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INSIDE

One Nation Media to challenge anti-Muslim narratives

Page 2



Visually impaired graduate Azraa Ebrahim working towards MA

Page 7

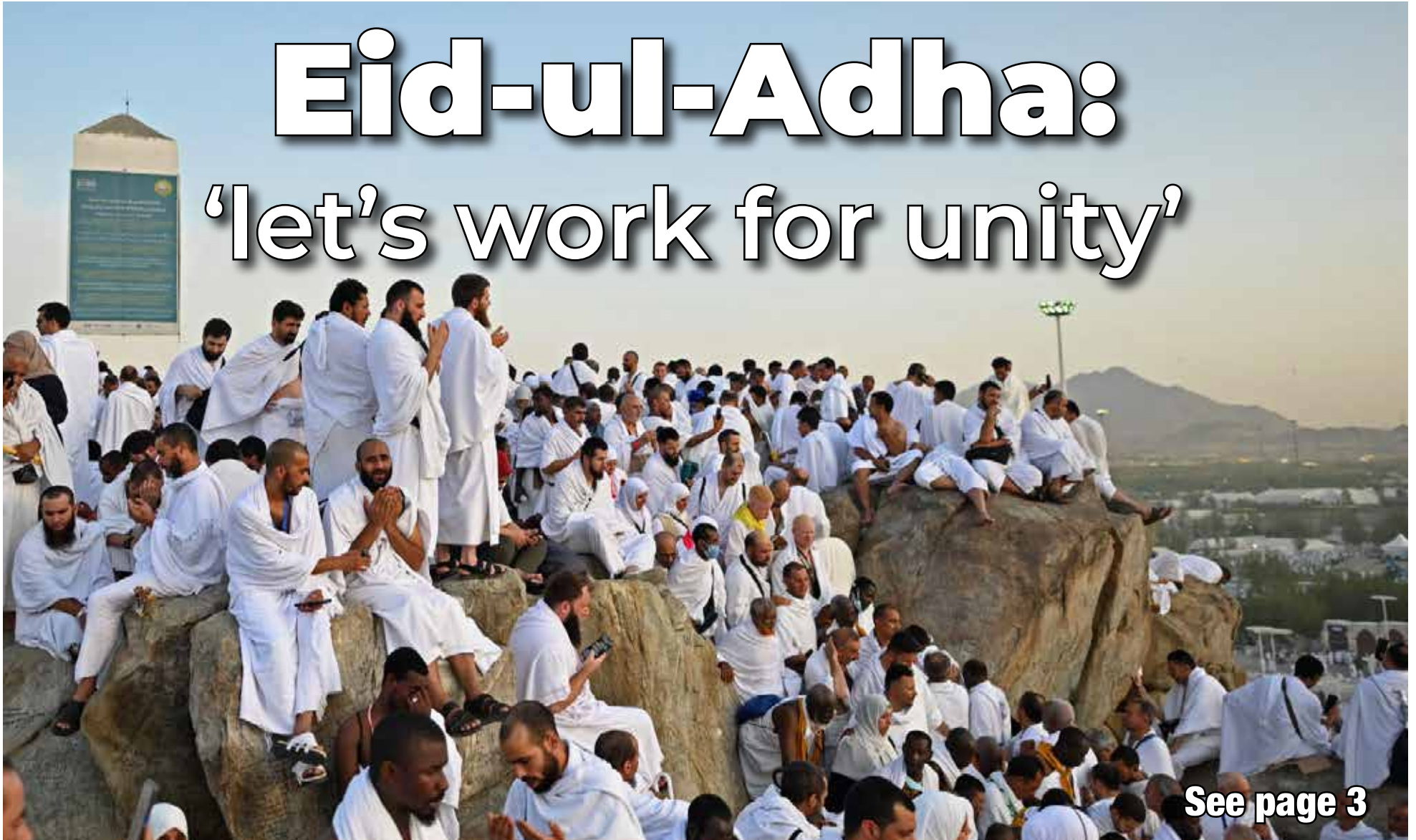


Faheem Jackson explores beauty of Arabic calligraphy

Page 20



Eid-ul-Adha: 'let's work for unity'



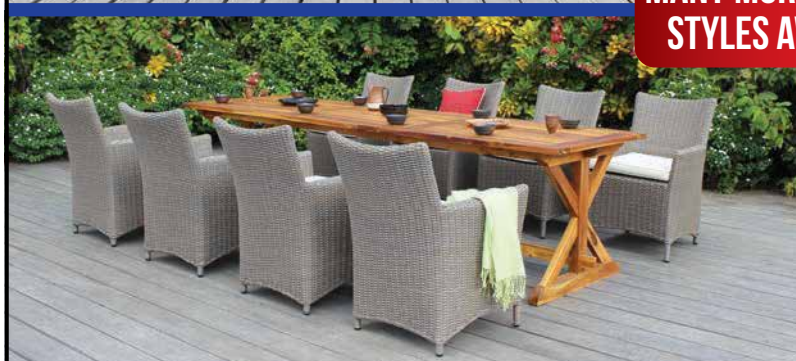
See page 3

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LOCAL NEWS

One Nation Media to challenge anti-Muslim narratives

Headed by prominent British journalist, Dilly Hussain, the new digital platform aims to report on global affairs affecting the Ummah, writes Neelam Rahim

Well-known UK-based journalist, Dilly Hussain has relocated to South Africa to set up One Nation Media, a global digital platform whose mission is to fight Islamophobia and anti-Muslim narratives.

Before joining One Nation Media, he co-founded 5Pillars in 2013, which grew into one of the largest independent Muslim news platforms in the West, and hosted the widely followed Blood Brothers Podcast, known for in-depth conversations on politics, identity and faith.

His appointment comes after more than a decade in Muslim digital journalism, during which he built a profile covering major political

and humanitarian developments across the Muslim world, alongside long-form media and commentary.

Hussain has reported from several regions affected by conflict and political transition, including Afghanistan following the withdrawal of American and NATO forces, the floods in Bangladesh in 2021, and post-Assad developments in Syria. He also covered global reactions to the reconversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque in 2020.

Speaking to *Al-Qalam*, Hussain said his identity is shaped beyond journalism.

“Beyond journalism, I’m a husband, father of two young daughters, and someone whose life has been shaped by faith, family and a strong sense of purpose,” he said. He was raised in Bedford, a town north-east of London, in a British-Bangladeshi working-class family. Growing up in post-9/11 Britain, he said, shaped how he understood representation

of Muslims in mainstream media. “Journalism became more than a profession for me; it became a responsibility,” Hussain said.

Before joining One Nation Media, he co-founded 5Pillars, which grew into one of the UK’s most recognised independent Muslim news platforms. He also hosted the widely followed Blood Brothers Podcast, known for in-depth conversations on politics, identity and faith. His move to South Africa marks a new chapter after years of UK-based media work.

“After more than a decade helping build 5Pillars in the UK, I felt there was space for a new kind of Islamic digital media platform rooted in civilisational journalism and confident in articulating an Islamic worldview without apology,” he said.

“There is a strong intellectual and activist tradition here, particularly around Palestine, social justice and anti-colonial struggles,”

Hussain said. He also noted the importance of South Africa’s press environment in supporting independent media work.

The relocation has also been a personal transition, involving his young family adapting to a new country.

“Relocating a young family to another country is never easy, especially leaving behind loved ones and familiar surroundings,” he said. “But South Africans have been incredibly warm and welcoming, and my family and I have genuinely felt embraced.”

For Hussain, much of his worldview has been shaped by witnessing how Muslim stories are framed globally and the need for independent platforms.

“If Muslims did not build their own platforms and tell their own stories, others would continue defining us,” he said. Now stepping into his role as Executive Editor at One Nation Media, Hus-



sain says the aim is to build a platform that goes beyond conventional reporting.

“My vision for One Nation Media is to help build a serious Islamic digital media platform rooted in journalistic integrity, intellectual confidence and civilisational clarity,” he said. The platform aims to produce journalism, documentaries, debates, podcasts and analysis that not only report events, but explain their meaning and context.

“The platform is grounded in an Islamic civilisational lens rooted in faith, morality and justice, rather than purely secular frameworks,” he said. For Hussain, the need

for such platforms reflects a broader gap in global media representation.

“Muslims are hungry for authenticity. People can sense when content is sanitised, performative or disconnected from their lived realities,” he said. As he settles into his new role in South Africa, his focus is on building a sustainable media institution that connects African Muslim narratives with wider global conversations.

His arrival signals the beginning of a new chapter in independent Muslim media collaboration between the UK and South Africa, rooted in storytelling, identity, and purpose.

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Eid al-Adha beyond racism & xenophobia



By Imam Dr. A. Rashied Omar

As Muslims across the globe celebrate Eid al-Adha and millions gather in Makkah for the annual pilgrimage of Hajj, we are reminded that the meaning of these sacred rites extends far beyond ritual performance. At the heart of Hajj lies a profound moral, spiritual, and social message: the affirmation of the equal dignity of all human beings before Allah.

The Hajj remains one of the world's most powerful symbols of human unity and solidarity. Every year, Muslims of every nationality, language, class, and culture

stand side by side dressed in the simple garments of ihram. In this sacred state, outward symbols of wealth, status, ethnicity, and privilege are stripped away. Kings and workers, scholars and labourers, Africans and Asians, Arabs and non-Arabs all proclaim together the same eternal response to God's call:

Labbayka Allahumma Labbayk: "Here I am, O God, at Your service."

The social message of Hajj is therefore unmistakable: human beings are equal in their humanity and equal in their moral worth. Superiority is not based on race, tribe, nationality, language, or wealth, but on taqwa, ethical consciousness and righteous conduct. During his Farewell Sermon, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) declared:

"There is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab, nor of a non-Arab over an Arab; neither of a white person over a black person, nor of a black person over a white person, except through good conduct and God-consciousness."

This prophetic declaration remains one of the most powerful anti-racist proclamations in human history. More than 14 centuries ago, Islam articulated a vision of radical human equality that still challenges the prejudices and hierarchies of our modern world.

For us in South Africa, this message carries profound contemporary relevance. Our country continues to live under the long shadow of apartheid racism.

Although apartheid formally ended more than three decades ago, its psychological, social, and economic legacies remain deeply embedded in our institutions and patterns of life. Structural inequality, racism, spatial segregation, and economic exclusion continue to shape the daily reality of millions of South Africans.

Alongside these enduring racial wounds, another disturbing phenomenon has emerged in post-apartheid South Africa: the rise of narrow nationalism, xenophobia, and anti-migrant hostility. In recent years, we have witnessed repeated out-

breaks of violence against African migrants and refugees. Fellow Africans, many fleeing war, poverty, or political instability, have been scapegoated for unemployment, crime, housing shortages, and economic frustrations. Increasingly, migrants are spoken about not as fellow human beings deserving dignity and compassion, but as threats to be removed or contained. This moral crisis should deeply trouble all people of conscience.

Afrophobia

Many scholars argue that what we are witnessing in South Africa is not simply xenophobia, a general fear of foreigners, but something more specific and more troubling: Afrophobia. Professor Ronnie Tshaka of the University of South Africa draws this distinction sharply, arguing that hostility is directed primarily at black African migrants from north of the Limpopo River, while many white foreigners are often welcomed or viewed differently.

At a time when fear-driven politics is growing globally, Muslims have a special re-

sponsibility to bear witness to a different moral vision rooted in compassion, hospitality, justice, and human solidarity.

The celebration of Eid al-Adha should therefore not only focus on ritual sacrifice and festive gatherings. It should also inspire moral introspection. What are we sacrificing in order to build a more compassionate society? Are we willing to sacrifice prejudice, racial arrogance, tribalism, xenophobia, and indifference?

The Hajj teaches us that faith without human solidarity is spiritually hollow. It reminds us that our relationship with God is inseparable from how we treat fellow human beings, especially the vulnerable, the displaced, and the marginalised.

Reclaiming the social message of Hajj in South Africa therefore requires more than symbolic gestures. It demands ethical courage and practical commitment. It requires building communities that transcend racial and ethnic divides, educating our youth about African solidarity, resisting the poli-

tics of scapegoating and fear, and renewing the values of justice, compassion, dignity, and non-racialism that inspired so many during the anti-apartheid struggle.

At its deepest level, Eid al-Adha commemorates the willingness of Prophet Ibrahim, Hajar, and Isma'il to surrender themselves fully to God's moral command. Today, perhaps one of the greatest sacrifices demanded of us is the sacrifice of our prejudices, fears, and narrow identities in order to embrace a broader human solidarity rooted in divine consciousness.

As close to two million hujjaj gather on the plains of 'Arafat dressed in the same humble garments, humanity is offered a glimpse of what a more just and compassionate world might look like.

May the message of Hajj inspire us in South Africa to transcend racism, tribalism, xenophobia, and division, and to build a society rooted in justice, dignity, compassion, and the sacred equality of all human beings. -

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LOCAL NEWS

SA activists 'steadfast' after Samud Land Convoy blocked

Mandla Mandela flies to Libya to motivate participants of the Samud Land Convoy heading to Gaza to deliver humanitarian aid. Ismail Suder reports.

Two South Africans travelling with the Samud Land Convoy currently in Western Libya have spoken out about being blocked by East Libyan authorities from continuing their humanitarian aid caravan to Gaza – but they say they are not deterred.

The convoy departed from the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, passing through the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and the Republic of Tunisia, then through western Libyan territories, with participation of more than 20 trucks, ambulances, and mobile accommodation units, and more than 230 participants from 44 countries, including doctors, engineers, educators, lawyers, media professionals, and humanitarian volunteers".

But when the convoy neared the border of the breakaway

region of Sirte in Eastern Libya, the military informed them they would not be allowed to enter its territory.

When Pro-Palestinian heavyweight Mandla Mandela learnt that the "Samud Land Convoy" has been blocked, he boarded a flight to Libya to meet the activists who were encamped at the coastal city of Zliten.

Al-Qalam interviewed two of the three South Africans in the convoy, Muhammad Bulbulia and Jessica Mary Breakey who both said that despite the hot desert windstorms, dwindling food and rationed water, their discomfort was nothing compared to what the people of Gaza were enduring. The third South African participant in the convoy is firebrand human rights activist Fatima Hendricks whose brother Qulb Hendricks – a participant in the latest Global Samud Flotilla – is currently being held by Israel. The others detained are Faizel Moosa, Hajat Kagiso Al Tha'irah, Ahjum Mathee, Mogamed Faek Ariefdien, Ebrahim Peters and Yusuf Rahman.

The Samud Land Convoy (SLC) is aligned with the Global Samud Flotilla (GSF).

Meanwhile, South Africa's Department of International Relations and Cooperation condemned Israel for the illegal arrest of the activists, adding it was negotiating for the release of the SA abductees.

Back at the east-west Libyan buffer zone, the executives of the land convoy delivered a letter to warlord Khalifa Haftar's regime with a plea to allow the convoy safe passage towards Egypt.

The letter read: "We hereby inform Your Excellency that the convoy, subject of this request, is a specialised international humanitarian relief convoy, part of the initiatives of the "Global Samud Flotilla," one of the most prominent international civilian humanitarian initiatives, with participation from actors from more than 44 countries worldwide."

They asked the regime to facilitate safe passage through

the territory under its control including the cities of Sirte and Benghazi, right up to El Salloum, the primary harbour town and official land border crossing between Libya and northwestern Egypt.

The letter continued: "The Sumud Convoy is proceeding transparently and publicly and is under international observation. There is no legal or factual basis for interfering with its movement.

"Accordingly, we request a response regarding safe passage arrangements and approval within 24 hours of receipt of this letter."

"Failure to provide confirmation or to guarantee safe passage within this timeframe will be interpreted as a refusal to ensure the safety of a peaceful civilian convoy, despite prior notice and an opportunity for coordination." They are awaiting a response.

Meanwhile, Johannesburg academic and activist, Jessica Mary Breakey, told *Al-Qalam* that participants are from North Africa, but



Mandla Mandela lifts the spirits of Samud Land Convoy participants, including SA delegates Fatima Hendricks, Muhammad Bulbulia and Jessica Mary Breakey pictured.

there are large contingents from Indonesia and Turkey.

"Part of the delegation are specialised humanitarian workers and we want access through Rafah into Gaza," she said..

"Enroute, we stayed at a coastal town called Zliten where we were warmly welcomed by the community – and by officials of the local mosque. They offered us accommodation and food and it was really, really beautiful with such a spirit of solidarity. That was when Mandla Mandela came briefly to join us. He flew all the way here to offer his support and solidarity which lifted our spirits", she added. Mandela reminded the activists

that Libyans "supported us during our darkest days in the struggle for liberation in South Africa."

He added: "I am here today when we commemorate the Nakba "Catastrophe" to say we remain united as Africans speaking with one voice in support of the Palestinians in Gaza and Occupied Territories.:"

"Our mission will not stop until every Palestinian in the diaspora has been given the right of return to the land of their forefathers. We will continue to mobilise the entire global community until we realise a free Palestine from the river to the sea. Libre Palestina, Aluta continua."

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Ulama council: 'Your Masjid is not separate from your municipality'

By Azra Hoosen

The United Ulama Council of South Africa (UUCSA) is calling on Muslims to rethink the way they view politics, arguing that civic participation is not separate from Islamic responsibility but closely tied to the daily realities of Muslim community life.

At the centre of UUCSA's message is the argument that Muslim communities cannot separate their religious institutions from local government, emphasising that 'Your masjid is not separate from your municipality.'

Head of UUCSA's Political Strategy Committee, Moulana Sulaimaan Ravat, emphasised that disengagement is not what Islam teaches us. "Never forget that we need a conducive environment to preserve our Masaajid, Madaaris and Institutions; to practise our faith and to live our lives as citizens. If you

disengage from the system, you are effectively handing over the responsibility to someone else to decide what kind of environment we will exist in materially and spiritually. That is why every vote counts," he said.

Explaining the importance of participation in the upcoming local government elections, Moulana Ravat said many voters do not fully understand how the municipal voting system works. Coalition politics has changed South Africa's political landscape. In many municipalities and provinces, outright majorities are no longer guaranteed, meaning smaller margins can now determine who governs, how coalitions are formed and which policies are prioritised.

"There will be two ballots. One ballot works on a winner-takes-all basis. The second ballot is for a political party. Even if that party's ward candidate does not win, the total number

of votes received across the municipality still contributes towards the number of seats that party receives in council. Your vote still strengthens the party of your choice," he explained.

Moulana Ravat clarified that UUCSA is not forming a political party, nor are they telling people who to vote for. "The aim is to help communities become more structured, organised and mobilised from the grassroots level upwards, so that our efforts are coordinated and more impactful within the political landscape," he said.

Moulana Ravat also encouraged Muslims to educate themselves about governance systems and to participate meaningfully in civic life: "Learn the system, apply your mind, be strategic, do the best you can, exercise the power of your vote, and leave the rest to Allah."

The Secretary General of

UUCSA, Moulana Yusuf Patel, told *Al-Qalam* that growing frustration with politics should not lead to disengagement. Many people only recognise the importance of politics once service delivery failures begin affecting their homes, institutions and communities directly.

"The question is not whether politics will affect us. It already does. The question is whether we will participate in shaping those decisions, or whether we will leave them entirely to others," he questioned.

The council outlined several issues affecting Muslim communities that require stronger representation at the municipal level. These include zoning and land use for Masajid, Madrasahs and Muslim schools, cemetery and burial matters, safety around places of worship, service delivery, housing, disaster response and support for small businesses. Moulana Patel said that as Mus-

lims, we must distinguish between partisan fighting and principled civic engagement. "UUCSA is not asking Muslims to become blindly loyal to any party. We are asking Muslims to become politically conscious, organised and accountable in how we engage," he said.

The organisation also warned against fragmented activism, saying communities that lack coordination often struggle to have their concerns addressed effectively.

At the same time, UUCSA stressed that Muslim civic engagement should not focus only on specifically Muslim concerns. "Our Islamic responsibility is wider than that. We must speak for justice, dignity and accountable governance for all communities, while ensuring that the specific needs of Muslim institutions and communities are not ignored," said Moulana Patel. Beyond elections, UUCSA encourages Mus-

lims to become involved in ward meetings, civic forums and public participation processes. It also urges communities to monitor promises made by political parties and public representatives.

Moulana Patel said that success would mean Muslim communities becoming "more organised, more informed and more consistent" in civic engagement across the country.

UUCSA's message to Muslims who feel disconnected from politics is direct: Your voice matters, and your absence also has consequences.

Your community is not separate from the decisions made in council chambers. Your responsibility as a Muslim is not separate from your responsibility as a citizen.

"If you are not registered, register now, vote and encourage others to do the same," said Moulana Patel.

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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."
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Visually impaired graduate Azraa Ebrahim now working towards MA

By Azra Hoosen

From SA Top Achiever to Summa Cum Laude, everything changed the moment Azraa Ebrahim stopped asking ‘Can I?’

The young scholar recently graduated from the University of KwaZulu-Natal with a Bachelor of Arts Honours degree in Religion and Social Transformation, achieving Summa Cum Laude distinction and averaging above 80% across all her modules.

Born with Congenital Bilateral Optic Nerve Atrophy, a rare degenerative condition affecting her vision, Azraa first drew national attention in 2021 after achieving the highest results among special needs schools in KwaZulu-Natal and placing second nationally. Since then, she has continued carving out a space for herself in academia, while using her platform to speak about disability, inclusion and representation within Muslim

spaces. Beyond academia, Azraa has presented at national conferences, travelled independently and returned to her former high school as the guest of honour at its Senior Prizegiving ceremony.

But long before the accolades and public recognition, there was a young girl trying to understand why she had been born blind. “Through-out my life, Islam has been my compass, offering direction through both triumph and hardship,” Azraa told *Al-Qalam*.

As the only learner with a disability in a mainstream Muslim school during her primary school years, she faced bullying and exclusion that deeply shaped her understanding of herself and the world around her.

“It was through Islam, particularly Sufism, that I found the tools to not only endure those experiences but transform them into sources of personal strength and purpose,” she said. For Azraa the concepts of sabr

and tawakkul became living practices. “Islam taught me that struggle carries meaning, and that understanding fundamentally changed how I experience my disability, not as something to overcome, but as part of a purposeful journey,” she said.

That understanding followed her into university, where the challenges became less visible but no less demanding.

“Being blind means that a lot of things take longer. Every piece of learning material had to be worked through carefully and completely.”

Using a screen reader to access academic material meant even simple formatting issues could become major obstacles. Most of her studies were completed on her phone, often while managing severe eye pain.

Still, she pushed through.

“Achieving Summa Cum Laude required discipline, consistency and a genuine

love for the process itself,” she said.

One of the most demanding parts of her Honours year came during presentations. Unable to rely on cue cards or slides, Azraa memorised entire scripts before presenting them. “What surprised me was that this became one of my favourite parts of the process. Memory is genuinely my greatest strength,” she said.

For Azraa, the shift in her life came when she stopped seeing blindness as something standing in opposition to her ambitions. “For a long time, I asked myself, ‘can I or can’t I?’. The moment I replaced that with ‘how will I?’ everything changed,” she said.

That perspective has also shaped the way she understands representation. Growing up, she seldom encountered stories of Muslim women with disabilities succeeding academically or publicly. “The absence of role models that looked like



me growing up is precisely why I understand the weight of the position I now occupy,” she said.

Azraa credits much of her confidence to her parents, who refused to raise her within the limits society often places on disabled children. After noticing how bullying had caused her to retreat into herself as a child, they enrolled her in karate. Years later, she earned her black belt.

Now preparing for her Master’s research on disability in

Islamic digital spaces, Azraa hopes to push conversations within Muslim communities beyond accommodation and toward genuine inclusion.

“I want the voices of disabled Muslim women to move from the margins to the centre.

As one of very few researchers with a disability working in this field in South Africa, I am aware that my presence in these conversations is itself an argument for why they need to happen,” she said.

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Farewell Mymona Galant: a pioneer of teaching Qur'an

By Al-Qalam reporter

Mymona Galant was born in Durban in 1939, the youngest of five children, to Rashaad and Kubrah (nee Salie) Domingo. Her childhood home was No. 37 Maud Lane in Central Durban, an address she repeated frequently in her last years. Both her parents were prominent community members in the small Durban 'Malay' community at the time. Her father was a manager in his brother's textile factory and also a much consulted khatib in the community. Her mother was a well-known and sought after dressmaker and also served as a 'toekamandie' (persons responsible for washing and shrouding the deceased), in the community.

Mymona attended Albert Street Primary school and Umbilo Road High School up to Standard 8. During the Apartheid forced removals in the 1960s, the family

moved to Havelock Road, Greenwood Park. She learnt how to recite the Qur'an from her parents. Her love for the Qur'an inspired her to join the Arabic Study Circle in Durban as one of its first students in the early sixties.

She married Sedick Galant in 1963, a teacher from Draper Street, Claremont and relocated to Cape Town. Her parents joined them in Cape Town in the early seventies and lived with them, in Vanguard Estate, Athlone, until they passed on. In Cape Town, Mymona initially followed in her mother's footsteps and became a dressmaker working from home. In 1973, she started volunteering as a teacher at the Vanguard Madrasah near her home. Inspired by her teaching at the madrasa, despite having no formal teaching experience, she started attending tajwid classes taught by the late Hafiz Yusuf Booley in order to improve her rec-

itation. She also enrolled for short courses offered by Vista University on child psychology. These studies inspired her to apply to the University of the Western Cape (UWC) for degree studies despite having no matric. In 1997, two years after her husband had passed away, she was granted an age exemption, at the age of 58, and started studying towards her Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of the Western Cape. In 2002 she completed her Honours degree in Arabic and Linguistics at UWC.

For twenty years Mymona taught at the Vanguard Madrasa, later becoming the principal. During this time she developed a pioneering phonetic method of teaching Qur'an reading. She developed a comprehensive madrasah teaching syllabus accompanied by colourful wall charts, flash cards and other visual aids. She proceeded to share her knowledge and experience of teaching this



method for Qur'an reading in numerous workshops with madrasa teachers from various madaris in the Western Cape, as well as teachers in Zimbabwe. Her method of teaching Qur'an reading has been published in a series of eight Qur'an Readers currently used in all grades

at the Claremont Main Road Mosque Saturday Morning Madrasa. During her active years, she also taught regular hajj classes and toekamandie classes to groups of women at home and other locations.

Mymona's life personifies lifelong learning and

she touched many people's lives through her teaching and leaves a lasting legacy of a method for Qur'an reading that will benefit generations to come. Mymona Galant is survived by her three children Jaamia, Khalid and Raashied and one grandchild, Zidane.

Eid Mubarak

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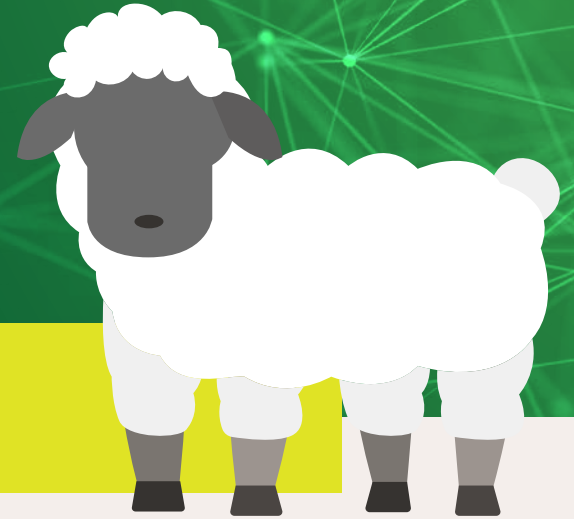
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SIYASA: Muslim Politics for Fighting Wolves and Cultivating the Land



By Ebrahim Rassol
(Former Ambassador to the USA)

Muslims and politics is often a vexed topic, maybe because it is often misunderstood. In my recent presentation at The Muslim Association of Canada Convention I addressed the issue, ranging from socio-political activism to political governance and policymaking, and how Muslims play differential roles across various political scenarios.

Necessarily, the need for Muslims, wherever they are, majority or minority, to un-

derstand what politics is, to understand the imperative of power, to ensure that management of power should lead to development, rights, inclusion, and, therefore, the betterment of society. The injunction is Quranic (11:61) in that we are obligated to cultivate the earth on which we dwell and from which we emerge.

But the uneven, even conflictual, understanding of politics in a global Muslim community reflects a fraught relationship with politics. Muslims are largely victims within states that have perfected the art of surveillance, exclusion, and autocracy. Sometimes elections could lead to illiberal outcomes; and yet others face a reality of a minority in ambiguity – embracing political democracy, but often subjected to Islamophobia, demands of secularization and assimilation, and suspected of subversion.

Amidst such mixed experiences of politics, South Africa, because of the fa-

vourable political condition Muslims are under, are expected to draw on a 350-year evolution from victims of colonialism, segregation, and apartheid to beneficiaries of democracy, human rights, and freedom, to help navigate such conundrums.

However, to avoid simple replication, it is necessary to frame my analysis by probing the common Arabic or Muslim vocabulary for politics, political participation, political governance, and policy development. Drilling down into the word Siyasa, into the etymology of Siyasa, becomes crucial to reorient the Muslim approach to politics.

Siyasa emerges from the practice of animal husbandry, managing livestock as the key to food security, and in turn, as the key to securing livelihoods in fragile and sensitive ecosystems. The practice of shepherding livestock as the precondition for the well-being of people thus lends its name to the very notion of politics! And



therefore, the political practitioner is akin to the shepherd with the responsibility to carefully manage a sensitive and fragile resource.

Furthermore, previous conversations with Hassan al Turabi, who is par excellence, a master of Arabic linguistics, deepen this concept of Siyasa. He adds

the dimension of rotation and circulation. Livestock do not graze at the same place - they need to be rotated to prevent overgrazing and the depletion of feed. And therefore, if circulation and rotation are germane to Siyasa, then very clearly they should be germane to the socio-economic and political sphere because

you require the circulation and the rotation of wealth, and not its monopolization, as well as parties, political leaders, politicians, governments, and those charged with managing the politics and policies of a country, a community, a nation, and a polity.

Continued on page 12

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EID MUBARAK



OPINION

Continued from page 11

The next proposition to be made is that there is not a singular, undifferentiated idea of Siyasa, or political governance, and political activism in Islam. It is largely contextual. Siyasa takes a different form and shape, based on different imperatives at play in different contexts. For me, there are four basic contextual scenarios that shape the objectives and practice of Siyasa, all reinforcing the ultimate objective: The well-being of people, the development of society, the assurance of food security, and the development of the community. The 4 scenarios expand on the metaphor of livestock management.

1. Keep the Wolves Away! The fundamental task of a shepherd is to protect the flock from aggression, imbalance, anything that disrupts the just interaction amongst different elements of the ecosystem. Any greed of the wolves cannot lead to the decimation and insecurity of the livestock.

Therefore, when there are threats to the livestock by the wolves, then the responsibility of Siyasa rests on 2 R's: Resistance, and when the threat is endemic, Revolt, both requiring political activism against injustice, exclusion, autocracy, denial of rights, undue surveillance... through forms of mobilization and organization.

2. Restock and Sow! The transition from conflict creates the imperative of fundamentally restoring the grazing fields and husbanding the new generations of livestock, after the wolves were fought and hopefully defeated. That means that the R's of providing Relief and starting the Reconstruction are crucial to meeting the challenge of post conflict stabilization and development as the imperative of Siyasa.

3. Cultivate the Land! The transition development is the imperative scenario of Siyasa, where restorative justice starts to take shape, and therefore the cultivation of society needs to take place, insti-

tutional resilience against the wolves put into place, and the systemic wherewithal for food security and development instituted. The institutions and systems of governance manifest as Siyasa, whether as majority countries or minority communities, where the R's of securing Rights, ensuring Representation, and assuming Responsibility for development. The character of Siyasa means its ability to respond contextually and, therefore, to manifest as out and out socio-political activism, to transitional management, where new shoots are being sprouted, to making society work through institutionalization of rights and responsibility for development.

4. Rotate the Shepherd! This fourth scenario emerges out of the third where the institutions and democratic practices are in place. But there may be the need to circulate and rotate the shepherds, as germane to Siyasa. Shepherds have lapses, temptations, are prone to corruption, and can become tone-deaf to the very vulnerable and the very



poor. Therefore, there is a need for activism, electoral campaigning, judicial intervention, media investigation, and civil accountability to change the shepherd. The system may not qualify for a revolt or a resistance, but certainly for the R's - Renewal and Reform. For a community alien-

ated from politics, the very origin in the Muslim imagination of politics, in the notion of Siyasa, provides a set of metaphors that allow us to understand that not all politics has the same form. We can err when we misidentify the juncture we're in; but are we confronting

wolves or a tone-deaf shepherd? Must we revolt or reform? Is our justice in a transitional or restorative phase? Each choice has an implication for the way Siyasa is practiced.

Ambassador Ebrahim Rasool is the former ambassador to the US and former Premier of the Western Cape

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Faith and Holding On to the Promise of Liberation

By Mphutlane Bofelo

This past Sunday, I spent time with a friend who was among the first to visit me at Leeuhof Prison in the 1980's. I had imprisonment for my political activism work.

After my release, when police harassment was relentless, he helped me enroll at As-Salaam Educational Institute in Mahlathini Village near Braemar and Umzinto — a refuge for young activists fleeing persecution.

At a time when Black Consciousness adherents faced violence from all sides, this brother left the comforts of suburban life to enter my township, intent on taking me to safety.

Yet, inspired by Biko's teaching that conquering the fear of death is the most liberating act, and that the

manner of one's death carries political meaning, I chose to stay and confront the situation head-on. As we reminisced, he reminded me how the BCM had warned of the neocolonial and neo-apartheid horrors that would follow the reformist CODESA.

With sadness, he asked whether, now that I witness the continuity of racial capitalism, I regret dedicating my life to the struggle.

I laughed off the question, but it lingered. Later, another comrade posed the same challenge: how do I keep going in this work despite disappointments, reversals, and betrayals? My answer remains simple yet profound: love, faith, and hope.

Faith anchors the conviction that freedom is not only possible but divinely mandated. In South Africa's Black Theology of Liberation, faith framed resistance

as a moral and spiritual battle. It transforms despair into determination, shielding against fear and doubt.

Hope sustains vision through hardship. It is resilience embodied — a "helmet" protecting the mind against despair, enabling endurance through imprisonment, exile, or violence. Hope is active expectation, expressed in songs, prayer, and revolutionary rhetoric.

Love binds communities together, ensuring the struggle is about dignity and solidarity.

Love transforms resistance into collective action: caring for families of prisoners, protecting the vulnerable, and building unity. In liberation theology, love demands justice and nurtures reconciliation.

Together, faith, hope, and love form a resilient moral framework. Faith grips the present, hope secures the



future, and love sustains the community. Yet balance is essential. Faith without love risks rigid ideology; hope without faith collapses

into naïve optimism; love without hope may lead to burnout. Only in harmony do these forces keep liberation movements principled,

humane, and enduring.

Bofelo is the former Secretary General of the Muslim Youth Movement

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EDITORIAL



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NB. All letters MUST be accompanied by the writer's correct name and contact details, or it will not be published. A nom-de-plume will be accepted only for publication purposes.
 NB. All views reflected in this column are the opinion of the writer and do NOT necessarily reflect the views of the Editor.

We would like to thank all our respected readers for sending in your comments, views and opinions to our 'Letters to the Editor' column. We value your thoughts on the various aspects affecting the Muslim community. Keep them rolling in.

'Why a Sufi conference matters while the world burns'

To convene an international gathering dedicated to Tasawwuf: the inner, spiritual dimension of Islam—at this specific juncture in human history invites the inevitable question: Why now? On Saturday, 16 May 2026, the Cape Town Ulama Board hosted the first-ever International Sufi Conference in Cape Town, bringing together a vast collective of local and international guests. Yet, outside our venue walls, the world felt progressively fractured. Gaza is burning. A devastating genocide unfolds on our screens in real-time, global geopolitical systems are fracturing, and the drums of wider regional wars beat with terrifying consistency. In the face of such visceral, industrial-scale cruelty, critics might ask how an assembly

focused on the purification of the heart and the quietude of the soul can make any tangible difference. Is it not a form of spiritual escapism?

The answer, as articulated by the profound collective of local Ulama and international scholars who graced our platform, is a resounding no. The Sufi Conference 2026 was not an exercise in isolation, nor was it disconnected from the bleeding edges of global reality. Speakers repeatedly brought the plight of Palestine to the forefront of the discourse.

But more fundamentally, the conference sought to re-establish a critical, forgotten truth: Tasawwuf is not an exotic addition, a separate sect, or an alien branch grafted onto the faith—it is Islam. It is the living manifestation of

Ihsan (spiritual excellence), the third pillar of our Deen established in the famous Hadith of Jibril alongside Islam (submission) and Iman (faith).

Throughout the day, the core of our scholarly talks and discussions focused intensely on Purification (Tazkiyah), Uprightness (Istiqaamah), Inner Peace, and Spiritual Growth. We delved deeply into the necessity of continuous Change, seeking an unshakable Closeness to Allah, and implementing rigorous Spiritual Training (Tarbiyah). In essence, all of these internal disciplines are not meant to keep us passive; they are explicitly designed to cultivate the spiritual stamina required to assist us in standing up against global and systemic injustices. For South Africans, this understanding is

woven into the very soil we walk upon. The preservation, survival, and eventual spread of Islam across our country did not happen in a theological vacuum; it was forged on the spiritual paths of exiled Sufi masters. Consider the trajectory of Shaykh Yusuf of Macassar, a master of multiple Sufi turuq (orders). Shaykh Yusuf did not separate his deep spiritual litanies (adhkar) and inner purification from his commitment to human liberty. His Tasawwuf was his armor. At the farm of Zandvliet, his sanctuary became the foundational node of Islam in South Africa, a refuge for runaway slaves and political exiles.

This was the same path walked by Tuan Guru (Imam Abdullah ibn Qadi Abdus Salaam), a master of the Ba 'Alawi Sufi tradition, who

was imprisoned on Robben Island. It was these Sufi masters who laid down the tarbiyah that kept the light of Islam burning through the dark centuries of slavery, colonialism, and Apartheid. They proved that a heart close to Allah is a heart that cannot be enslaved by man. By hosting this inaugural conference, the Cape Town Ulama Board aimed to remind attendees that Tasawwuf is the living, breathing heart of the Deen. It is the science that teaches us how to keep our hearts alive when the world around us is drowning in spiritual death.

How does a Sufi conference make a difference while Gaza burns? It makes a difference because it cultivates the exact type of human being capable of standing for Gaza effectively. It trains the soul

through Tarbiyah to seek justice not out of a desire for vengeance, but out of a deep, unshakeable devotion to truth, uprightness, and divine balance. It reminds us that peace is not merely the absence of war, but the presence of justice, and justice can only be established by those who have achieved peace within themselves.

True Tasawwuf commands us to witness the suffering of the world, to feel the burns of Gaza in our own chests, and to respond with an unyielding, dignified activism that is anchored in closeness to the Divine. Only when our resistance is purified can it truly begin to heal a broken world.

Sayed Ridhwaan
 Lead Convener of the Sufi Conference 2026
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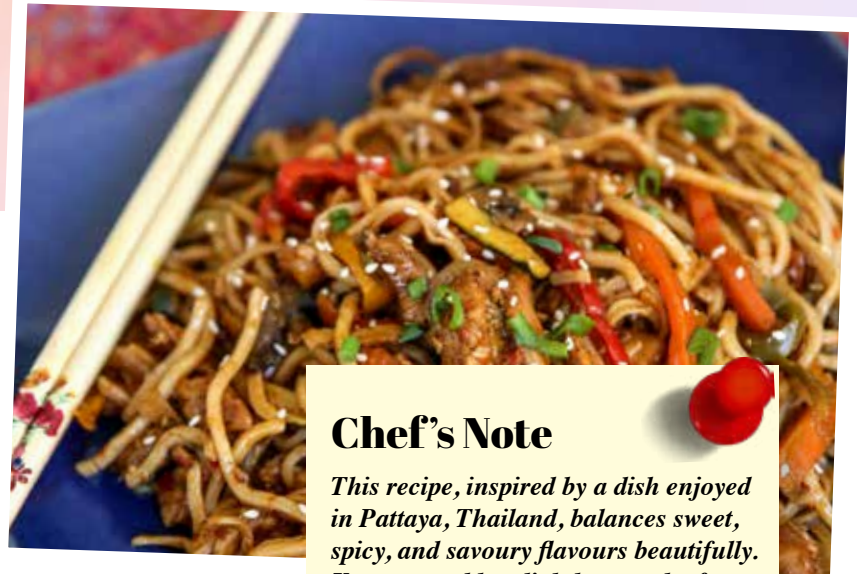
Recipe and Pic Credit: Gorimas Serves: 4 | Prep Time: 15 minutes
Cooking Time: 20 minutes

Ingredients:

500g chicken strips or soya strips (vegetarian option), 2 Tbsp oyster sauce, 1 tsp red chilli paste or dry crushed chillies, 3 Tbsp garlic & herb spice, 1/2 packet egg noodles, 4 Tbsp olive, vegetable, or sesame oil, 1 tsp ginger slices, 1 onion, sliced 2 carrots, cut into strips, 1/4 cup water, 2 baby marrows/courgettes (cut into strips), 1/2 cup butternut or red pepper, cut into strips, 200g mushrooms, sliced, 2 Tbsp light soya sauce, 6 Tbsp sweet chilli sauce

Method:

1. Marinate chicken (or soya strips) with oyster sauce, chilli paste, and garlic & herb spice.
2. Boil noodles in 4 litres of salted water until tender.
3. Heat oil in a wok or deep pan. Add ginger, onion, and chicken. Stir-fry until lightly browned.
4. Add carrots and 1/4 cup water. Cook until carrots begin to soften.
5. Add marrows, butternut/peppers, and mushrooms. Stir-fry until vegetables are cooked but still slightly crunchy.
6. Add soya sauce, sweet chilli sauce, and noodles. Toss well, adjusting sauces to taste.



Chef's Note

This recipe, inspired by a dish enjoyed in Pattaya, Thailand, balances sweet, spicy, and savoury flavours beautifully. Keep vegetables slightly crunchy for texture, and don't be afraid to adjust sauces to suit your palate. For a vegetarian twist, substitute chicken with soya strips — the flavour remains just as vibrant

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All systems go for AWQAF's Maths workshop series

Al-Qalam Correspondent

As South Africa's education system faces ongoing pressures, Awqaf SA has stepped in to address the much-needed educational demands of learners. Now in its 11th year, the community-based organisation's flagship Maths Workshop series is ready to kick off this weekend by providing support to Grade 10-12 learners across the country.

These critical interventions have reached learners in places such as Soweto, Ladysmith, Mitchells Plain and Khayelitsha. Hosted locally in association with the Western Cape Education Department, the goal is to assist learners who are struggling to understand Maths, as well as those who have potential in Maths.

"The high numbers of attendance over the past decade shows that the workshops

are making their mark", said Awqaf SA's CEO, Mickaeel Collier.

"As a community-based organisation, our role is to fill the gaps when the system is under pressure. The learners are eager to improve, and we are proud to lead this intervention.

"Careers of the futures such as STEM (Science Technology and Medicine) all require Maths. Despite South Africa's economic potential, poor learner performance widens the country's skills gap and the growing high youth unemployment rate," said Collier.

"Awqaf SA's workshop series confronts this challenge by giving learners the strategy and confidence to approach their exams like a 'War room,'" stated Maths Facilitator, Mohammad Khota.

"This life changing experience lays a well-planned

foundation for the learners' futures." Collier said that the driving force of the project has been Khota. And that with his unique brand of humour, he has transformed thousands of learners' approach to Maths. Through him, they have acquired an understanding for complex Maths concepts and built an affinity for the subject.

Following a successful 2025 workshop series, where 85 000 learners benefitted, and a record 700 learners participated at Spine Road High, the 2026 series is set to equal, if not increase its impact.

The partnership between Awqaf SA, the Western Cape Education Department, Spine Road High, Portlands High and Luhlaza High School continues to strengthen the Maths ecosystem.

What makes the sessions accessible is that they are hosted as hybrid sessions.

There is an in-person cohort at schools, completed by a larger audience who log on via Awqaf SA's YouTube platform. Registration is free, making this Maths education available to any learners with access to an internet connection. An annual competition assesses the impact of the intervention. Armani Rahman, a Grade 12 learner, scored 97% in her final Maths exam. She is now studying Medicine. Jayda Lee Pillay from Strandfontein High School scored 87%. In Grade 12 this year, she aspires to study Actuarial Science at UCT.

This bears testament that learners have benefitted from this model. Furthermore, learners have been able to realise their full potential by unlocking scholarships, bursaries and university placements.

Workshop

This workshop caters for grades 10, 11 and 12. This



will be a hybrid session where learners will be in person at the school venues and for learners who will attend via YouTube.

Grade 12 Venue: Spine Road High School, Maths Paper 1 (Algebra), Saturday, 23 May 2026 – 8:30am – 3:00pm. Maths Paper 2 (Geometry), Sunday, 24 May 2026 – 8:30am – 3:00pm

Grade 11 Venue: Portlands High School, Maths Paper 1 (Algebra), Saturday, 30 May 2026 – 8:30am – 3:00pm.

Maths Paper 2 (Geometry), Sunday, 31 May 2026 – 8:30am – 3:00pm

Grade 10 Venue: Luhlaza High School, Maths Paper 1 (Algebra), Saturday, 6 June 2026 – 8:30am – 3:00pm. Maths Paper 2 (Geometry), Sunday, 7 June 2026 – 8:30am – 3:00pm

The classes are free. Online registration is required to confirm in person attendance and to obtain the YouTube stream links. For more information, visit: <https://awqafsa.org.za/mathsmay2026/>

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LOCAL NEWS

Faheem Jackson explores beauty of Arabic calligraphy

By Sana Ebrahim

Cape Town-based Arabic calligrapher Ustad Faheem Rhoda Jackson blends heritage, spirituality, and artistic mastery through the timeless language of ink and script.

Faheem's journey into calligraphy began while studying Arabic at Abu Nour University in Syria. A defining moment came when his handwriting teacher, Shaykh Adham Fadi Ja'fari, entered a noisy classroom and quietly drew an intricate calligraphic design on the blackboard. The room immediately fell silent.

"That could have been the day I made the niyyah to learn this art," recalls Faheem. "I hoped that one day I could become like him."

Today, his work sits at the intersection of language, reflection, and visual art. Deeply inspired by Islam and the Qur'an, he approaches creativity as an appreciation of divine beauty.

"Just a small sheet of paper and scribbles can inspire me to continue in the hope that Allah guides me to create the best piece," he says.

Cape Town's Muslim history has shaped his artistic identity. Growing up in Bo-Kaap, he often visited the historic Tana Baru cemetery, where many early Muslim scholars are buried, including Tuan Guru, the first imam of the Auwal Mosque. Tuan Guru famously transcribed copies of the Qur'an from memory while imprisoned on Robben Island during the Dutch colonial era.

Faheem's late teacher, Dr Sulaiman Nordien, gifted him a facsimile copy of one of Tuan Guru's manuscripts. Studying the script inspired him to develop the 'Janubi' script, a South African calligraphic style influenced by historic manuscripts and gravestone inscriptions found in cemeteries such as Tana Baru and Mowbray.

"This made the connection between my work and the

history of Islam in Cape Town even more meaningful for me," he reflects.

His creative process combines classical techniques with contemporary tools. After selecting a text, often through commissioned work, he sketches repeatedly before carving a bamboo qalam suited to the piece. He first works in black ink to focus on form and proportion before refining designs digitally using Adobe Illustrator or Photoshop.

Despite using modern technology, he remains committed to traditional learning.

"The best way to acquire a solid foundation in Arabic calligraphy is through the study of classical scripts," he explains. One of the two foremost scribes of the Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), Sayyiduna Ali (RA) was reported to have said: "Calligraphy is hidden in the teacher's teachings, and mastering it requires much practice."

For Faheem, calligraphy

is more than visual art. It is rhythm, remembrance, and meditation. Raised in a home where dhikr gatherings were common, he developed an early love for Arabic writing through devotional texts such as the Raatibul Haddad. As a student, he often copied passages repeatedly, finding peace in the act of writing.

Among the forms that continue to inspire him are the Huruf al-Muqatta'at, the disconnected letters appearing at the beginning of certain Qur'anic chapters.

"Calligraphers are challenged to bring attention to these letters in creative ways," he says.

Although Arabic calligraphy is often associated with Muslim audiences, Faheem has witnessed its universal emotional impact. During a 2019 workshop at the Palestine Museum in Cape Town, participants from Muslim, Christian, and Jewish backgrounds gathered to explore the art form together. "One Christian woman was brought to tears after seeing



a Qur'an for the first time," he recalls. "She said it was the most beautiful sight her eyes had ever seen."

At the same time, he expresses concern about the misuse of AI-generated Arabic calligraphy. As a graphic designer and calligrapher, he warns that distorted Arabic letters created through artificial intelligence can unintentionally disrespect sacred texts.

"If the letters are unrecognisable and distorted, we have to be careful," he says.

"Muslims believe the Qur'an is the word of Allah." Alongside his artistic practice, Faheem Rhoda Jackson teaches weekly in-person Arabic calligraphy classes at the Awqaf SA Islamic Centre in Zeekoevlei, Cape Town. He offers online Arabic calligraphy lessons to students locally and internationally. His courses are designed for beginners and experienced artists. Through live Zoom critiques and overhead camera demonstrations, students learn technical skills and the etiquette traditionally associated with beautiful writing.



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