

A1 - Qalam

Southern Africa's Muslim Newspaper

Volume 51 | No. 8 | August 2025 | Rabi ul Awwal 1447 A.H.

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LOCAL NEWS

Hand it to AMA for giving Maksud a new robotic arm

By Al-Qalam correspondent

When Maksud Dala (35) of Klerksdorp, Johannesburg, accidentally lost his hand while operating a mince-making machine, he found it extremely difficult to do normal things – like playing cricket or holding up a glass of water.

Now, thanks to the Africa Muslims Agency (AMA), he now has a new robotic limb fitted that allows him to live his life as normally as possible.

“I can hold a glass of water and drink with my right hand again. I can hold a broom, pick up bread – and the best part is I can make salaam with my right hand,” he said joyfully.

Dala, who currently works as a Bolt taxi driver to earn a living, said after he lost his right hand in the accident, he found it difficult

to carry out simple tasks. As a right-handed person, the impact was immediate and difficult. “I couldn’t eat properly with my left hand, couldn’t write, and couldn’t hold things the way I used to – I couldn’t lift boxes or carry things that needed two hands,” he said.

Then one day, a friend forwarded him a post from Africa Muslims Agency about robotic prosthetic limbs that AMA was facilitating to help the war-wounded in Syria and Lebanon. “I called AMA to ask whether I could get one, and they agreed. To be honest, I was like... ‘is this for real’? Am I going to use a hand again?”

Through GRIPP3D, he was fitted with a 3D-printed robotic prosthetic arm. Dala is now learning to eat with a spoon and continues to adjust using his new hand. “Thank you so much, Dr Joseph, for taking care of me, he said.”

Founded in 2010, GRIPP3D began after Dr Vin-

cent Joseph visited refugee camps in Lebanon and partnered with the Palestine Children’s Relief Fund to offer cleft lip and palate surgeries. After meeting Syrian children injured by the war, the need for prosthetic limbs became clear. After a refugee requested a robotic limb, GRIPP3D evolved from offering basic mechanical hands to building robotic arms using motors, sensors, and 3D-printed technology.

AMA’s GRIPP3D has also delivered robotic limbs across various countries, including South Africa, Malawi and Turkey.

The response from his family and friends has been deeply moving. “The day I came back with the hand, my wife and kids were so excited and emotional. They were very happy. My friends too.”

He’s even thinking about returning to a hobby he loves. “I want to try and play cricket again,” he said with



a smile.” When asked what he would say to the people who helped make this possible, his words were simple:

Allah is everywhere, but you can’t see Him. He sends angels – like you guys who helped me get this hand.

JazakAllah so much. May Allah reward you and your team in this world and the hereafter.”

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Hundreds protest in SA: 'Why should our coal resources fuel Gaza genocide?'

In order to embargo shipments of coal to Israel, South Africans must stand up in their millions, say advocacy groups. Ismail Suder, reports.

Hundreds staged a simultaneous protest action yesterday outside the offices of the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC) in Pretoria, Durban and Cape Town demanding our government stop selling coal to Israel that fuels the genocide in Gaza.

The South African BDS Coalition, which organised the protests, said Israel is one of the recipients "of our coal which is perpetuating genocide against the Palestinian people as well as administering an apartheid-style state."

In Durban, *Al-Qalam* witnessed a protest action on the Victoria Embankment where dozens of people waved flags calling for an end to genocide and for South Africa not to be complicit. Many motorists hooted in support. There was

sizeable police presence. An executive of the SA Palestine Movement Saydoon Sayed said a memorandum would be handed over to the management of the DTIC.

Yesh Govender, another executive said: "Our coal is helping to supply half the energy needs of the Israel apartheid regime. As South Africans, it is our duty, regardless of race, religion and language, to stop the supply of South African coal to an apartheid state. We went through apartheid and we cannot let our mineral resources support another apartheid state", he added.

Govender said activists are not in conflict with the SA government, they interact with it.

He said SA was under pressure from the United States and European countries to "stop us from our advocacy." He pointed out that if SA was able to show that it has the support of its citizens, has the backing, then it can impose the coal embargo.

A BDS Coalition spokes-

man said: "As South Africans, how can we look ourselves in the mirror, as a nation, as individuals, knowing that our mineral resources are supporting an apartheid state?"

"We are the world's leading experts on apartheid and we know about the collective trauma we carry as a nation.", he said.

South Africa's biggest trade union, COSATU had joined the ongoing protest action to force South Africa to help end the genocide. South Africa is among the largest coal producers in the world. Glencore, the Swiss mining giant ships South African coal from the Richards Bay Coal Terminal to various Israeli ports. In the first half of this year South Africa has been the largest exporter of coal which goes directly into the Israeli electricity grid. Since mid-March, Israel cut electricity provision to Gaza along with a total blockade on all humanitarian assistance, food, water and medical supplies. "Fuelling the Israeli electricity grid is directly fueling the Israeli war

machine committing genocide, destroying all means of life for the people in Gaza, powering the military destruction of towns and refugee camps in the West Bank and illegal settlements. Fuelling the Israeli electricity grid is directly fueling the Israeli war machine committing genocide, destroying all means of life for the people in Gaza, powering the military destruction of towns and refugee camps in the West Bank and illegal settlements."

"It is beyond urgent" said Roshan Dadoo, energy embargo campaigner. "Now is the time for the South African government to heed the Palestinian people's call for action. We called on the world for boycotts, divestment and sanctions against apartheid South Africa.

People-power pressured governments to take action that helped us bring down the apartheid regime. How can we ignore the same call on us from the Palestinian people as Israel openly declares its intent to commit genocide and ethnically



cleanse the entire population?"

Last year Colombia declared an embargo on coal sales to Israel. In July this year Colombian President Gustavo Petro instituted additional measures to ensure that the embargo is not breached by ordering the Colombian navy to intercept any ship carrying coal heading towards Israel. "We call

on Parks Tau, Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition to show leadership and commit to upholding South Africa's international legal obligations – DTIC must lead in implementing a coal embargo and stop our complicity in feeding the Israeli electricity grid that fuels the genocide, illegal occupation and Apartheid Israel's military industrial complex, said Dadoo.



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LOCAL NEWS

‘So...what’s your comment?’ Muslim school train journalists as young as 10

Grade 6 Pupils of the Orient Islamic School in Durban have embraced an innovative project called IP News Desk that gives kids a taste in broadcast journalism, writes Azra Hoosen.

If a tween happens to thrust a microphone in your face for a “comment”, don’t be surprised – he/she could be a new breed of broadcast journalist currently being trained at the Orient Islamic School in Durban.

Children as young as 11 and 13 are stepping into the role of anchors, reporters and producers, learning lessons that go far beyond the classroom.

Fathima Rajub, OIS Educator and producer of the IP News Desk, told *Al-Qalam* that a few years ago, they wanted an innovative and creative way to convey the news. “Newsletters are usually the route to go, but our school already had a fortnightly newsletter. Instead of adding more reading, I thought, what if we produced a news broadcast and nurtured our learners as anchors? That’s how the idea of the IP News Desk was born,” she said.

The broadcasts feature updates on school activities, curriculum reminders, learner achievements and even study tips and Naseeha. They are produced with the same rigour one might expect of a professional newsroom. Scripts are drafted, checked by language departments, rehearsed by anchors and then edited together by a technical team. The final cut is shared with parents and on social media.

For Rajub, the value lies not in polished delivery but in the growth of the children. “It’s not about perfection. It’s about building confidence. We sometimes

add bloopers at the end of a broadcast, which everyone loves. It reminds us that these are just 10 – to 12-year-olds trying their hand at something so different. It’s seldom done in one take, but that’s part of the learning,” she said.

The commitment required from learners is no small matter. “There are no marks involved. This is purely voluntary. The kids sacrifice their breaks for script read-throughs. That’s where their commitment comes in. We’ve seen children who barely spoke at first grow in confidence and articulate themselves better. Overall, it’s been very positive,” Rajub explained.

Learners themselves are discovering the impact of their voices. Fareeha Khan, 12, described how the news desk has given them a sense of purpose: “This news platform has had a really positive impact.

It keeps students and parents informed about important events, achievements, and issues happening in and around the school. It also gives learners a voice. We get to share our opinions and stories.” For others, it has been an opportunity to sharpen their skills. Asma Chohan, 11, told *Al-Qalam* that she takes the role seriously: “As soon as my teacher gives me the script, I practice it, I revise it and I do it with someone. I make sure I am confident, loud, and clear so everyone can hear me and I memorise my parts properly.”

Confidence, for many, has been the biggest gain. 13-year-old top sports achiever, Akram Mseleku, whose presenting skills were discovered after featuring as a guest, described the excitement of seeing himself on screen. “I feel like a celebrity every time I watch



myself on the IP news desk. My friends and family are overwhelmed every time they watch me,” he said.

The skills stretch beyond performance. Organisation, teamwork and discipline are part of the package. “To stay organised, I follow a few simple steps, make a schedule, set priorities, break big tasks into small steps, limit distractions, and make time

for fun and rest,” said Han-nah Omar, 12.

Nasiha Alisha, 11, told *Al-Qalam* about the mission to get everything right on camera: “What I find most challenging being part of the IP news desk is remembering my lines and not having too many bloopers.”

Most of the stories focus on school activities, achieve-

ments and upcoming events. Rajub said these moments of visibility matter. While parents receive the broadcasts at home, they are also occasionally screened at school assemblies.

For Rajub, the bigger picture is about planting seeds. “We want to instil responsibility and integrity. More than ever, children need to develop critical thinking

skills. If you look at the role of media in shaping the news, and how alternate media has changed the narrative, we have to inspire them to think,” she said. For Orient, the result is not just a record of school events, but a training ground for future storytellers. In Rajub’s words: “It’s about growth and it’s about building a culture of journalism from the ground up.”



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Zakariya & Shuaib: A tale of two brothers

By Fuad Hendricks

This is a story of two visually challenged brothers, Zakariya and his younger brother Shuaib Moola. Their brotherly love and support for each other compensated for their blindness.

What was unique about them that teaches us so many instructive lessons of life? They saw the world with their hearts and minds.

Their strong belief in Allah (God) was informed by what they saw with their hearts and minds.

But let me focus on Zakariya who sadly transitioned to the next world on Monday, August 11. He was 47.

The story of Zakariya from boyhood to manhood is a fascinating story. Why do I describe his life as fascinating rather than sad? Because I was fortunate to witness his upbringing by his parents Hajra and Ahmed Saeed as well as his beloved extended family headed by his grandfather Moosa Paruk and grandmother Zubeida. Zakariya did question “Why

me?” Why did Allah (God) choose him to be blind was amongst the questions of dialogue between him and Allah, but he introspectively, from within, resolved over time this and other human questions about his interaction with the Divine. However, he moved on to build his life on what was given to him rather than brooding over what was not.

Zakariya’s life was filled with trials and tribulation which strengthened him. He never succumbed to helplessness and despair. He had his first heart surgery in 1981 when he was only three years old. Thereafter in 1984, he underwent a second heart operation.

With his physically mended broken heart he tried never to break the hearts of others.

Zakariya appreciated his younger brother Yusuf, who was the second born. His sight became the sight of his brothers by way of unstinting support and love.

The title of this article was adapted from Zakariya’s chapter ‘A TALE OF TWO CITIES’ in the book by Dr

Sivalingum Moodley titled ‘Passion for SUCCESS’.

The Chapter ‘A Tale of Two Cities’ portrays Zakariya’s life in two major cities Durban and Pietermaritzburg.

Zakariya’s parents Hajra and Ahmed Saeed Moola had to make their migration (hijrah) from Durban to Pietermaritzburg so that Zakariya could attend the New Horizon School for the blind in Pietermaritzburg.

Zakariya expressed his profound gratitude throughout his chapter to his parents and the rest of his extended family. He made a point to mention his maternal grandmother Zubeida Paruk several times for her supporting upbringing role she played in his life.

Zakariya singled out for specific mention his gratefulness and thanks to Mrs Cook, a teacher at the New Horizon School for her special mentoring love and support. Also, Maulana Hassan Murchi was highly regarded by him. Maulana Murchi played a significant tutoring role in his life at the Madras-

sa Noor for the blind.

How Zakariya forged his career path was significant

Zakariya was driven to make the best of his life. He wanted to optimise the gifts Allah has given him. His perseverance, persistence, love of knowledge and pursuit of personal excellence were manifested in him, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts Degree from the Howard College Campus of the University of Natal.

Zakariya was a practical person. He chose to translate his studies into work experience. He together with his mother Hajra started a business called ZAKS Stationers which he managed.

Zakariya married Asma Es-sack on 25 November 2011. He described his marriage to Asma as “providing unwavering assistance and support” to him. It was a marriage of love, support and strengthening the bonds between them and members of their extended family. In an interview with Shuaib this is how he remembers his brother Zakariya. “In



every family there is sibling rivalry. But our love, respect, and support for one another trumped or out did our sibling rivalry. He set an example for me. He led and I followed. Words failed me to describe him adequately and fully.”

With tears in his eyes Shuaib said: “I will miss his presence. It is hard to say goodbye to the one you really love and grew up with. I do miss him. I always felt reassured knowing he was with me and was always there for me.”

Zakariya and Shuaib were blessed to be born and reared in a family where love, support and solidarity of the extended family were

not in short supply.

Hajira and Ahmed Saeed Moola did not see their two visually challenged children as a burden. But as gifts from Allah.

Zakariya believed strongly in the transition from this life to another life free from hardship, conflict, misery, trials and tribulation. He has made the worthy transition from this life to another life.

He is amongst those whose transition to the next life which the Quranic Scripture described as “they shall neither fear nor shall they grieve.”

Farewell Zakariya. Until we meet again, Insha’Allah.

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TRIBUTE

Aunty Mariam’s destiny was in Islam

Appa Mariam passed on last week, aged 87. She leaves behind her legacy of Madrasa-An-Noor which she started in Sydenham, 48 years ago, writes an Al-Qalam Correspondent.

On the 7th of August 2025, three days before her 87th birthday, Mariam Wood, passed away in Durban, dearly loved and honoured. Affectionately known as Aunty or Appa Mariam, her life’s journey was, in every sense, a tapestry of unshakable faith, immense perseverance, and a compassionate heart attuned to service.

She was born as Mary Lorraine to two worlds – in Zululand – to an Afrikaner father, Alfred de Lange and a Black mother whose identity is not known. Her roots gifted her with fluency in Zulu.

Aunty Mariam navigated immense personal challenges with unwavering faith and tremendous courage and remarkably rose above it all. She was widowed twice.

Her first husband Abdool Rafik passed away at age thirty-five, when she was pregnant with their son Mohammad Irshaad. The couple had three sons. Her second husband Dawood Wood also embraced Islam. He had seven children, and they had two more, resulting in a blended household of twelve children. After his death in 1987, she remained anchored in her passion for service despite the challenges of widowhood.

Aunty Mariam’s association with a new neighbour after her family’s relocation to Durban, first sparked her curiosity about Islam. Despite her father’s firm opposition, she embraced Islam wholeheartedly at the age of 16, finding strength in her new beliefs, and courage to chart her own destiny.

Despite her formal education ending after Standard 6 (Grade 8), she was an avid learner, which led her to become an eager, informal student of the late Ahmed Deedat and Mr. Vanker, both pioneers of the Islamic

Propagation Centre in South Africa. This prompted her to start Madrasa-An-Noor 48 years ago, offering free classes to children and women at her humble home in the Sydenham area.

“She personally funded and helped raise funds for this initiative,” explained her son Abdurahman. “Its goal being to cultivate Islamic knowledge and values within our community. Over the years, many students benefited from the teachings.”

Appa Shahida Fazil, a teacher at Madrasa-An-Noor since 2010 told Al-Qalam: “If a child was absent, she used to send me to go and find out the reason from the parents.”

Maulana Riyad Hassam echoed this sentiment and added, “A lot of eye-opening things happened at the Madrasa in the past one or two years, Alhamdulillah. What a beautiful lady she was. Her Akhlaq (disposition / inherent qualities of mind and character), was something else. Her sincerity, her

humility, her Fikr (thinking) was on a different level.”

The Executive Director of the Islamic Dawah Movement (IDM) Dr Ebrahim Dada told Al-Qalam that (IDM) honoured Aunty Mariam with a ‘Plaque of Gratitude’ in 1999 for her immense contributions. Although she worked independently, she had close ties with IDM, the South African National Zakah Fund (SAN-ZAF), the Muslim Youth Movement and other organizations and individuals who shared her vision.

According to her son, Abdurahman, Aunty Mariam also enjoyed quilting, cooking, and baking, which facilitated much happiness to her family and others through acts of kindness and hospitality.

In 2024, she had the sacred opportunity to perform Haj which deepened her spiritual connection and reaffirmed her faith,” he said. Aunty Mariam ensured that Madrasa-An-Noor would continue as a Waqf, as confirmed



by her son Abdurahman. “Today Madrasa-An-Noor continues under the management of Jamaitul Ulama South Africa who ensures its ongoing success. Her ultimate wish was that the Madrasa should continue to serve generations to come,” he said.

The story of Aunty Mariam and her family’s dedication

serves as an inspiration for all of us.

As the world marks the 1500th anniversary of the Prophet PBUH’s legacy, the life and legacy of Aunty Mariam is a reminder as to what one can achieve when guided by purpose and compassion, no matter the odds. May Almighty Allah SWT accept her exceptional service and elevate her station.



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Beautiful patience’ and the healing power of forgiveness – lessons from Surah Yusuf



Imam Dr. A. Rashied Omar

In times of trial, betrayal, and loss, we often find ourselves grasping for meaning, strength, and direction. The Qur’an, in its timeless wisdom, offers us a story that speaks not only to the people of the past but to every human heart burdened with grief, jealousy, or estrangement.

Surah Yusuf, the twelfth chapter of the Qur’an, stands out as “the most beautiful of stories” (12:3), a narrative that continues to shine a radiant light on how to endure life’s challenges with dignity, patience, and faith. I wish to share some reflections here, especially at a time when our communities and families are under immense strain, fractured by rivalries, tested by injustice, and wounded by cycles of resentment.

Beautiful Patience (Sabr Jamil)

The first and foremost lesson from Surah Yusuf is the Qur’anic call to sabr jamil, “beautiful patience.” This is not a patience of passivity or resignation, nor is it the stoic swallowing of pain. Rather, sabr jamil is patience purified of bitterness, an active, dignified endurance rooted in deep trust in Allah’s wisdom. When Prophet Ya’qub (peace be upon him) was told the devastating news of his son Yusuf’s “death,” his heart was pierced with anguish. Yet his response was not despair before people, but dignified restraint before his Lord: “I will practice beautiful patience. And Allah is the One whose help I seek against what you allege” (12:18). This is the heart of sabr jamil: to turn

The Dangers of Sibling Rivalry and Jealousy

The second lesson of Surah Yusuf speaks to one of the most destructive human tendencies: jealousy and rivalry within families. Yusuf’s brothers, consumed by envy, betrayed him, setting into motion years of pain and estrangement.

The Qur’an does not merely recount their betrayal for historical record; it warns us vividly of how unchecked jealousy can corrode love, blind us to our blessings, and rupture the very fabric of family life. Sadly, our communities are rife with the same dynamics: siblings torn apart over perceived parental favouritism, disputes over inheritance, or envy over material success. What begins as small rivalries

often escalates into harsh words, prolonged estrangement, and sometimes permanent severance of family ties.

The story of Prophet Yusuf (peace be upon him) reminds us that preserving family bonds is not just social etiquette, it is an act of worship. To embody sabr jamil, we must purify our hearts, celebrate the blessings granted to our siblings, and nurture compassion instead of rivalry. Families that remain united, even through hardship, become fortresses of faith and resilience.

Forgiveness as Spiritual Courage

The third great lesson from Surah Yusuf comes at the climax of the story. After years of betrayal, imprisonment, and injustice, Yusuf (pbuh) is elevated to a position of power. His brothers stand before him, vulnerable and at his mercy. In that moment, Yusuf (pbuh) could have chosen revenge. Instead, he declared words



immortalized in the Qur’an: “There is no blame upon you today. May Allah forgive you. For He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy” (12:92).

This act of forgiveness was not a weakness. It was spiritual courage. It was the strength of a heart purified by patience and anchored in Allah’s plan.

Forgiveness, like patience, is a profound act of resistance against cycles of vengeance. It heals deep wounds, restores dignity,

and reunites fractured hearts.

Conclusion

May we live with sabr jamil, beautiful patience. May we resist petty rivalries, preserve family bonds, and forgive with open hearts. And may patience, mercy, and forgiveness define the legacy we leave behind. This is not only a moral call but a spiritual imperative. For those who embody sabr jamil and magnanimous forgiveness, Allah promises honour, success, and His eternal pleasure.

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OPINION

Courage amidst conflict & vulnerability

Faith Speaking to the G20



By Ambassador Ebrahim Rasool

Last year in Brazil at the Interfaith Forum of the G20, I raised how faith communities often have moral clarity – sometimes righteously speaking truth, sometimes self-righteously posturing without action or in defence of the indefensible. But religions often struggle to find the moral courage to do what moral clarity demands once it pierces our conscience. What is courage how do we manifest it in a world of conflict and vulnerability? Emmanuel Kant, for me, understood courage best when

he posits that courage is not the opposite of cowardice; recklessness is the opposite of cowardice. Courage is the perfect middle, because it has the ability to call out the cowards and bring them to action in a time of danger, and at the same time to have the courage to diminish excessiveness, diminish extremes, diminish recklessness, and bring those who peddle them to the middle. So, our courage means our ability to speak to both sides of the equation: to those who are morally coward and ultra-cautious in the face of power where they should be standing up, and those who are morally reckless, excessive, and extreme when they should be measured and balanced.

The spirit of Ubuntu provides the thematic coherence for our gathering. You have heard all the definitions: I am because you are; we are people through other people; we are interdependent; we have a common humanity! Ubuntu, in a very real way, is the soft power that South Africa presents in a hard world. It

reflects the idea that human beings are interdependent despite the differences of race, language, or religion; that we are interdependent; and therefore, our humanity is what defines us, drives us, and binds us together.

But Ubuntu has a hard edge, because it is founded also in the words of the scripture, that says we are each other's keepers. We are responsible and accountable to each other, and that is the art of speaking truth, to both sides of the equation, the powerful and the very angry.

Therefore, when we have our demons as Muslims (like those who appropriate our faith for extremism), on the one side of the equation, we need to call them out. And when you have your demons (those who appropriate your faith for nefarious goals) Ubuntu demands that you call them out, so that the world finds its equilibrium, and religion is a beacon of equilibrium, not the religion of an ideology. Inspired by the Quran, in the dark days of Apartheid, that declares



that 'Allah, God, has shown us the two ways, but that people are not making haste on the path that is steep and difficult. How can God describe what this difficult path is?' And in describing the difficult path, it is not the path of praying, of fasting only. It is the path of freeing in the days of slavery, feeding in the days of hunger, embracing the stranger, looking after those who have been de-parented.

Continued on page 9

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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

Continued from page 8

Then you are those who believe. Belief is contingent on those humane acts. Then you are of those who do good, as good is defined by that courage. Then you are people of truth, that you stand up for truth irrespective of its discomfort to you; then you are people of compassion. Those are the things that we need to be in the days of hunger, in the days of marginalization.

What we need to be able to do, in these days, is to define what interfaith is. For some, interfaith is an opportunity for competitive faith: how good is your religion versus mine? How do I get adherents from you or prevent you from you getting adherents from me? For some faith, interfaith is comparative: we pray like this, and you pray like that, and there's merit in that. For others, faith is co-operative: let's work together on this campaign, shoulder to shoulder, etc. All of that is good.

But when faith itself is staring down the barrel [of a gun], then faith needs to be collaborative. When faith and religion is both the doctor and the patient, then it admits its own vulnerability as a phenomenon in this world. And it says, let's hold hands together, because we are fighting an existential

battle for faith and religion itself, as we fight the issues on both sides of the equation.

And so, when we embark on that collaborative work, we begin to see the obvious vertical divides between Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Jew, non-believer, ... Those vertical divides are very easy to see, but within those vertical divides, as we found out in the anti-Apartheid struggle, are also horizontal divides that bring some of us closer across vertical divides. Some of us, across all our religions, are so orthodox that we are in a state of inertia.

Some of us are so extreme that we become a nihilistic phenomenon, destructive in the name of our religion. Some show more commonness with their mirror image in other religions than with their co-religionists. And some of us are the middle ground, the people who find meaning in doing the work of God amongst the people of God, demanded by today's context of conflict and vulnerability.

Last year's predictions have become matters of urgency today. The looming populism predicted last year in Brazil has become the mainstreamed extremism of today, manifesting



itself across the world. Last year's differences trying to coexist, have now become divisions. Last year's emergent tensions have become full blown conflicts this year. The vulnerable last year have become the victims of massacres and starvation. Fears have become intolerances. Migrants looking for peace and well-being in the world have become the deported, the outcast, and the discarded. The idea of populism is the populism with fingers on the buttons that

defund health programs, that fund wars, with an impunity that can do whatever it wants with permission from the world.

Religion must act in the name of faith, drawing from its deep and profound spiritual resources. Religion cannot appeal to the powers that be because they themselves are often compromised by their interests in a world where trade wars become pernicious, manifestations of the will of a person or a gov-

ernment. The ears that are waiting for us are the ears of the people of the world. We have seen the campuses rise against the capitals. We have seen the streets become restless against their palaces. We have seen the ordinary people begin to speak. And while we appeal to, or appease, the powerful, we ignore those who really want our guidance, who want to believe again, who want to understand the manifestation of God, and the closest they will come is to find it in

the churches, the mosques, the synagogues, the temples from which we preach.

They will reclaim their faith as a force for good and manifest it in good works. And if we compromise because we need to be good with our governments, and we need to escape their surveillance, then we have compromised on the very truth that the world needs.

And if we can't do it, who will?

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- ½ teaspoon coriander powder
- ¼ teaspoon lemon juice
- 3 tablespoon Tandoori Paste
- ¼ cup Allifas Tandoori Sauce
- ¼ cup Yoghurt dressing mixed with 3 tablespoon green masala chutney
- Chopped Tomato, Coriander, Red onion and green chilli

Method:

- Marinate chicken in Allifas Special Chilli Powder, Rajpuri Tumeric, cumin powder, coriander powder, lemon juice and tandoori paste.
- Grill chicken and once done, set aside.
- Add 1 tablespoon Allifas Chilli Sauce and Yoghurt Masala dressing on the Naan.
- Top with chicken and drizzle extra sauce.
- Finally, garnish with coriander, onions, tomatoes and green chilli.

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Electric' vibes at MYM's celebration of empowerment

By Iman Mahomed

The Bayview Ubuntu Community Centre came alive on Saturday, August 16, as 145 women from across KwaZulu-Natal gathered for a day of empowerment, learning, and celebration. The Muslim Youth Movement of South Africa's (MYMSA) Gender Desk hosted its annual Women's Empowerment Programme, this year themed "Empowering Women, Enriching Communities."

The event was a vibrant showcase of women's strength, resilience, and unity, bringing together participants of all ages and backgrounds for an unforgettable day.

From the moment participants arrived, the atmosphere was described as "electric."

Poetry recitals, Zumba sessions, self-defence classes, and even laughter therapy set the tone for a day filled with both joy and purpose. Lucky draws kept the energy high, while networking opportunities allowed women to share

experiences and build connections.

One of the programme's organisers, Arun Naicker, said the diversity on display was one of the most powerful aspects of the day.

"It was truly one of the most vibrant and electric events I have ever done. It was in the heart of the community, and it was multicultural. You had Muslim women embracing different cultures and entertainment in a variety of languages. We live in societies that are so closed, so it was remarkable to see people come together like that, and that was one of the highlights for me," said Naicker.

Women travelled from far and wide to be part of the event, wearing their best clothes, and spent the day listening to one another, offering advice, and empowering each other.

Programme Director Aisha Metedad Ally, who served as MC for the day, described the event as both empowering and inspiring. "The event was amazing, it all went well, Alhamdulillah. The highlight for me was the fact that I got

to MC the event, and I also loved the fact that it was so diverse. We had women from different areas, backgrounds, and cultures. We had Zulu and Chichewa performances. I would like to see more events like this taking place. It empowers our ladies a lot," she said.

Ally noted that the mix of age groups was particularly encouraging.

"Most MYM events are for people from low socioeconomic areas, and it's an excellent way to uplift people. I also tried to bring in a lot of young ladies to attend. The youth are our future, so it was lovely to see the mix of different age groups," said Ally.

While the day carried a celebratory tone, serious issues were also at the heart of the programme. In partnership with Lifeline South Africa, the South African Police Service, and the Department of Justice, the MYMSA provided crucial resources and information on gender-based violence (GBV). Representatives from Lifeline spoke about recognising abuse, how to access support ser-



vices, and the importance of introducing interventions at the community level.

The Department of Justice also offered free consultations to participants, providing advice on legal options available to victims of GBV.

The Bayview Clinic extended its services to attendees, offering free pressure and diabetes testing, pap smears, and breast examinations. By providing these screenings on site, organisers ensured that health was an integral part of empowerment. The highlight of the day was also the participation of MYM's Ambassadors for Change members, a youth leadership initiative. The group present-

ed thought-provoking role-plays, poetry, and speeches challenging stereotypes and inspiring women to rise above societal limitations.

The message echoed throughout the event: empowerment is not just an individual pursuit, but a collective responsibility. Whether through cultural expression, physical wellness, legal knowledge, or spiritual growth, Naicker said the programme underscored the importance of standing together against challenges facing women today.

She said by the end of the day, the Bayview Ubuntu Community Centre had become a symbol of solidari-

ty and empowerment. "The event marked one of MYM's most successful Women's Month initiatives to date, and the team for the day was exceptional. This was about creating safe spaces where women can learn, share, and feel valued. The energy, the diversity, the unity - it all came together beautifully," said Naicker.

As participants left, many of them carried renewed determination to make a difference in their communities. Attendees said the Women's Empowerment Programme reinforced the Muslim Youth Movement's commitment to advancing women's rights and tackling pressing social challenges.



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War crimes and the killing of journalists



By Imraan Buccus

War has been part of human history for millennia. But even war has rules. Since ancient times there has been a deep moral aversion to killing civilians, and especially women, the elderly and children. In modern times international humanitarian law, codified most clearly in the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, draws a bright red line between combatants and civilians. It is explicitly prohibited to target civilians, and special protections are afforded to the most vulnerable, including children.

Journalists, as civilians engaged in the essential task of informing the public, are recognised as protected persons. So too are medical personnel, whose work is safeguarded under the First and Fourth Geneva Conventions and who must be allowed to treat the wounded without obstruction or attack. These protections are not optional—they are binding obligations ratified by the overwhelming majority of the world's states, including Israel.

The Geneva Conventions emerged from the devastation of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, shaped by the understanding that even in war there must be limits if humanity is to survive its own violence. They apply equally to all conflicts, regardless of the justifications given. Violations—such as deliberately targeting civilians, children, journalists, or medics—are not simply breaches of protocol; they are war crimes.

In Gaza, the evidence of such violations is overwhelming. Credible estimates now place the death toll in Gaza well above 90,000, with women, children, and the elderly making up the majority. The number of children killed is believed to be in the tens of thousands, and many of the dead were non-combatants killed in their homes, schools, and hospitals. When indirect deaths from starvation, disease, and the collapse of healthcare are included, some credible estimates suggest the true toll could be in the hundreds of thousands. Since October 7, 2023, well over 200 journalists and media workers have been killed in Gaza, nearly all Palestin-

ians reporting from inside the besieged territory. This is a calculated erasure of witness, testimony, and accountability. On 10 August Anas al-Sharif and four of his Al Jazeera colleagues were killed when an Israeli airstrike hit their media tent outside al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City. Israel openly admitted that they had been deliberately targeted.

The Committee to Protect Journalists places the death toll of journalists at approximately 192, nearly all Palestinians, and notes that at least 20 were directly targeted—a potential war crime. The International Federation of Journalists confirms more than 180 media workers killed. Reporters Without Borders offers even higher figures, placing the toll at over 220, or as high as 237, since October 2023.

UN and media analyses show that more journalists have died in Gaza in the past two years than in all major wars of the last century combined, including the First and Second World Wars, Korea, Vietnam, the Yugoslav Wars, and Afghanistan.

For years, Russia and China were regularly denounced in the West for suppressing press freedom—often with good reason—yet when Julian Assange, a publisher and whistle-blower, exposed American war crimes, was pursued, denied asylum, and threatened with indefinite imprisonment. Western capitals were silent. Now, the United States and much of Europe have backed Israel politically, militarily, and diplomatically, even as it has waged what is now widely agreed to be a genocidal war, and the deadliest war for journalists in modern history.

There is a sickening double standard in which the enemies of the West will be held accountable for any limits to press freedom while the allies of the West have carte blanche to murder journalists at will.

The assault on journalists in Gaza is part of a wider pattern. Gaza's medics—the doctors, nurses, paramedics, and first responders working under relentless bombardment—have also been targeted. South Africa's UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health, Dr Tlaleng Mofokeng, has described Gaza's health system as "completely obliterated" and condemned "a war on healthcare workers" in breach of the most basic principles of humanitarian law.

By September 2024, more than 885 healthcare workers had been killed in Gaza and the West Bank, and over 1,000 attacks had been documented against medical facilities. Dr Mofokeng has stressed that practising med-



icine is never a crime during conflict, but that the targeted killing of healthcare workers most certainly is.

The deliberate destruction of Gaza's healthcare system has compounded the crisis. Hospitals have been besieged, shelled, and raided. Ambulances have been struck. Doctors have been detained. These attacks have crippled the ability to treat the wounded or respond to disease outbreaks.

There was a time when describing Israel as an apartheid state was controversial among Israel's defenders. Today, it is clear that what is happening in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories is far worse than apartheid. Yet, because of the long-recognised connection between South Africa's own history and Israel's oppression of the Palestinians, our country carries particular moral weight on this question.

Of course our own country continues to break our hearts in many ways. Corruption is entrenched, the criminalisation of politics is out of control, and poverty and inequality are worsening. Brazenly corrupt figures sit unashamedly in Parliament

and Cabinet and our cities are falling apart. Yet, amid this decline, the South African government's decision to take Israel to the International Court of Justice was an act of courage and principle that has won growing moral acclaim across the world. In The Hague, South Africa laid out a detailed case that Israel's actions in Gaza amounted to genocide under the terms of the Genocide Convention. The court agreed there was a plausible case to answer and issued provisional measures ordering Israel to prevent acts of genocide and to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza. This was a historic moment: it forced the question of Israeli accountability onto the formal stage of international law and gave the Palestinian people a rare legal foothold in a system often stacked against them.

By building support for its case through the Hague Group, South Africa has begun to exercise real global leadership. Through this coalition—which includes countries such as Brazil, Colombia, and Bangladesh—South Africa has worked to keep the pressure on, turning legal action into political momentum. This is more than symbolic diplomacy: it

signals that the Global South can set the agenda on questions of international law and challenge the impunity long enjoyed by powerful states and their allies. There is much to lament about our country's state, but on this score, there is every reason to feel pride.

But now that South Africa has been vindicated and mainstream human rights organisations, including in Israel, have recognised that what is happening in Gaza is genocide, and that there has been the targeted killing of journalists and medical workers, deep questions must be asked about how the rump of liberal opinion in South Africa backed Israel uncritically and continues to cravenly align itself with the West.

The fevered and uncritical support for the West by figures such as Greg Mills, Tony Leon, Branko Brkic, Emma Powell and organisations such as BizNews, the Institute for Race Relations and the now defunct Brenthurst Foundation has failed the great moral test of our time. All these actors were loudly and fervently opposed to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, but backed Israel. A war crime is a war crime,

whoever commits it. Neither Putin nor Netanyahu, nor the armies they command, can be held to different standards because one is an enemy of the West and the other its ally. Until liberal opinion can acknowledge how profoundly its double standards on Russia and Israel have compromised its moral standing, it cannot be taken as a credible force in our public life.

The whole point of international law and human rights is that they are universal. They cannot be bent to suit the interests of friends or ignored when they inconvenience the powerful. The liberals who have tried to evade this principle have placed themselves on the wrong side of history.

The ANC has acted shamefully in many ways, and continues to do so, but on the question of Palestine it has acted with rare moral clarity. In taking Israel to the ICJ and building an international coalition for justice, it has shown the kind of principled leadership the world so often lacks—and that South Africa, despite all its failings, is still capable of providing.

Dr Buccus is editor of Al-Qalam and research fellow at UFS

Minara nominations concluded, finalists to be announced mid-September

By Al-Qalam Reporter

The nomination period for the Minara Business Recognition Awards 2025 was concluded on August 4 with an exceptional volume of nominations submitted from across the country.

Minara, said in a statement that the enthusiastic response reflected the remarkable diversity and calibre of individuals and organisations driving progress across South Africa. From emerging entrepreneurs to established industry leaders, the awards recognise those whose vision and dedication have made a meaningful impact in their fields.

The business body said it remains committed to highlighting the vibrant entrepreneurial spirit thriving throughout our country, fostering growth, collaboration, and opportunity within the broader business ecosystem. A spokesperson added: “The Minara Chamber is proud to acknowledge the unwavering commitment of all those

who have participated in this year’s awards, whether by nominating inspiring candidates or lending their support as part of the broader business community. “As the evaluation process proceeds, an independent panel of judges is tasked with the considerable responsibility of reviewing each submission with care, integrity, and a commitment to fairness.

Their expertise ensures that every nomination is assessed on its merits considering not only business success and leadership but also social responsibility, ethical conduct, and enduring positive influence.

“This rigorous assessment process embodies the Chamber’s dedication to upholding high standards, ensuring that those ultimately recognised have demonstrated exemplary achievement and serve as role models for others.

In the coming weeks, anticipation will mount as the panel prepares to reveal those whose stories have stood out amongst a distinguished field of contenders. The fi-



nalists will be announced in mid-September 2025.”

The winners will be revealed at the Minara Business Recognition Awards and Gala Dinner which takes place on Friday, October 24, at the NMJ Conference Centre, Durban. This year’s celebration is especially significant as it commemorates the 25-year milestone

of the Minara Chamber of Commerce. The awards are poised not only to honour outstanding contributions, but also to serve as a forum for networking, knowledge sharing, and inspiration. Attendees can look forward to an evening marked by celebration, reflection, and the forging of new connections that will help shape the future of South Africa’s eco-

nomonic landscape. Lincoln Mali, CEO of Lesaka Technologies, a distinguished and accomplished business leader will be the Keynote Speaker sharing his insights on leadership, growth, and the future of business in South Africa. The Minara Chamber of Commerce acknowledges all those who have contributed to the awards process, those that

submitted the nominations, the nominees, our stakeholders and our sponsors especially Standard Bank SA whose unwavering support makes the Annual Awards possible.

For participation and further information, please email awards@minara.org.za or visit their website at www.minara.org.za.



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LOCAL NEWS

MJC to Sahuc: ‘While disagreements exist, we must act with wisdom, unity’

Assalamu Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh,

On behalf of the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC), and in our capacity as a member of the SAHUC National General Council, we wish to first commend SAHUC and the Hajj operators who, over decades, have faithfully served the South African hujjaaj with dedication, professionalism, and sincerity. Their efforts, often under difficult circumstances, have ensured that generations of pilgrims were able to fulfil this sacred obligation with dignity and comfort. We recognise and appreciate this contribution as part of the legacy of service to our community.

It is precisely because of our deep concern for the welfare of the hujjaaj that we write to you regarding the proposed amendment to the SAHUC constitution, which would see SAHUC transition from its current role as regulator to becoming the sole Hajj operator. While we respect the

right of any organisation to amend its constitution, this shift represents a fundamental change in mandate with far-reaching repercussions for both the organisation and the broader community.

Already, we have witnessed the unfortunate fitna and division this proposal has sparked within our community, with legal battles, political parties, and government entities becoming involved. This is deeply concerning, as it detracts from our shared mission of serving the hujjaaj in unity and sincerity.

As members of the NGC, we carry a fiduciary duty to make fully informed decisions in the best interests of the pilgrims. We must also remind ourselves that members of the NGC could be held legally accountable for decisions taken without having fully understood their implications, especially where such decisions may result in harm or disadvantage to the hujjaaj. This is why transparency, clarity, and proper briefing are not only ethical requirements but

also legal safeguards for all involved.

Several critical questions remain unanswered:

- What is the clear and compelling rationale for SAHUC becoming an operator, when alternative arrangements have reportedly been afforded by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?
- What are the long-term objectives of such a structural shift, and how does it align with SAHUC’s founding mandate?
- Has SAHUC realistically assessed its capacity to fulfil the operational demands of serving thousands of pilgrims annually?
- How will SAHUC ensure it caters to the diverse needs of hujjaaj, many of whom desire bespoke Hajj experiences?
- What safeguards will be put in place to ensure SAHUC does not become a monopoly, and who will exercise oversight if SAHUC

assumes both regulatory and operational functions?

- Why has there been limited consultation with the broader Hajj industry and other stakeholders whose voices are essential in shaping such a major transition?

Until these questions are addressed through a proper briefing and consultation process, we are of the firm view that it would be premature and irresponsible to proceed with a vote on this matter. We therefore propose:

1. That the vote on this constitutional amendment be postponed until such time as the NGC is fully briefed and our concerns are addressed.
2. That a task team be established under the mandate of SAHUC to engage with all relevant stakeholders—including Hajj operators, industry experts, and community representatives—in order to draft a comprehensive proposal that balances the interests of the hujjaaj, SAHUC, and the industry. The recommendations of



this task team can then be presented to the NGC for consideration and approval.

3. The payment of the Hajj fees due to the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah in Saudi Arabia should (have been) affected by the deadline date of 23 August 2025, thereby ensuring compliance with Saudi requirements and safeguarding the interests of South African pilgrims.

Finally, we wish to place on record our strongest disap-

proval of those individuals or organisations who have chosen to undermine the standing of SAHUC through divisive actions, whether by resorting to legal measures, political lobbying, or direct appeals to foreign authorities. While disagreements may exist, our accountability before Allah (SWT) compels us to act with wisdom, unity, and a steadfast commitment to the hujjaaj, whose rights and dignity must always remain above personal interests or egos.

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Durban Palestinian family launch culinary school to keep heritage alive

By Ismail Suder

A Durban-based Palestinian family has started a hands-on kitchen that teaches women the art of preparing authentic Palestinian cuisine – with the best part being that they can take the sumptuous food home.

The Palestinian cooking classes being offered at 66 Harris Crescent, Sherwood, is the brainchild of the extended Shat family who immigrated to South Africa to carve out better lives for themselves, at a time when Israeli oppression against Palestinians was becoming unbearable.

Kufiya Academy, as it is known – in conjunction with PalFood RSA – hopes to keep the Palestinian heritage alive with its theme – “A Culinary Journey Through Palestine.” Asked how the Palestine culinary kitchen started, Abdelrahman Shat, a Palestinian student in Durban whose family runs the business – said: “Kufiya Academy was established by the Shat family in Durban not only to offer cooking classes, but to develop a spectrum of hard skills, soft skills, and arts that add real

value to people’s lives.

The cooking stream was started by Nada and Amira Shat, hand-in-hand with PalFood RSA – which also belongs to the Shat family.

Most cooking classes (for a maximum of eight women per class) run for between 2.5 to 3 hours. The cost is R500 per course which includes all the ingredients and use of equipment – and a certificate would be issued at the end of the course. He said 10% of proceeds will go towards supporting the children in Gaza. Students can take classes in preparing traditional maqluba and musakhan. Sweets delights include ka’ek; ma’amoul; basbusa & kunafa. There are also classes in manakish & dough making – and learning how to make a traditional Palestinian breakfast and Palestinian styled salad. Shat said all the ingredients required in Palestinian cooking are widely available in South Africa.

“Core ingredients such as chickpeas, bulgur, tahini, fresh herbs, quality olive oil, spices, are widely available. We source specialty items and teach smart substitutes while keeping authenticity. He said the new project was

a “series of hands-on classes and workshops. Our vision is to capacitate and familiarise the people of Africa with our skills, culture, and stories through practical learning.”

“Our logo draws from the well-known kufiya (keffiyeh) – a living emblem of Palestinian resilience and belonging. The kufiya is part of our heritage – its motifs (the fisherman’s net and olive leaves) symbolise livelihood, rootedness, and hope. We use this design to signal our purpose – culture you can wear, taste, learn, and pass on,” he added. Shat told *Al-Qalam* that the family have also launched the “Arabic Conversation Club” to teach conversational Arabic.

“We have launched the Arabic Conversation Club to provide a genuine, supportive environment for people in South Africa to practise Arabic with native speakers from Palestine. Expect small, interactive circles on everyday topics (greetings, shopping, travel, family & faith), rich cultural context (idioms, etiquette, stories) and practical outcomes help in building confidence, listening fluency, employability, and social cohesion. “Beyond food, we teach hard



skills (baking fundamentals, kitchen safety, menu costing, basic food entrepreneurship) and soft skills (teamwork, strategic management, cus-

tomers service, cultural communication), plus arts such as tatreez (embroidery), storytelling, drawing, Arabic calligraphy & lettering, and

dabke basics”.

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How this historic masjid ...and community defied demolition – and won

As *Musjid-ul-Aziez* turns 125, we must not forget the sacrifices of a community that fought to save it – even if it might have cost some their lives. **Ismail Suder** reports.

When the historic *Musjid-ul-Aziez* in Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth) was threatened with demolition to make way for a freeway in 1970, many congregants threatened to “fast until death” to save the mosque – but sense finally prevailed – the freeway was rerouted and the masjid saved.

Today, the beautifully preserved mosque named after the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Aziz will this year celebrate 125 years since its official opening on July 27, 1901 – it was constructed at a princely cost of 1345 British pounds.

Also known as the Pier Street Mosque, this green-shaded architectural marvel in the South End area, is a sight for sore eyes amidst the gray of the har-

bour industrial complex. Salie Abrahams, one of the trustees of the mosque, is passionate about welcoming musalees to the masjid. When this reporter visited *Musjid-ul-Aziez* at Jumuah whilst on a 5000km road trip around South Africa, he spotted Abrahams warmly welcoming everyone at the entrance.

The freeway that would have bulldozed this beautiful mosque, had thankfully been diverted via an overhead circular bridge – just 300m short of the mosque.

“Although, we don’t hear the sounds of the motor-ing traffic, we unfortunately can’t get rid of the loud noises of the passing trains that trundle right past the masjid carrying iron ore. At times, the trains do cause disturbances during salah, but we’ve learnt to live with it, Alhumdulillah,” Abrahams says smilingly.

He tells *Al-Qalam* that with tons of iron ore being transported each day, soot coats the walls of the mosques,

thereby requiring maintenance, and regular painting. The masjid had faced many struggles in its history. According to historical records, the South End area – where *Musjid-ul-Aziez* is located – was declared a “Whites Only” district in 1963 and scores of families were uprooted in terms of the dreaded Group Areas Act. The evicted Muslim families were not only up in arms over their forced removal, but they were seriously concerned about the destruction of their masjids.

While masjids in the area survived the “Group Area” bulldozers, trouble loomed when in 1970, the Port Elizabeth Municipality decided to build a freeway that would go right through the land on which *Musjid-ul-Aziez* stands.

For 18 months, the community rallied to vehemently oppose the destruction of this historic masjid. There were numerous public meetings, protests were held and legal battles were fought to stop the potential dem-

olition. The ulama of Port Elizabeth at the time, Imam Igsaan Nackerdien, Moulana Ahmed Sadek Desai, Sheikh Jamiel Jardien as well as religious leaders from around the country stood strongly to prevent the demolition. “The matter raised such an outcry that it was even taken as far as a meeting at the United Nations,” according to records.

According to an excerpt from the book, “The Big Five Masjids of Port Elizabeth”, the imam of the Cape Peninsula at that time, Shaikh E. Behardien, informed the Group Areas Board in Cape Town that when a masjid had been built and the ground “dedicated to the service of God,” it could never be desecrated.

“The Sheikh warned the Group Areas Board of international complications that would eventuate if any steps were taken to alienate a masjid. He further stated that a masjid could never be destroyed, nor the land on which it stood be used for any other purpose. He



informed them that he was busy consulting Muslim leaders from all parts of the world and asked the Government to do the same.”

With the municipality determined to go ahead, many Muslims decided they would rather die than allow the bulldozers to crush the mosque to dust. While the bulldozers waited outside, some of the congregants decided they would “fast till death” rather than give in to the demolition gangs. Their firm stand paid off and the authorities gave up on the idea.

The Government finally

conceded and allowed *Musjid-ul-Aziez* to remain but demanded that the minaret had to be removed as they planned to build the freeway above the masjid. The Muslim community begrudgingly agreed and brought down the minaret.

The authorities eventually decided to reroute the freeway, much to the joy of the community.

If you ever happen to visit the masjid, you will see the truncated piece of freeway that stops short of the masjid. It reminds everyone about the many battles fought – and won!



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