

Dr Laheu told Al-Qalam that performing these surgeries on Mandela Day was deeply symbolic. "Each procedure reminded me that healthcare is a powerful way to serve humanity. It wasn't

just about medical skill; it was about dignity, hope and doing our part to make the world better, just as Mandela urged us to do," he said.

For Dr Laheu, the real impact of the day was visible in the patients' reactions. "There's this moment of hesitation, like they're not quite sure they can trust what they're seeing. Then suddenly, their faces light up, sometimes with tears, sometimes with laughter," he said.

He recalled that one patient looked at his wife and whispered, 'I can see you again.' Another patient stared out the window, watching the trees sway. "For them, it's getting their life back. Witnessing that transformation stays with you forever," said Laheu.

IMASA's Gift of Sight programme has been operating in Durban for several years, offering eye care to patients who cannot afford

private services. According to Yasiera Mahomed-Suliman, the programme's coordinator and chairperson of the IMA-Durban branch, the cataract component was introduced in response to growing challenges. "Our organisation runs three optometry clinics in Durban. While we offer exams, spectacles and treatment, cataracts have remained a major challenge due to long waiting periods at government hospitals, sometimes over two years," she explained.

The partnership with AAK Hospital helped change that. "Patients eligible for the cataract programme are mainly from IMA-Durban's primary clinics' database. These are people who could never afford private eye care. By partnering with AAK, we are able to reduce their waiting time from years to a month or two," added Yasiera.

AAK CEO Ebrahim Asmal told Al-Qalam that the

project aligns with the hospital's vision of delivering private care with a public impact. "We believe in honouring Mandela Day not just through symbolic gestures, but by making a real and meaningful impact. By restoring sight, we restore dignity, independence and opportunity, values that Madiba himself championed," he said.

The programme also reflects AAK's belief that quality healthcare should not be reserved for the few. "Private institutions have both the responsibility and the capacity to create access and equity in our communities," said Asmal.

For many patients, regaining their vision means more than just medical improvement. "Sight restoration brings hope, empowerment and a renewed sense of purpose, enabling them to live fuller, more meaningful lives," said Yasiera. Cataract blindness remains one of the



most common causes of preventable visual impairment in South Africa. Dr Laheu highlighted that the challenges are often systemic, not just financial.

"In rural and disadvantaged communities, access is limited by long waiting lists, low awareness, and a lack of resources, which is why initiatives like this are so important," he said.

Dr Laheu said that it is a privilege to be part of a project with such lasting impact. "You're not just fixing

a lens. You're giving people the chance to live again. I'm deeply grateful to IMASA and AAK for the opportunity to serve," he added.

Asmal confirmed that AAK plans to continue and expand the programme. "Together with IMASA, we're exploring ways to expand both the number of surgeries and the areas we reach. Our goal is to turn this into a long-term programme that helps reduce the cataract backlog and restores hope, one patient at a time," he said.

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Islamic Forum to host US prof on coffee culture, role in colonialism

By Al-Qalam Reporter

If you are interested in coffee culture and “its notorious role in the annals of colonialism, slavery and racial capitalism”, then you wouldn’t want to miss a talk by Professor Flagg Miller of California to be held at the Suleman Lockhat Auditorium at 7.30pm on Friday, August 1. Miller, a professor of Religious Studies at the University of California (Davis) is being hosted by the Mariam Bee Centre at 222 Kenilworth Road, Durban.

Given its domestication in Yemen and centrality to Sufi `Alawiyya rituals across the world, coffee has also long been used as a plant for healing, community building and spiritual insight.

Dr. Miller’s research focuses on ways in which South Africans have used

coffee, stories about coffee and ideas about coffee’s symbolic and ritual associations to stage and help create more just forms of national community.

A relatively minor agricultural export, coffee has had an outsized cultural presence due in the main to centuries of Dutch and British colonial rule and the fact that each of these polities was heavily engaged in the global coffee trade. Using archival research, literary analysis and ethnographic fieldwork, he will discuss how South African religious and political reformers, writers and artists have mobilized coffee rituals and discourse to confront gendered and racialized violence from European colonial powers and their successors.

Miller’s current research focuses on Islamic coffee cultures and empire-building in South Africa, Yemen



and the United States.

His first book, entitled The Moral Resonance of Arab Media: Audiocassette Poetry and Culture in Yemen (2007), was translated into Arabic in 2021 as Al-Sadā al-Akhlāqī li-Wasāil al-

Ilām al-Arabiyyah: Shir Al-Sharīf wa-l-Thaqāfah fi-l-Yaman.)

His second book focused on an archive of over 1,500 audiotapes formerly owned by Osama bin Laden. Entitled The Audacious Ascetic:

Dr FLAGG MILLER
Professor of Religious Studies at the University of California at Davis

Coffee and Colonialism in Southern Africa



FRIDAY 1 AUGUST - 7.30pm
Suleman Lockhat Auditorium
Mariam Bee Sultan Centre
222 Kenilworth Road, Overport, Durban



What the Bin Laden Tapes Reveal about Al-Qa`ida (2015).

Dr. Miller is president of the American Institute for Yemeni Studies and Director of Human Rights at UC Davis. Along with

publications in a variety of journals, Dr. Miller has written the preface to Poems from Guantánamo: The Detainees Speak (University of Iowa Press, 2007), a collection of translated poems written by detainees at Guantánamo Bay.



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Liberation Movements Summit: Ramaphosa blasts Israel for genocide

By Al-Qalam Reporter

During the closing address of the Liberation Movements Summit held in Johannesburg at the weekend, President Cyril Ramaphosa blasted Israel for “crimes against humanity and genocide committed by the apartheid state of Israel against the people of Palestine.”

Presidents of the participating movements delivered closing addresses, reaffirming their commitment to justice, liberation, solidarity within Movements and across the Global South.

Ramaphosa said: “We reaffirm our support for the people of Palestine, Western Sahara, and Cuba. We condemn, in the strongest terms, the crimes against humanity and genocide committed by the apartheid state of Israel against the people of Palestine.” He expressed horror at

the deliberate starvation of Palestinians in Gaza, calling on Israel to allow the immediate flow and distribution of food and aid, and for an end to the bombardment of civilians and destruction of homes, places of worship.

The Palestinian Authority delegation led by Cde Jibril Rajoub, Secretary-General of the Fatah Movement, held a bilateral meeting with President Ramaphosa.

The delegation was accompanied by Ambassador Hanan Jarrar and Counsellor Bassam Elhussiny, while President Ramaphosa was joined by ANC 1st Deputy Secretary-General Cde Nomvula Mokonyane and ANC Treasurer Cde Gwen Ramokgopa.

The Palestinian delegation extended its appreciation to President Ramaphosa for South Africa’s principled and unwavering support for the Palestinian cause. In turn, President Ramaphosa



reaffirmed South Africa’s commitment to stand with the Palestinian people until the realisation of their full rights and the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state. Ra-

maphosa said: “We call on the world to stop the murder of children and babies through starvation.

Our position remains very clear: liberation is indivisi-

ble. We are not free until all are free.”

All presidents in attendance echoed these sentiments, reaffirming the right of the Palestinian people to free-

dom, statehood, and dignity, and condemning the ongoing Israeli genocide against Palestinians. Palestine’s Fatah movement was also hosted by the ANC in Durban.

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Suspect ship in Durban found NOT to be carrying military cargo for Israel

Palestinian activists have been thanked for their quick mobilisation to confront a suspect ship – and also heartened by the urgent action of police to investigate, Ismail Suder reports.

An Indian-owned ship, the MV Ultramarine, suspected of carrying military cargo enroute to Israel was given the all clear by SA police investigators following a huge outcry and mass mobilisation by pro-Palestinian activists.

Lubna Nadvi, a member of the Palestinian Solidarity Alliance (PSA) in Durban said she was heartened by the quick mobilisation of local activists.

“Comrades we can confirm as the Durban mobilising group that the ship was checked by the South African authorities and nothing was found that was on its way to Israel. There was engagement happening at

multiple levels. Thank you to BDS Coalition comrades for having tipped us off and to all Durban citizens for their engagement and participation. We look forward to having everyone remaining committed to ongoing pro Palestine solidarity activism in the city and province”.

Earlier, the international BDS Coalition said it had credible information that the MV Ultramarine was carrying military supplies from India to Israel. It wrote that the vessel was reportedly carrying 15 containers of “dangerous cargo” for Israel’s ongoing genocide against 2.2-million Palestinians in Gaza, it said in a bulletin.

The BDS Coalition tipped off local activist groups of a ship heading to Durban, suspected of carrying 15 containers of military cargo.

It advised local activists and SA authorities to take

“immediate due diligence action, investigate the vessel, and in case the suspicion was confirmed, stop the cargo, withdraw any docking permission and prohibit any servicing.

Within minutes of the alert going out on social media platforms, activists were heading to the Durban harbour to ensure the ship would not secretly leave before its cargo was checked by police and port authorities.

Despite the cold weather, and time ticking closer to midnight, news came in that the MV Ultramarine was anchored off Umdloti and won’t be entering the port that night. It was at that stage that the activists left the harbour, only to track the ship the next day.

Meanwhile, the social media chatter continued into the early morning of Wednesday with urgent calls for the SA police, Government officials, port

security, the EFF and other groups to investigate whether the ship had any military cargo board.

Police and Government authorities heeded the call and gave the all clear following inspection of the MV Ultramarine.

South Africa took apartheid Israel to the ICJ under the Genocide Convention and co-hosts the Hague Group of States, which this month reaffirmed commitment to prevent the provision or transfer of arms, munitions, military fuel, related military equipment, and dual-use items to Israel. Prevent the transit, docking, and servicing of vessels at any port in all cases where there is a clear risk of the vessel being used to carry those items to Israel.

According to maritime law, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea imposes a duty on coastal states to take necessary action within their territorial seas, in-



Imraan Subrathie MP & Abdool Valodia outside the Ultramarine ship on 31 July 2025 to verify that the cargo on board is in order

cluding interrupting or suspending passage of vessels carrying military supplies or cargo assisting Israel’s illegal occupation, apartheid, and genocide.

It said South Africa was

obliged to: Stop or board the vessel; redirect its passage; order it to leave the territorial sea; or employ proportional and legal force. Failure to act may result in accountability under international law.

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Support for Palestine

South Africa is no longer isolated



By Imraan Buccus

Last week the Emergency Conference to Halt Genocide in Gaza was held in Bogotá, Colombia. Convened by The Hague Group, and co-hosted by Colombia and South Africa, the meeting was attended by 32 countries. Although the meeting was widely covered in the international media, it was, bizarrely, largely ignored in the South African media.

The Hague Group was formed in January this year as an alliance of Global South countries working together to uphold international law and challenge impunity, especially in the context of Israel's actions in Gaza. The group rejects selective enforcement of international law and affirms that legal norms must apply equally to all states. It has served as a platform for coordinated legal and diplomatic action aimed at reinforcing rulings by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC). The nine countries that formed the group were Belize, Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Honduras, Malaysia, Namibia, Senegal, and South Africa. Belize later withdrew.

The Bogotá meeting was convened in response to growing frustration with the failure of powerful states of the Global North to enforce existing international legal rulings on Israel's conduct in Gaza. This time 32 countries attended the meeting, including Spain, Ireland and Slovenia from the periphery of the Global North.

The concrete measures announced in Bogotá were far-reaching. Signatory states committed to preventing arms trans-

fers, fuel and dual-use equipment from reaching Israel; banning vessels carrying military material from docking or being serviced in their ports; reviewing public contracts to ensure no state-linked resources are financing occupation; and reaffirming their commitment to universal jurisdiction, enabling legal action for international crimes regardless of where they occur. Crucially, they pledged to uphold ICC and ICJ obligations, including arrest warrants and provisional measures, and to take coordinated diplomatic and legal steps to end the era of impunity.

Twelve countries formally adopted these measures: Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Indonesia, Iraq, Libya, Malaysia, Namibia, Nicaragua, Oman, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and South Africa. An additional eighteen attendees expressed interest but held off formal endorsement pending domestic consultations. A number of other countries that did not have representatives in Bogotá are considering endorsing the measures.

Palestinian organisations — both in the occupied territories and across the diaspora — widely welcomed the outcomes of the Bogotá summit. The declaration was described by a spokesperson for the Palestinian BDS National Committee as a “breakthrough in coordinated Global South action against Israeli impunity.” Across Palestinian civil society, the measures announced were viewed as long overdue and a powerful signal that solidarity is being transformed into concrete, enforceable policy.

UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese, herself sanctioned by the U.S. for pro-Palestinian advocacy, called the summit “the most significant political development in the past 20 months.”

Al Jazeera characterised the Bogotá outcome as “the most ambitious, multilateral plan since the beginning of Israel's war in Gaza 21 months

ago.” Middle East Eye described it as a declaration of “unprecedented measures to halt the Gaza genocide.”

Inevitably the United States responded with hostility. The U.S. State Department spokesperson condemned what it referred to as “efforts by so-called ‘multilateral blocs’ to weaponise international law as a tool to advance radical anti-Western agendas,” and urged countries not to undermine Israel or U.S. allies through coordinated “legal and diplomatic warfare.”

Israel's foreign ministry dismissed the conference as a “show of hostility” and accused participating states of “coordinated lawfare” designed to delegitimise Israel's right to self-defence. Both governments characterised the measures endorsed at the summit — including arms embargoes and support for ICC arrest warrants — as biased and legally unfounded.

The essence of The Hague Group's position is that international law should apply to all without fear or favour. The fact that the US and Israel can condemn this position is a crystal-clear demonstration that they openly seek impunity from international law. For years the most powerful countries in the West told us that they guaranteed a ‘rules-based international order’. It could not be more clear that for the US and Israel, as well as their backers in countries like the UK and Germany, these ‘rules’ were never intended to apply to the dominant powers in the West.

The Bogotá meeting will not stop the genocide. Israel's ongoing war crimes and its genocide continue to enjoy the full support of the US and countries like the UK and Germany. Shamefully Israel continues to buy coal from South Africa via Glencore and Patrice Motsepe. The Bogotá meeting is, though, a huge step forward for Global South-led diplomacy and for building a growing consensus



that international law must apply to all states without exception. If, as expected, many more countries join The Hague Group and sign on to its measures, and if more countries in the Global North break ranks with the US, UK and Germany and ally themselves with the majority of humanity, Israel will start to reach the point at which it can no longer fuel and arm its genocide or assume that its impunity will be permanent.

South Africa's decision to take Israel to the ICJ in late 2023 was warmly welcomed across the bulk of South African society, including by the mass-based organisations of the poor and the working class, including Abahlahli baseMjondolo, which is now unequivocally the leading force on the South African left as it is the only mass-based left organisation to directly stand up to the fascism of Operation Dudula.

However, the decision to take Israel to the ICJ was aggressively condemned by the US and the now rapidly weakening pro-West bloc strung across the media, NGOs and the academy at home. Inevitably various baseless conspiracy theories were floated about South Africa having been paid by Iran to become ‘the legal arm of Hamas’. Naledi Pandor, one of the most principled people in our

politics, was gratuitously slandered.

But while the case against Israel at the ICJ was widely supported at home, the alliance between the pro-West bloc here and US power did pose a real threat to South Africa — a threat that went beyond Trump's attacks on X. The US has massive power and has the capacity to do serious economic damage to South Africa. For this reason, South Africa cannot afford to be isolated on the international stage.

In this context the formation of The Hague Group was a diplomatic masterstroke. South Africa is no longer isolated and if the group can be further strengthened it will be the chief backers of Israel's genocide — the US, the UK and Germany — that are isolated. It is necessary to denounce the ANC government's failings at home — from endemic corruption to service delivery collapse — but that critique should not blind us to South Africa's principled leadership on the global stage. Nor should it obscure the strategy underpinning that leadership: the transition from moral witness at the ICJ to coordinated diplomatic action. South Africa's partnership with the progressive government in Colombia, and its growing alliances across Latin America, the Middle East, Africa and Asia, show that international solidar-

ity can turn principles into power.

The Bogotá summit set a deadline of 20 September for additional states to sign on to the six agreed measures, aligning with the UN General Assembly. South Africa and Namibia have already begun integrating arms embargo protocols into their domestic regulations. Governments are now considering national investigations under universal jurisdiction. States that support ICC arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant are developing legal strategies to enforce them.

Of course, limitations remain. Implementation will require ongoing political will. Smaller economies may face economic retaliation or diplomatic pressure. But even so, the Bogotá summit is a massive step forward in the work of building a principled global alliance in support of the universal applicability of international law. In time the Bogotá summit may be understood to have marked the beginning of a new era in Global South diplomacy.

While we must condemn the ANC's many failures at home, we can be hugely proud of what it is achieving on the global stage.

Dr Buccus is Al Qalam editor and senior research associate at UFS.

More than 100 NGOs warn Israel's forced 'mass starvation' stalks all of Gaza

Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza says 111 people have now died from famine and malnutrition in recent weeks, reports Al Jazeera

More than 100 aid and human rights groups have called on governments to take urgent action as Israel's forced "mass starvation" of Palestinians engulfs Gaza, including by demanding an immediate and permanent ceasefire and the lifting of all restrictions on humanitarian aid.

In a statement signed and released on Wednesday by 109 organisations, including Mercy Corps, the Norwegian Refugee Council and Doctors Without Borders (also known as MSF), the groups warned that deepening starvation of the population was spreading across the besieged enclave.

Tonnes of food, clean water, medical supplies and other items sit untouched just outside Gaza as humanitarian

organisations are blocked from accessing or delivering them by Israel. "As the Israeli government's siege starves the people of Gaza, aid workers are now joining the same food lines, risking being shot just to feed their families. With supplies now totally depleted, humanitarian organisations are witnessing their own colleagues and partners waste away before their eyes," the organisations said.

"The humanitarian system cannot run on false promises ... the Government of Israel's restrictions, delays, and fragmentation under its total siege have created chaos, starvation, and death," the statement added.

Ten new deaths linked to famine and malnutrition have been recorded during the past 24 hours by hospitals in the Gaza Strip, according to the Ministry of Health.

The grim count brings the total number of people starved to death in the territory to 111, the ministry's

statement said. In recent weeks, more than 1,000 desperate people have been killed trying to reach food, mostly in mass shootings by Israeli soldiers posted near GHF distribution centres, according to the United Nations. The notorious group, backed by the United States and Israel, has been fiercely criticised by humanitarian organisations, including the UN, for an alleged lack of neutrality since starting operations in late May.

The NGOs also called for governments to demand that all bureaucratic and administrative restrictions be lifted, all land crossings be opened, access to everyone across Gaza to be ensured and for the rejection of military-controlled distribution and a restoration of a "principled, UN-led humanitarian response".

"States must pursue concrete measures to end the siege, such as halting the transfer of weapons and ammunition." More than two dozen countries called on Monday for an immediate

end to the war, saying suffering in Gaza had "reached new depths".

The EU has also warned Israel of action over the worsening starvation crisis in Gaza, as the US said Trump's envoy, Steve Witkoff, will head to Europe for ceasefire talks and an aid "corridor".

Starvation

Israel, which controls all supplies, food, medicine and fuel entering Gaza, has imposed a punishing blockade for months, only partially easing it for GHF.

The Israeli government denies it is responsible for food shortages, despite evidence to the contrary, claiming that 950 trucks' worth of aid were in Gaza and waiting for international agencies to collect and distribute it.

Hamas has urged "all the free people of the world" to organise demonstrations, sit-ins and "angry marches" on July 25, 26, 27 and "all the coming days, until the



siege is broken and the famine ends" in Gaza.

"People are dying of hunger and malnutrition, and famine is making its deadly presence felt in the faces of children, mothers, and the elderly, amidst a suspicious global silence, and the absence of any action that rises to the scale of the catastrophe," its statement published on Telegram said. Mara Bernasconi, the

regional communications and advocacy manager for Humanity & Inclusion UK, an NGO with teams working in Gaza, told Al Jazeera that Gaza is at the "peak level of starvation".

She said humanitarian workers living in Gaza are not excluded from this suffering and have experienced "death, hunger, displacement, danger" for 21 months of war.



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