

# Al - Qalam

Southern Africa's Muslim Newspaper

Volume 51 | No. 10 | October 2025 | Jamaad ul Ulaa 1447 A.H.

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## Locals & Palestinians in SA mobilise to ship aid to Gaza

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LOCAL NEWS

# A decade since 'Fees Must Fall' – the generation that refused to be silent

By Neelam Rahim

Ten years after the Fees Must Fall movement ignited South African campuses, the echoes of that defiant chant - "Asijiki!" ("We will not turn back") - still resonate in lecture halls and policy rooms.

What began as a spark at Wits University in 2015 grew into a national reckoning, a call for free and decolonised education that no longer served only the privileged few. Young South Africans, armed with conviction and courage, stood at the frontlines demanding not just lower fees, but justice, equality, and dignity.

Among the most visible faces were Fasiha Hassan and Shaera Kalla - both professionals whose leadership helped shape the movement. Hassan, now a Member of Parliament for the African National Congress (ANC) and winner of the 2016 International Student Peace Prize, described the experience as transformative: "It

changed the course of our lives. It made us understand that leadership isn't a title, it's service." Kalla, who served as President of the Wits Student Representative Council (SRC), was shot by police during the protests and today serves on the board of Section 27. She reflected on the courage it demanded: "We didn't break the system, we exposed it." Both women continue to carry the lessons of activism into their professional lives, showing that leadership and justice extend far beyond campus gates.

Yet the movement was never only about its leaders. Hundreds of students printed pamphlets, sheltered peers, organised marches, and faced tear gas and arrest. The collective effort yielded tangible wins: partial fee freezes, the insourcing of university workers, and a renewed national debate on access to higher education. Every voice, every action, contributed to a generation defining struggle that challenged the country to rethink access, justice, and belonging. At the time, university leaders were

also tested. Professor Adam Habib, then Vice-Chancellor of Wits University, described Fees Must Fall as "both a challenge to authority and a moment of renewal," writing that "the youth forced universities, and the country, to confront truths we could no longer avoid." His account captured both the tension and the potential for change that the movement revealed. Habib later reflected on these experiences in his book *Rebels and Rage: Reflecting on Fees Must Fall*, offering a detailed account of the student movement and the issues it raised.

Irfaan Mangera, a first-year student at the time and now Head of Education at We The People SA, recalls stepping off the bus from Lenasia and joining the protests, unaware that the moment would shape his life. Speaking to *Al-Qalam*, he said, "It was a generation-defining moment. A reminder that young people can shake the foundations of power when they act collectively and with conviction." Mangera emphasised the human side of activism.

"Students fed one another, cleaned campuses after protests, and built organisations to argue their case for justice. Activism isn't only about defiance, it's about care, courage, and accountability."

Today, he channels that same spirit into civic education and constitutional literacy. "Activism sparks awareness; institutions sustain transformation," he told *Al-Qalam*. For him, faith was a grounding force: spaces like the Muslim Students Association and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign offered reflection, resilience, and solidarity.

Reflecting on the decade since, Mangera says today's youth must carry forward more than energy. "Education is a public good, not a privilege for the few. Justice isn't achieved only by shouting at power, it's built through ethical leadership, collaboration, and solidarity across generations."

The legacy of Fees Must Fall is also visible in policy and institutional change.



Beyond partial fee freezes, universities began listening more carefully to student voices, unions gained stronger bargaining power, and campaigns for equality in education now have a roadmap for advocacy.

But the movement's lessons extend far beyond campuses. They are for every young South African willing to challenge power, for every citizen called to act with

courage and conscience. Fees Must Fall was a mirror held up to the nation, a reminder that change is earned through persistence, principle, and collective action.

Ten years on, the chants may have faded, but the fire remains, daring a new generation to claim their space, speak truth, and refuse to be silent in shaping the future of education and justice in South Africa.

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# Ceasefire: ‘My parents dream is to return and smell the sea of Gaza’

*Palestinian student, Abdelrahman Shat, of Durban says Palestinians here are mobilising with locals to send lifegiving resources to Gaza, writes Ismail Suder.*

**D**urban-based Palestinian student, Abdelrahman Shat, says after two years of genocide in Gaza, his family and close friends have thankfully escaped injury or death – his elderly parents who live with him in Westville can’t wait to return once permanent peace is restored.

His parents want nothing more than to spend their last days in the land they love so much, said Abdelrahman, who is studying for his doctorate in business administration.

“My parents received the news of the ceasefire with relief. They are grateful for the silence after so much noise. Their first reaction was gratitude and prayer for those we’ve lost. Their second reaction was a simple

longing: to return. They talk about the smell of the sea, the way neighbours check on each other at dusk, the olives, the call to prayer that threads the day together. They understand that ‘ceasefire’ is not ‘reconstruction,’ and they know the road back is uncertain. But their hearts have already crossed the checkpoint. If you ask whether they dream of returning, the truth is they never stopped.

“I carry two truths at once: gratitude that many of our loved ones are still here – and grieve for those gone. The ceasefire gave everyone a chance to exhale, but it also spotlighted the scale of loss. When my parents say they want to be back in Gaza, what they mean is they want to be back in a life that makes sense. For them, home is not a set of coordinates; it’s relationships, routines, and responsibilities. That’s what they dream of returning to.

“Our relatives and close friends who remain in Gaza are, alhamdulillah, alive – yet their ‘Okay’ hides a

difficult reality: they are surviving with almost no resources. Food is sporadic, clean water is a daily struggle, and medical care is thin. Schools and clinics that once anchored the community have been damaged or repurposed. Even those with savings have discovered that money doesn’t translate into access when markets are empty or roads are unsafe. The ceasefire has slowed the tempo of fear, yes, but it hasn’t restored capacity: supply chains, electricity, and public services are far from normal. People are patching roofs with whatever they can find, sharing meals, and bartering. Its resilience is born of necessity, not choice.

He told *Al-Qalam* that Durban’s Palestinian community are relieved at news of the ceasefire and are mobilising to see how best they can help.

“In Durban, the Palestinian community – and many South Africans who stand with us – have responded with both joy and deter-

mination. Joy because any cessation of violence saves lives. Determination because everyone understands the work ahead: rehabilitation of schools and clinics, support for orphaned children, mental-health care, and livelihoods,” he added.

Abdelrahman said, following the announcement of the ceasefire, local mosques, community groups, and student associations have quickly moved from protest vigils to planning meetings: Discussions now revolve around ‘How do we help rebuild?’ ‘Which NGOs have safe and reliable channels?’

“People often ask, ‘What does reconstruction look like?’ It’s tempting to answer with cement and spreadsheets, but for families it starts with three basics: safety, services, and a sense of normal. Safety means predictable access – being able to move without gambling with your life. Services mean water that doesn’t make you sick, a clinic that has antibiotics, a school that can



Abdelrahman Shat, Durban-based Palestinian student

reopen even if under a tent for now. Normal is to hear kids laughing on their way to class and parents knowing the day will end roughly as it began. The extraordinary thing is how much the community is already doing to self-organise – micro schooling, neighbourhood watch rotations, food-sharing networks. What’s needed is to amplify these community initiatives with professional support and resources.”

Meanwhile, Iqbal Jassat, an executive member of the Media Review Network wrote in a recent opinion piece that

Netanyahu claims to have won, is false. He said that “Netanyahu’s claim of ‘victory’ is part of his hasbara narrative to conceal defeat.”

He wrote: “Military experts will agree that if any power sets out beating war drums and loudly proclaiming clearly defined goals but after a lengthy period of killing innocent people, including causing enormous devastation and destruction by its army, is forced to accept a ceasefire without attaining any of its goals militarily, cannot claim to be victorious.”

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OPINION

# Muslim Thinker is not an oxymoron



By Ambassador Ebrahim Rasool

In the Spring 2025 edition of the journal *Jacobin*, a piercing question is asked: what creates an aversion to progress? Three possible reasons are averred: firstly, it could be the idea that a community's best years are behind them, that somehow their golden age has passed, and whatever could be thought of has been thought, and there is no need for new thought; secondly, it could be that progress is frightening, that it could disturb or disrupt every neat and comfortable assumption of that community, and that anything new could be a contaminant to a pre-existing morality and intellect; and thirdly, the need for progress is acknowledged but the wherewithal, the skills and resources for progress in an unmoored world is not available to that community or its scholarly sector.

In preparing for my keynote address to an illustrious audience gathered by the Muslim Thinker Forum in Cape Town recently, this interrogation shaped my evaluation of the state of the contemporary Muslim ummah, an ummah who today, many centuries later, are mere strangers to, and consumers of, their own gifts to the world, whether the inheritance of Al Khwarizmi's algorithms that fires the digital revolution or Al Battani's pioneer-

ing work in astronomy and trigonometry.

My conclusion is that the ummah contains elements of all three of the proffered reasons for the absence of progress: we possess an inordinate nostalgia for a great past, so much so that we did not trust future generations with the motor for regeneration – *ijtihad* or the independent critical reasoning – and promptly shut it down; we certainly are suspicious of anything new or innovative, hence the free and abundant usage of what has become a condemnable pejorative word, *bid'a* or innovation; and thirdly, even if we could overcome these two, the wherewithal for progress through critical thought and reasoning is lacking when even those most educated in the non-worship professions abdicate from thought, genuflect to those proficient in worship, and affirm the historical barriers to their participation in the jurisprudence of the socio-political-economic-cultural-and-professional disciplines. This is intellectual abdication.

A few in my generation, growing up in the heart of the apartheid experience in the 1970's and the 1980's, through the transition of the 1990's, were also largely up against the theologians of worship. They too told us to avoid the socio-political, preferring that we stand up only for *fajr*, not for justice. They too confronted us for our lack of expertise in Arabic and Islamic knowledge as the key barriers to our engagement in the required *ijtihad* in the face of rampant racism, repression, and dispossession inherent in the apartheid injustice. They then already advised that we stay in our lane. They ignored the fact that our generation learnt the Qur'an



and Sunnah in community *halaqat* (study circles), in the confrontation with injustice, in solitary confinement in apartheid jails, and in the deep underground hounded by the security police. We often had to determine what Allah asked us from the cardinal *maqasid* or divine intents that were so clear in their absence and denial.

It was in real life that they had to find *wasatiyyah* (the middle ground) in the heat of both battling injustice and

our own anger. It was often in the absence of our own leaders that we had to find common cause with people of other faiths and ideologies and learnt the lessons of building the *hilf al-fudul* (the coalitions for virtue). It was in the heart of constitutional negotiations that we had to find the formula for a society of mutual co-existence and cooperation, expressed as a *Darus Shahada*, as a move away from the hostile abode. It was in the nascent governance structures, where our

professionals were largely absent from, that we had to find formulas for services amidst a racially skewed edifice. Because we strayed from our lane, we influenced the construction of an Islamophobia-free country.

It was precisely the *ijtihad* of that generation of intellectuals and activists that created the space for today's Muslims to thrive in their professions. They have the freedom even to abdicate from the responsibility of

their knowledge and defer to clerical knowledge.

Even my generation deferred to clerical knowledge for worship but knew that should we wait for their Arabic and *Usul* to pronounce on apartheid, the imperatives of *fiqhul mu'amalat* (the jurisprudence of the world) would have passed us by at the moment of its greatest need.

*Continued on page 5*

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It is today the absence of ij-tihad in the fiqhul muāmalāt that makes of Muslims the perpetual victims of history. The state of the ummah is defined by an enormous lag in both the number of patent registrations and scientific-technological publications our intellectuals and professionals bring to the contemporary world. The antiquated state of our muāmalāt is evident in the ambiguity we have about democracy, human rights and freedom, and its impact in our systems of governance, mobility of women, and even in the absence of a strategy and vision for Palestine, beyond ending the genocide.

In the face of these, we possess great moral righteousness, but not always moral clarity, the clarity that is of the Prophetic quality in which there is a clear analysis of our contemporary reality (the jāhiliyyah – era of ignorance – in the Prophet’s (s) time is the barbarism we confront today); opposed by a compelling tawhidi vision of an integrated, inclusive and equal world; and attained through a strategy of jihad (multi-faceted struggle), founded on ij-tihad, without which jihad is

reduced to its component of qitāl– warfare. The Arab Spring represented a moment in which great opportunity – the overthrow of tyranny – was sacrificed because our instinct was nostalgic: how do we recreate both the essence and form of the Prophetic era, and in this we gave room to those who feared the Arab Spring to conspire for counter revolution.

Professor JK Galbraith once said: “The more uncertain people are, the more dogmatic they become”. Dogmatism isn’t intellectualism! If anything, it is at best non-intellectual because thinking has been removed, and nostalgia and imitation have become our currency.

This is sustainable in the fiqhul ibadāt (worship) because the Prophet(s) said: “Pray as you have seen me pray”. But their limitations are evident in the muāmalāt, where certainly the essence must be transposed, but the form transformed. Dogmatism, at worst, is anti-intellectual. It actively opposed thinking: it creates a blanket ban on innovation by invoking bid’a; what it doesn’t understand or tolerate, it labels with takfirism (ex-communication); and in its apparent quest for purity, it



avoids contamination from other faiths, ideologies, or genders. This potentially creates an existential crisis for the ummah, whether by relevance or by Allah’s sunnah to replace a people who fail in their purpose.

I sometimes joke that the strength of the Ummah is that it has no pope, and the weakness is that it has no pope. The strength lies in the fact that what we have never had a clerical class to

whom we outsourced our thinking, no fragmentation of scholarship into theological and secular, and no restrictions on who can and cannot think, thus creating a festival of ideas, creativity and progress.

The weakness is that in times of fragmentation and barbarism, we have no sense-making and consensus-forming centre, and in a place like South Africa we have a mufti (an edict-giver)

in every suburb, whose first edict is often to takfir his Muslim rivals.

It is under circumstances in which the Ummah finds itself victims of the surveillance state, occupation, and Islamophobia that we most need leadership based on ij-tihad and jihad. In the quest for such leadership, we are reminded that the founding revelation in the Quran was the invocation to read, use the pen, and uncover

the unknown knowledge. In the quest for leadership, the Prophet (s) recommends that when two or more are set for an endeavour, the first thing is to elect a leader. Clearly, no leadership vacuum must ever be allowed! But the Prophet (s) also admonishes that those who desire leadership must be denied leadership. Leadership is neither a claim nor a title, it is earned through service to humanity and acclaim by your community.

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LOCAL NEWS

# Christian man who became an imam told: 'the devil got you!'

*Gerrie Desmond Olifant is not only a revert, he is an accomplished imam and a da'ee in one of the most notorious informal settlements near Durban, writes Ismail Suder*

In a dusty township church outside Koffiefontein, (Free State), Gerrie Desmond Olifant (16) did the unthinkable – he told his pastor he was leaving Christianity to become a Muslim. Today, 20 years later, he serves as an aalim in the crime-ridden township of Malagazi, north of Durban.

During the last day of his bible studies class, his pastor at the local Lutheran Church told him: "Son, the devil got you!"

Gerrie, now 36, who officially changed his name to Ali Akbar Olifant, runs a small dawah centre and madrasa in the heart of Malagazi, under the auspices of the Africa Muslim Peace Organisation. Imam Ali Akbar's journey to Islam was fraught with obstacles. When he informed his mother about his decision, she was upset and told him that he had chosen a religion of "the foreigners" – but she eventually gave her blessings before her passing.

What was your turning point? *Al-Qalam* asked.

"It was when my pastor told me that humankind was paying for the "sins of Adam and Eve – that didn't make sense to me. The more I investigated about Christian teachings, the more convinced I became that I was being led down the wrong path," he added.

He once asked his Somali employer why they were praying five times a day. The answers he got, including

mentions about the oneness of God, convinced him that Islam was the true religion.

When they handed him a copy of the Quran in Afrikaans, he turned to Surah Al Bakarah and was taken aback by its messages, "I was excited because these were the answers I was looking for, and I knew instantly that Islam was the true religion. Upon reading further, I was also amazed that the Quran revered Jesus and Mary.

"By the Will of God, I met Moulana Irshad Siddiqi in Koffiefontein. Moulana was also involved in dawah and I badgered him with many questions about Islam, and everything he said resonated with my soul, "Imam Ali Akbar said.

When he informed his pastor that he found the true religion in Islam and that he was leaving, the pastor was clearly upset and told him that "the Devil got you!"

When word spread that he was abandoning the religion of his ancestors, his family and friends shunned him.

"It was hurtful, but I knew in my heart I was doing the right thing," he said, Moulana Irshad Siddiqi took him under his wing and tutored him for a while at his home, and thereafter arranged for him to study at Darul Uloom in Pretoria where he spent over two years doing an aalim course. On his return, he contacted Shaykh Rafeek Hassen, founder and director of iiFri (Islamic Interfaith Research Institute) who further moulded him to become a Da'ee of Islam.

Malagazi, north of Durban is a dangerous place to live amidst random shootings, alcoholism, prostitution and

**“ When word spread that he was abandoning the religion of his ancestors, his family and friends shunned him. It was hurtful, but I knew in my heart I was doing the right thing.”**



drug peddling, but Imam Ali Akbar pushes on knowing that this was his calling. Since establishing himself there, Imam Ali Akbar says over a dozen people have reverted to Islam and more are expected to follow.

Meanwhile, Shaykh Rafeek Hassen told *Al-Qalam* that Allah had guided Ali Akbar Olifant to the deen. "His first mentor was Sheikh Irshad Siddiqi who dedi-

cated his life to do dawah in the poor rural areas of Eastern Transvaal (the son of Marhoom Shaffi Siddiqi) He referred Imam Ali to me at iiFri to teach him Comparative Religion, Dawah and Islam. Imam Ali was a very passionate, sincere and dedicated Muslim. Keen to learn and ready to make all the sacrifices for the Deen.

"In Imam Ali I see the verse of the Quran which says:

"there are people who the desires of this world does not distract them from Allah and His Rasool [S]"

"Imam Ali having reverted to Islam by choice – has really dedicated himself to the service of the Deen, and being a South African, he brings out another verse of the Quráan for the Muslims to take note of wherein Allah says: "if we (born Muslims) do not do the work, Allah

will raise other people to do it."

Imam Ali is a real inspiration and example. May Allah grant his success in the world and the next." For Imam Ali Akbar, his family who once cut ties with him over his reversion to Islam, have bonded again. "It makes me so happy that over 30 members of my extended family have taken the shahadah, Alhumdullilah."



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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*

# More Muslimahs now using Instagram to boost online business

By Dr Quraisha Dawood

Instagram, the world's most widely used app among women, has evolved into a powerful tool for entrepreneurship, cultural expression, and economic empowerment for Muslim women; all from within the boundaries of faith and family responsibilities.

Instagram's visual nature and accessibility make it an ideal platform for women who wear the nikaab or adhere to modesty norms. It provides a private, controlled space where products can be marketed without compromising personal or religious boundaries.

The economic landscape has also shifted with the growth of the global halaal economy which spans food, finance, fashion, and even travel. More than just a dietary requirement, the concept of "halaal" is part of an ethical lifestyle. For many consumers, choosing halaal goods has become a form of

political and moral expression, particularly in a world increasingly conscious of social justice, human rights, and anti-genocidal sentiment.

## Faith Trust and the 'Instafamous'

Catalysed by the pandemic, many South African women took to Instagram to create economic opportunities within the halaal market, becoming part of the labour force while maintaining their roles as Muslim women. Balancing their roles as wives and mothers, maintaining modesty, as well as fulfilling one's daily prayers can make being traditionally employed difficult for the Muslim woman. The accessibility of Instagram offers a flexible, 24 hours online 'shop' which may be used to sell products while fulfilling her other duties.

Within this economy, consumers also trust that a Muslim provider will sell only halaal or halaal certified products. 'Instafamous'

celebrities however pose a concern in Muslim communities as their endorsements, videos and emphasis on materialism often contradict the modesty and simplicity expected of Muslim women. Nevertheless, their networking power, especially of those with over 100 000 followers, has facilitated the rise of premium halaal brands which they endorse.

## Honouring belief in business

For the women interviewed in this study, the flexibility of Instagram allowed Muslim women to have multiple online businesses.

For example, Nura managed three businesses on Instagram: a scented candles business, a clothing 'store' and a beverage product line. As a single parent, this allowed her to earn an income from the diverse markets she has entered, while still fulfilling her duties as a mother (such as homework, cooking and cleaning), making the products, driving long dis-

tances to source halaal products and delivering items to customers.

For Zahra (a baker) and Ayesha (a doula), who have toddlers, hosting the business on Instagram allows them to fulfil their rights to their children and adhere to their prayer times, especially during Ramadaan. Fatima, (an educational toy business owner) explained:

"Instagram opens up a new world to us Muslim women. We have a business tool on hand "literally". Its gives us purpose, independence and endless opportunities."

The overarching understanding that one will answer to Allah (God) for one's sins influences business ethics and strategy.

Ayesha, who prepares post-partum products and services elaborates: "...I rather give a customer more than less. If I am doing a massage, I would rather give them five minutes more than wondering if I timed it

wrong...because we are answerable for all that..."

Similarly, Zahra says: "I do research on halaal ingredients. Sometimes an ingredient like vanilla essence will have alcohol in it and one wouldn't know. So I ensure all my products are halaal."

## Customised and curated

The demand for customisable products is a selling point for handmade gifts in the halaal economy. Initials, names or Arabic letters show a little more effort has been put into a gift. The option to customise it or curate an experience, is key to success in the halaal Instagram market. This is true for privacy as well, especially with antenatal classes among Ayesha's Muslim clientele. While influencers may have their place online, a business owner needs to be careful who she aligns herself with and whether the influencer portrays the authenticity of her brand.

Essentially, Nura relates

that it all comes down to 'rozi,' or what Allah SWT has ordained for you. Even in the face of Covid where these items may not have been deemed essential and the role of the Muslim woman in the home became that of supervisor, cleaner and carer, participants believed that Instagram still allowed them to trade due to its online presence, rather than having to shut down a physical store and still pay their overheads.

Business is intricately linked to faith or fate, as Nura says, 'I took whatever Allah gave me and whatever business was meant for me, came to me.' Even in the online halaal economy that thrives on Instagram, Allah's will has a way.

*\*All names have been changed to ensure anonymity.*

*Dr Quraisha Dawood is the Deputy Dean of Research at the Independent Institute of Education, Emeris, National Office.*

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS

# Kashmir's Ongoing Struggle: From Black Day to Black Laws

By: Muhammad Zakria

October 27 marks a solemn day etched in the annals of Kashmir's history that calls upon us to remember the grave injustices endured by its people at the hands of Indian authorities.

On this fateful day, Indian troops descended upon Kashmir, disregarding its Muslim-majority status and acting without any legal basis for their presence.

This event marked the beginning of one of the world's longest-standing conflicts, a saga marred by numerous human rights violations, extrajudicial and systematic suppression of the decades of torture, unjust arrest, mass detentions, religious and cultural rights of Kashmiri Muslims.

Since that dark day, Indian-illegally-occupied Jammu & Kashmir has borne witness to the darkest facets of humanity, met with a disconcerting lack of mean-

ingful action from the international community which supposedly champions the cause of human rights. India's relentless militarisation of Kashmir has continued unabated, painting a harrowing picture of unchecked power and gross violations.

Through these abominable tactics and black laws, BJP is trying to disempower Muslims and erode their religious and cultural identities in the occupied region and consolidate its illegal occupation.

The shameful undertaking that India started on 27th October 1947, continues with added miseries for the helpless Kashmiris. It has been a long ordeal which must be put to an end. After the obvious ineffectiveness of UN Resolutions and other diplomatic efforts only a strict international response will bring India to its senses.

Several decades have passed and yet Kashmir continues to grapple with an oppressive occupation and authoritarian rule imposed by



Indian authorities. Vulnerable communities, particularly Muslims, continue to bear the brunt of this protracted conflict, which remains a pressing issue on the UN's agenda. The reports of extrajudicial killings, detentions,

injuries, kidnappings and mistreatment at the hands of Indian soldiers have brought the region a jaded reputation in the face of adversity. However, hope persists and the resilience of Kashmiris look to the international

community for humanitarian support.

Kashmiris will persist in striving for justice and recognition of their right to self-determination. It is imperative for the world to

acknowledge the harsh reality that Kashmir faces and therefore it's crucial to implement effective strategies and solutions to bring the Kashmiri cause on a global scale comprehensively and decisively.

KASHMIR BLACK DAY KASHMIR BLACK DAY KASHMIR BLACK DAY KASHMIR BLACK DAY KASHMIR BLACK DAY

**Black Day serves as a reminder of the human rights violations endured by the people of Kashmir. The world must not remain silent**

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"October 27, we stand in solidarity with the Kashmiri people and mark Kashmir Black Day. On this day in 1947, Indian troops landed in Srinagar, marking the beginning of a painful chapter in Kashmir's history. Over the years, Kashmiris have faced immense hardships, HR violations and a denial of their right to self-determination. We honor the sacrifices of the Kashmiri people and reaffirm our support for their just struggle. Pakistan along with the international community, continues to advocate for a peaceful resolution to the Kashmir dispute, in line with UN Security Council Resolutions and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. Let us unite in calling for an end to the oppression and injustice faced by Kashmiris. Together, we can raise awareness and promote a peaceful and just future for the region."

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**"Solidarity with Kashmir, justice delayed is justice denied!"**

#KashmirBlackDay

**RANA ZAHID IQBAL**

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT PML 'N' (SOUTH AFRICA)  
CHAIRMAN  
PASA PAKISTAN ASSOCIATION SOUTHERN AFRICA

"We stand in solidarity with the Kashmiri people on this Black Day, marking the Brutal Act of Indian occupation. For decades Kashmiris have suffered human rights abuses, oppression and denial of self-determination. We pay tribute to Kashmiri people's resilience & reaffirm our support for their just cause. Pakistan & the international community continue to push for a peaceful resolution, aligning with UN resolutions and Kashmiri aspirations. Let's unite to end the suffering and injustice in Kashmir, Advocating for a future characterized by peace and justice."

**STAND WITH KASHMIR**

**FOR JUSTIC, FREEDOM & PEACE**

# Mental Health: An Islamic perspective



By Imam A. Rashied Omar

families and communities. To acknowledge mental illness is not to admit weakness of faith (iman). It is to embrace the truth of our human condition, and to open ourselves to the healing tools that both Islam and modern science place at our disposal.

### Mental Health: A Widespread Challenge

Globally, depression is projected to rank among the leading causes of lost productivity, spiraling health costs, and diminished quality of life. South Africa has not been spared. The tragic and still-unfolding death of former Minister and Ambassador to France, Nathi Mthethwa, casts a piercing spotlight on just how insidious mental suffering can be. According to statements from his wife, Phelisiwe Buthelezi-Mthethwa, she received messages from him apologizing and indicating an intention to end his life. Whether or not every detail is confirmed, her brave disclosure forces us to face this painful reality: mental illness spares no

one, not leaders, not public figures, not the faithful. To acknowledge this is not to tarnish his memory, but to elevate a more compassionate truth: suffering in silence must no longer be the default. Recognizing that even someone of his stature might be overwhelmed by internal pain helps break the silence, challenge the stigma, and open the door to healing. It is important to understand that mental distress is not a sign of weak faith (iman).

Even the prophets of God endured profound sorrow. The Qur'an tells us of Prophet Ya'qub (peace be upon him), whose grief over the loss of his son Yusuf caused his eyesight to fade (Q. 12:84). Likewise, our Beloved Prophet Muhammad (may Allah's everlasting peace and blessings be upon him) endured immense sadness and distress during the Am al-Huzn (Year of Sadness), when he lost two of his greatest pillars of support: his noble uncle Abu Talib and his beloved wife Khadija. The Sirah relates that after Khadija's passing,



the Prophet (pbuh) would frequently remember her with tears in his eyes, and he continued to honour her memory for the rest of his life. He is reported to have said: "She believed in me when no one else did; she accepted Islam when people rejected me; she supported me with her wealth when others deprived me." (Musnad of Imam Ahmad).

This powerful testimony shows us that grief and sor-

row, even for Allah's most beloved Messenger, are natural responses to loss. Sadness, grief, and emotional pain are thus part of the human condition, even for the most righteous and steadfast of believers.

### An Islamic Lens on Mental Health

Islam teaches us that life is a test, filled with both joy and hardship. Allah reminds us in Surah al-Mulk,

chapter 67 verse 1-2, Allah, the Lord of Guidance proclaims: "Blessed is Allah in whose hand is the dominion, and Allah has power over all things, the One who created death and life to test you as to which of you is best in conduct." (Q. 67:1-2) And in Surah al-Balad, chapter 90 verse 4 "Truly, We have created humankind in hardship." (Q. 90:4)

*Continued on page 11*



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# Classic Bread Pudding



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- 6 slices of bread (day-old works best)
- 2½ cups milk
- 4 eggs
- ¾ cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons melted butter
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon or cardamom powder
- 1 teaspoon vanilla essence
- ½ cup chopped dates, raisins, or chocolate chips
- ¼ cup chopped nuts (almonds, pecans, or cashews)
- 2 tablespoons desiccated coconut (optional)

### Method:

- Preheat oven to 180 °C and grease an oven-proof dish.
- Tear the bread into small pieces and place in the dish. Drizzle with melted butter.
- In a mixing bowl, whisk together milk, eggs, sugar, cinnamon, and vanilla essence.
- Pour the mixture evenly over the bread and let it soak for about 10 minutes.
- Scatter the chopped nuts, coconut, and dates or raisins over the top.
- Bake for 40–45 minutes, or until golden brown and firm to the touch.
- Serve warm – with custard, cream, or a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

Recipe courtesy of Chef Zaakirah, Master Chef. Originally published on Halaal.Recipes (2024).

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Continued from page 9

Health challenges, including struggles with mental well-being, are therefore not marks of personal failure. They are an inescapable feature of earthly life, part of the divine test, and an opportunity for growth in patience, faith, and resilience. At the same time, our tradition emphasizes that every illness has a remedy. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is reported in Sahih al-Bukhari to have said: "There is no disease that Allah has created except that Allah has also created its cure." This hadith places a moral obligation on us to seek treatment when we suffer, whether through medical care or psychological and spiritual support.

**Moving Beyond Stigma**

Sadly, within our community, mental illness is too often misunderstood. Some argue that people suffer because their faith is deficient. Others discourage seeking help from psychologists or psychiatrists. This thinking not only deepens people's suffering, it drives them into silence and isolation. We must remind ourselves that to seek help is not a failure of faith, it is an act of responsibility and trust in Allah. Just as we consult doctors for diabetes or heart

disease, we should consult mental health professionals for depression or anxiety. Islam does not demand that we endure in silence; it calls us to act to preserve the gift of life and dignity that Allah has entrusted to us.

**Islamic Tools for Healing**

Alongside professional medical care, Islam offers us powerful holistic spiritual resources to safeguard mental wellbeing:

**Salah** (Ritual Prayer): The daily rhythm of prayer grounds us, reconnects us to Allah, and creates inner calm.

**Dhikr** (Remembrance): Repeating the Names of Allah softens the heart, eases worry, and instills tranquility.

**Sabr** (Patience) and **Shukr** (Gratitude): Cultivating patience in hardship and gratitude in ease provides emotional balance.

**Asabiyyah** (Family Support and Social Solidarity): As the great North African Muslim scholar Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406 CE) taught, strong bonds of family and community protect us from isolation. Congregational Salah, Zakah, Ramadann, and Hajj all reinforce this ethic of togetherness and shared responsibility.

At the same time, we must be realistic: religious observances alone do not immunize us against psychological suffering. Even the most devout may struggle with despair or anxiety. What our tradition calls us to is not denial, but compassion, for ourselves and for others.

**Recognizing the Signs**

It is part of our communal duty to recognize when we or our loved ones may be struggling, and to reach out for help when needed. In South Africa, several lifelines are available: the SADAG Suicide Crisis Line (0800 567 567), the Substance Abuse Helpline (0800 12 13 14), and Lifeline South Africa (0861 322 322), which offers 24-hour counselling and crisis support. These resources remind us that no one should suffer alone, and that compassionate help is always within reach.

Encouragingly, Muslim communities themselves are beginning to develop institutional responses to the challenge of mental health. In the United States, the Khalil Center (khalilcenter.com) has pioneered a faith-based model that integrates Islamic spirituality with professional psychological care. Similarly, in South Africa, the Islamic Careline



(Tel: 011 373 8080 / 078 727 1334; icareline.org.za) provides culturally sensitive counselling and support to families and individuals. These initiatives signal that our ummah is awakening to the urgent need for holistic support systems that weave together the healing power of faith with the best tools of modern psychology.

**A Call to Compassion Care**

Mental illness is not a moral failing. It is part of

being human. Our duty as Muslims is to respond not with judgment, but with mercy and compassion. Let us break the silence. Let us replace stigma with compassion, ignorance with understanding, and despair with hope.

By integrating the healing tools of Islam with the best of contemporary mental health care, we can nurture a community where no one suffers alone, and where the mercy of Allah, the Most Compassionate is made

manifest in how we care for one another.

May Allah, the Most Compassionate, grant relief and strength to all who face struggles of the heart and mind, replacing their sorrow (huzn) with tranquility (sakinah), their anxiety (qalq) with peace of mind (tumaninah), and their loneliness (wahshah) with the warmth of Allah's Divine Presence; and may their trials be a purification of sins and a means of raising their ranks by Allah's grace.

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# Albanese: It's a 'call of destiny' to be invited to deliver Nelson Mandela lecture

By Lehlohonolo Lehana

**H**uman rights lawyer and UN Special rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories, Francesca Albanese, will deliver the upcoming 23rd Nelson Mandela Annual Lecture, taking place on Saturday, 25 October 2025.

The lecture will be held under the theme "Enhancing Peace and Global Cooperation."

Albanese said, it is a "call of destiny" to be invited to deliver the lecture by a foundation whose mission is to "steer good trouble." She will be reflecting on the challenges of advancing social justice in a fragmented geopolitical order. With added scrutiny following US sanctions targeted towards her, she will probably draw on reflections based on her institutional and personal experiences and knowledge.

Under US sanctions since July for her outspoken crit-

icism of Israel, she will also present her next report to the United Nations from South Africa in the coming days.

In a first version of that report, published on the UN website, Albanese calls the Western support for Israel during the war with Hamas "the culmination of a long history of complicity".

"Even as the genocidal violence became visible, states, mostly Western ones, have provided, and continue to provide, Israel with military, diplomatic, economic and ideological support," Albanese wrote.

Recent years have seen growing tensions in the geopolitical landscape, which have exacerbated the crisis of multilateralism as global governance structures find themselves unable to fulfil their original mandates, especially in the area of peace, security and development. The lecture will thus give an opportunity to reflect on the challenges of pursuing lasting peace in Palestine, and in other theatres of conflict,



even as the recent ceasefire agreement between Hamas and Israel faces various pressures and debate on whether it can achieve lasting peace.

The lecture will also offer an opportunity to discuss the challenges facing the pursuit of social justice in

a fragmented geopolitical landscape and consequences faced by UN structures and personnel when pursuing matters perceived to be hurting US and Israeli interests.

However, the fact that Albanese was invited and is being hosted by a non-state actor

in the form of the Nelson Mandela Foundation, will show that South Africa tends to not recognise unilateral sanctions as a matter of principle. It is thus demonstrating its own agency by not restricting her movements and continuing to recognise her work as an integral part

of the UN.

The Lecture was initially scheduled to take place at the Linder Auditorium, but due to high public demand, tickets sold out in just 30 minutes. The venue was moved to accommodate a larger audience.

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# ICJ ruling on Israel's conduct in Gaza will generate more heat on Zionist



By Iqbal Jassat

In another fatal blow to its pariah status as a rogue regime, the settler colonial regime Israel has once again been found to be in grave violation of International Law.

Though belated, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued a strongly worded ruling, stating that Israel must allow the entry of urgently needed humanitarian aid into Gaza Strip and ensure the basic survival needs of its population are met.

“The court considers that Israel is under an obligation to agree to and facilitate relief schemes provided by the United Nations and its entities, including UNRWA,” said ICJ President Yuji Iwasawa.

The court emphasized that as an occupying power, Israel must guarantee essentials for civilians, including food, water, and other critical supplies.

“As an occupying power, Israel is obliged to ensure the basic needs of the local population, including the supplies essential for their survival,” Iwasawa added.

While the world looks on as a fragile ceasefire takes effect following two years of relentless bombings and devastating cruelty inflicted on the besieged population of Gaza, the Netanyahu regime has yet again been cornered and exposed as genocidaires.

None of the myriad of excuses used by the Zionist regime to justify its evil policies of weaponizing starvation and the inhumane denial of critical supplies, has been entertained by the ICJ.

As expected, the genocidal regime led by war criminals has dismissed



the ruling as politically motivated. Such kneejerk responses including rejection of the ICJ is entirely predictable and in line with what the international community has heard from Israel, over the last 24 months of genocide.

However, rejection does not absolve the regime from the legal, moral and political implications that flow out of the ICJ ruling.

Equally damning is the finding that no evidence exists that members of UNRWA were affiliated with Hamas. This myth, as we know and have written about, was deliberately fabricated and widely promoted by the regime and its army of Hasbara agents, to justify the destruction of UNRWA facilities and the massacre of its members.

In its statement Hamas rebuked Israel, saying the ICJ ruling confirms that Israel commits acts of

genocide by deliberately starving Palestinians and cannot legally enforce settlement policies in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. “The ICJ decision banning the use of starvation as a method of warfare confirms that the occupation, which deliberately starves Palestinians, is committing a form of genocide,” Hamas said.

It added that the ruling is a clear call for the international community to “act immediately to guarantee the entry of humanitarian aid and prevent its politicisation or use as a tool of coercion by the occupation.”

According to a Guardian report, a crucial interpretation of the ruling means that Israel has violated the UN’s immunities as set out in the UN charter, as well as ignored its humanitarian obligations as an occupying power under the Geneva conventions. It thus is bound

to lead to further calls for Israel’s suspension from the UN. An additional consequence of the ruling makes it possible for member states of the United Nations to seek damages from Israel for breaching the immunities of UN staff premises.

Seeking accountability and compensation for bombing UN facilities and ending cooperation with UNRWA, is a right that needs to be invoked by member states.

The ICJ judges also found that the mass transfers or deportations of a population in an occupied territory is prohibited under the Geneva conventions. It said that Israel had no right to block aid, or force hundreds of thousands of people into crowded areas or to restrict the presence of the UN “to a degree that creates conditions of life that would force the population to leave”. “The occupying power

may never invoke reasons of security to justify the general suspension of all humanitarian activities in occupied territory,” Judge Iwasawa Yuji said while delivering the opinion, which also said Israel is obliged to ensure the basic needs of civilians in Gaza are met. “After examining the evidence, the court finds that the local population in Gaza Strip has been inadequately supplied.”

Philippe Lazzarini, UNRWA Commissioner-General, welcomed the “unambiguous” legal opinion in a post on X and stated that the UN has the resources to “immediately scale up” the humanitarian response in the territory.

The ICJ process is separate from the investigation into Israel’s war crimes in Gaza being carried out by the International Criminal Court (ICC) - another international legal body

based in The Hague, Netherlands. Late last year, the ICC issued arrest warrants for Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant.

In its summary of the ICJ ruling, Sky News said it was a verdict that came slowly, and with some of its barbs hidden in sub-clauses and legalese.

“But if you put the elements together, it was a highly critical attack on Israel’s conduct in the occupied territories. Not just in Gaza, but also in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.”

While Netanyahu has dismissed the ruling, neither he nor his gang of war criminals can deny that it is another nail in Zionism’s coffin and that the heat against the regime will intensify.

*\*Iqbal Jassat is an Executive Member of the MEDIA REVIEW NETWORK*

# SAMNET: ‘Minister, why are so many Israelis entering South Africa?’

The South African Muslim Network (SAMNET) has written to the Minister of Home Affairs, Leon Schreiber raising concerns at the growing influx of Israeli citizens entering South Africa, particularly in the Western Cape. In his letter, SAMNET’S chairperson, Dr Faisal Suliman penned off a series of pertinent questions for which he requested urgent answers “regarding Immigration, Residency, and Citizenship Applications from Israeli.”

**The letter reads:**

“I am writing to request clarification and transparency from the Department of Home Affairs concerning the growing influx of Israeli citizens entering South Africa, particularly in the Western Cape. This matter raises public concern, especially given ongoing reports of human rights violations committed by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) in Gaza and the Occupied, Palestinian Territories, and the possibility that individuals in-

involved in or supportive of such actions may be seeking residency or citizenship in South Africa.

“Given South Africa’s strong constitutional commitment to human rights and its consistent stance in support of international humanitarian law, it is important that due diligence is applied in all immigration and citizenship applications involving individuals who may have served in, or been associated with, military or intelligence bodies accused of violations of international law. To this end, I respectfully request that the Department provide responses to the following questions:

1. How many Israeli citizens or people coming from Israel have applied for South African residency, work permits, permanent residence, or citizenship over the past five years?
2. How many of these applicants hold dual or multiple nationalities in addition to their Israeli passports?
3. What specific back-

ground checks does the Department conduct on such applicants to determine prior or current military service in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) or associated security/intelligence institutions?

4. How does the Department ensure compliance with South Africa’s domestic laws and international obligations, particularly where applicants may have been involved in actions constituting human rights abuses or violations of international humanitarian law?

5. Are there any mechanisms to coordinate with the Department of International Relations and Cooperation or the National Prosecuting Authority in assessing applications that may raise human rights concerns?

It is common cause all able bodied adults in Israel serve in one form or the other in the greater Israeli Defense Force and would have served and participated in the occupation and enforcement of a host

of UN declared illegal activities in the occupied territories of Palestine and Gaza, including, but not limited to, killing and injuring unarmed Palestinians, destruction and / or illegal seizure of Palestinian homes, crops and possessions, illegal arrest and torture of Palestinians. These same people are, especially during the past two years, increasingly entering our country and being sped through the normal bureaucratic processes at DHA and hastily given work permits etc to speed up their presence in our country, notwithstanding the fact that they would have perpetrated human rights abuses in occupied Palestine.

**Relevant Legal Framework:**

The following provisions of South African law provide a framework for this matter: South African Citizenship Act 88 of 1995 - Section 6(1)(b): Provides that the Minister may refuse or revoke citizenship if the applicant has been convicted of an offence

which, if committed in South Africa, would constitute a serious criminal offence.

\*Section 8(1)(a): Allows for deprivation of citizenship if the individual has conducted themselves in a manner seriously prejudicial to the interests of the Republic.

\*Immigration Act 13 of 2002 - Section 29(1)(a): Declares any person who is or has been a member of an organization or group advocating the practice of racial hatred or social violence as a “prohibited person.


\*Section 29(1)(b): Excludes from entry any person who has committed, ordered, incited, assisted, or participated in the commission of crimes against humanity, war crimes, or genocide as defined in international law.

\*Section 30(1)(c): Identifies a person as “undesirable” if they have been convicted of serious offences or conduct inconsistent with South African

values and law. These sections clearly empower the Minister and the Department to exercise discretion and ensure that individuals associated with violations of human rights, including those potentially arising from IDF service, do not obtain residency or citizenship status in South Africa. South Africa’s Constitution, under Section 7(2), further obliges the State to “respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights in the Bill of Rights,” including the rights to equality, dignity, and life. Granting residency or citizenship to people implicated in human rights abuses could therefore contradict the spirit and obligations of our Constitution.

Given the sensitivity and gravity of this issue, we respectfully request that your department furnish a written response addressing the above queries, including any relevant statistics or current policy frameworks guiding such applications.

*Yours faithfully,  
Faisal Suliman,  
Chairperson (SAMNET)*



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# IOC wants no sport events in Indonesia after visa ban on Israeli athletes

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has urged global sports federations not to host any sporting events in Indonesia after it banned Israeli gymnasts from the ongoing Artistic Gymnastics World Championships in Jakarta, a decision the host nation said it took to "maintain public order".

The IOC's executive board issued a statement on Wednesday saying it has recommended that world sports bodies cease holding events in Indonesia.

Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority country, denied visas to Israeli gymnasts earlier this month amid Israel's genocide in Gaza, meaning they could not take part in the championship that began on Sunday.

Jakarta said the move was in line with Indonesia's policy of cutting ties with Israel until it recognises the independence of the state of Pal-

estine. In its strongly-worded statement, the IOC said it was also cutting off all discussions about any potential Olympic Games bid by Indonesia until the government provided assurances that all athletes, irrespective of nationality, would be eligible to compete there in future.

Indonesia has repeatedly expressed an interest in hosting the 2036 Summer Olympics, but the IOC decision all but buried its chances of landing the Games in 11 years.

Following the IOC's statement, Sports Minister Erick Thohir said Indonesia "understands the consequences of its decision", adding that the move was designed to maintain public order.

"We adhere to the principle of maintaining security, public order, and the public interest in hosting every international event," Thohir posted on X.

He added that the principle was part of Indonesia's constitution and based on its

obligation to maintain world order.

"We understand that this decision carries consequences, wherein as long as Indonesia cannot accept the presence of Israel, the IOC has decided that Indonesia cannot host world championships, Olympic events, Youth Olympic Games, and other activities under the Olympic umbrella," Thohir said.

The IOC said it would change qualification principles to include guarantees for access of all athletes, irrespective of nationality, for any qualification event for an Olympic Games.

It ordered the Indonesian Olympic Committee and the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) to attend a meeting at the IOC headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland, to discuss the matter. It did not provide a date for the meeting.

Last week, the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) rejected appeals by the Isra-



el Gymnastics Federation to be allowed to compete at the championship.

The CAS also turned down Israel's request to force the FIG to guarantee Israel's

participation, or alternatively, cancel or move the artistic worlds.

The FIG did not threaten to take the event away from Indonesia as stipulated in its

statutes for cases where the host refuses to issue visas. Israel wanted the FIG "taking note" of the government statement to be annulled, but CAS also rejected that on October 14. - Al-Jazeera



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**SPORT**

# Why was FIFA President with Trump at Gaza peace summit?

FIFA boss Gianni Infantino pledged to rebuild football infrastructure in Gaza as part of a wider post-war reconstruction efforts, writes Andrew Semple

## Why was FIFA president at the Egypt Peace summit?

Infantino stated that Trump had invited him to the Summit for Peace and that "FIFA is here to help, to assist and to put ourselves at disposal for whatever we can do to make sure that this peace process comes to fruition and to the best possible end."

His invitation followed the FIFA president becoming more vocal on the Israel-Gaza conflict in recent days.

Last week, he called for football to support efforts towards peace in the Middle East in the lead-up to two World Cup qualifiers that involved Israel, after pro-Palestinian demonstrations were planned at stadiums

in Norway and Italy. After Friday's Israel-Hamas ceasefire announcement, Infantino praised the US-brokered plan and singled out Trump to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts.

"The role of President Trump has been absolutely fundamental and crucial in the process. Without President Trump, there would be no peace," he said.

## What role did Infantino play at the Summit for Peace?

In Sharm el Sheikh, the FIFA president stressed football's important role in creating new hope in the Middle East region.

Infantino pledged the governing body's support to rebuild football infrastructure in Gaza as part of wider post-war reconstruction efforts following Monday's peace summit.

"Football's role has to be to support, has to be to unite, has to be to give hope in the

region. In Gaza, in Palestine, we will, of course, help to rebuild all the football facilities. We will help to bring football back – together with the Palestinian Football Association – in every corner of the country.

We will bring (footballs), we will build pitches, we will bring instructors, we will help organise competitions, we will launch a fund to help rebuild football infrastructure in Palestine," he announced.

Infantino added that FIFA would contribute with mini-pitches and "FIFA arenas" and invite other partners to join the effort, saying "football brings hope to children, and it's very, very important."

Trump first met Infantino at the White House in 2018, during his first presidential term, after the US was awarded the co-hosting rights to the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

They have appeared at



summits together before; in 2020, they shared the stage at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. It was during this summit that Infantino first called Trump "my great friend", according to reporting by The Washington Post. The pair remained in contact when Trump left office in

early 2021, but since the second Trump presidency, which coincided with June's FIFA Club World Cup staged in the US, Infantino has been seen repeatedly with the US president.

Most recently, on August 22, Infantino was filmed inside the Oval Office after he

gifted a gold replica World Cup trophy to Trump.

In late 2024, Infantino relocated to Trump's hometown in Miami due to his North American-based World Cup commitments, ensuring the two friends have easy access for any joint public appearances in the future.

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