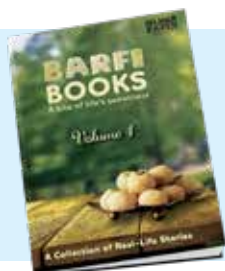


**INSIDE**

**Barfi Books celebrate stories, sisterhood and creativity**

**Page 2**



**UN inquiry urges release of Palestinian doctor**

**Page 7**



**Israeli strike kills World Cup screening organiser in Gaza**

**Page 12**



## MYMSA's 'Ambassadors for Change' workshop develops future leaders

By Azra Hoosen

The Muslim Youth Movement of South Africa (MYMSA) recently brought together 31 young people representing several schools for its annual Ambassadors for Change leadership workshop, a six-day programme held at the Al-Ansaar Conference Centre from 29 June to 4 July.

The workshop focused on developing leadership, critical thinking and facilitation skills to prepare participants to make a positive impact in their communities.

The programme brought together Grade 10 and 11 learners from Crescent Girls' High School, Orient Islamic School, Al Falaah College, Insaan Boys' College and Ihsaan Girls' College, equipping them with the skills to become ethical leaders and positive role models in their communities.

Against a backdrop of rising racism, gender-based violence, corruption and growing social division

in South Africa, the programme challenged participants to think critically about the role they can play in building a more just and compassionate society.

Throughout the week, participants explored topics including identity and self-reflection, discrimination, racism, xenophobia, prejudice, gender-based violence, human rights, communication, public speaking and facilitation skills. They also gained practical experience through a radio interview at Radio Al-Ansaar.

Sessions were facilitated by a range of experts, including the Isibani Law and Therapy Centre on gender-based violence and Attorney Jessica Ngobese from the Department of Justice on human rights and responsibilities.

The programme aims to prepare young people to participate confidently in South Africa's diverse society while remaining grounded in their values. It also seeks to develop critical thinking, ethical decision-making and leadership skills so that graduates can

become ambassadors for positive change within their schools and communities.

Programme facilitator Arun Naicker told *Al-Qalam* that this year's course was particularly encouraging because of the involvement of former participants.

"The 2026 Ambassadors for Change course brought together a vibrant group of learners from schools and a university. The highlight was the full participation of participants from 2022 to 2025, who joined the facilitation team and presented creative and exciting sessions," she said.

Naicker noted that participants left with a deeper understanding of the social and economic issues affecting South Africans.

"The learners went away with a deep understanding of social and economic issues and how they affect the lives of people. They debated issues of discrimination, gender-based violence and the power of making informed choices," she added. For many participants, the



programme was far more than leadership training.

Seventeen-year-old Lubone Kona, a Grade 11 learner at Muir College in the Eastern Cape, travelled to attend the programme and described it as a life-changing experience:

"Overall, I found the 2026 Ambassadors for Change programme highly interesting, informative and very enjoyable.

It gave me the opportunity not just to make new friends, but to grow as a person and learn more about myself. Self-reflection was a huge part of this journey

for me and it taught me that there's always more to learn about myself." He said that the programme challenged participants to think differently about leadership and society.

"Through the programme, I gained leadership skills and the opportunity to view social issues from multiple perspectives. I think I speak for everyone who participated when I say that our critical thinking skills were truly tested and enhanced this week.

It was a privilege to attend all the way from the Eastern Cape, and I'm grateful to the MYM for making it possi-

ble," said Kona.

The final day of training focused on facilitation, lesson planning, community outreach and public speaking, equipping participants to facilitate similar discussions in their own schools and communities.

The workshop concluded with a closing ceremony, where the 31 participants received certificates of completion and reflected on what they had learnt during the week. The group left with a shared commitment to becoming ambassadors for positive change in their schools, campuses and communities.

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LOCAL NEWS

Barfi Books celebrate stories, sisterhood and creativity

By Sana Ebrahim

The Association of Muslim Women Authors in South Africa (AMWASA) celebrated the launch of ‘Barfi Books – Volume 2’ at a gathering that showcased the power of storytelling, creativity and community.

The Durban launch took place at Poppyseed Co in Morningside and coincided with sister events in Rustenburg and Emmarentia on Saturday 4 July.

Led by Durban-based author Waheeda Joosab, AMWASA is committed to amplifying the voices of Muslim women writers across South Africa by creating spaces where authentic stories can be shared with honesty, courage and purpose. ‘Barfi Books –

Volume 2’ is described as “a heartfelt collection of real-life stories that celebrate the richness of life’s sweet moments. From quiet reflections to unexpected lessons, this volume offers a tapestry of tender experiences to nourish the soul and sprinkle hope.”

As part of their ticket, guests enjoyed a light meal and beverage, a traditional barfi treat, a copy of ‘Barfi Books – Volume 2’, a souvenir journal, and a decoupage workshop presented by House of Ayaat.

A portion of the proceeds will benefit Passion to Care, a Rustenburg-based non-profit youth and charity organisation.

Author Nasreen Variyawa delighted the audience with a humorous reading from the anthology, capturing

the warmth and humour of family relationships through one of the book’s short stories.

Author Farhana Yunnus then guided guests through an engaging decoupage workshop, where participants transformed ordinary coasters into colourful keepsakes using decorative serviettes.

Reflecting on the creative process, she said: “Sometimes beauty doesn’t come from grand moments, but from the small moments that don’t need to be perfect.”

The next launch in the series will take place in Lenasia on Saturday 25 July, continuing AMWASA’s celebration of storytelling, creativity and the voices of Muslim women across South Africa.



Safiyya Khan (left), Waheeda Joosab, Farhana Yunnus, and Nasreen Variyawa. Photo Khadija Latiff



Photo - Khadija Latiff

Ambassadors for Change



Ambassadors for Change Skills Leadership Programme hosted by the Muslim Youth Movement of South Africa at Al-Ansaar Conference Center from 29 June - 04 July 2026



- Topics Covered:
- Self reflection, focusing on identity, analysis of diverse personality types, negative influences on a collective environment.
  - Forms of discrimination, racism, xenophobia, class distinction, stereotypes, body shaming and prejudice.
  - Gender-Based violence. The Isibani Law and Therapy Centre facilitated an excellent workshop, deepening the understanding of why GBV occurs, patriarchy, and the cycle and forms of violence.
  - Human rights, which covered the constitution, gender-based violence, children’s rights, human trafficking, laws, and the justice system.
  - Characteristics of a good facilitator, program planning, organisational development, report writing, and planning a session in groups for presentation back at schools and communities.

# New Ballito Masjid is a dream come true



Since its soft opening recently, Ballito's first Masjid is a dream come true for hundreds of residents and Muslim tourists to the holiday town who now have a dedicated place of worship. Today, the architecturally beautiful masjid

at 3 Nandi Mthembu Drive, stands serene in one of Ballito's prime spots that has become a notable landmark admired by both locals and tourists alike. Many have spent years pursuing the idea for a Ballito Masjid – and it even-

tually came about through numerous back-and-forth negotiations with the local municipal authorities, not to mention protests from some residents who complained that a mosque in the area would cause congestion and Azaan "noise" – none of which has hap-

pened. There is no Azaan via loudspeakers, but Muslims residents can hear the Azaan through receivers. A spokesman told *Al-Qalam* that following the erection of the masjid, there was a growing interest from Muslims across

the country to relocate to Ballito and invest in this fast-growing holiday town. With the opening of the masjid, there is an expectation that halaal establishments may open. In the near future, the Masjid trustees hope to open a

fully-fledged madrassa at no cost. The ground floor of the masjid can hold up to 500 musalees and a further 200 on the upper floor. There is also a dedicated section for ladies. The imam of the masjid is Moulana Bilal Vally.

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LOCAL NEWS

# Awqaf SA hooks up water at Rahima Moosa Mother and Child Hospital

By Al-Qalam Correspondent

Awqaf SA has officially handed over a new water supply extension at Rahima Moosa Mother and Child Hospital in Coronationville, helping ensure a more reliable water supply to the hospital's Outpatients Building during municipal water disruptions.

The project was formally handed over during a ribbon-cutting ceremony on 29 June attended by the hospital's Chief Executive Officer, Dr Arthur Manning, members of the hospital's management team, and representatives from Awqaf SA.

The project followed a request from the hospital after ongoing Johannesburg Water interruptions highlighted a critical vulnerability. While the hospital already has access to borehole water, the Outpatients

Building was not connected to the existing backup system, leaving essential services without water during supply outages.

Recognising the importance of uninterrupted access to water in a healthcare environment, Awqaf SA partnered with the hospital to design and install the new water connection, which is now fully operational.

Dr Manning welcomed the partnership, highlighting the critical role that water plays in healthcare delivery.

"Although the hospital has sophisticated MRI and CT scan equipment, one of the greatest contributors to quality healthcare is simple hygiene. As Florence Nightingale recognised many years ago, this remains true today. Without a reliable water supply, hospitals cannot function effectively. This project is therefore not a small con-

tribution – it is a significant investment in quality patient care."

Awqaf SA Founding CEO, Zeinoul Abedien Cajee, said the project reflects the organisation's commitment to strengthening public institutions that serve vulnerable communities.

"Today is about far more than pipes and infrastructure. It is about preserving life, protecting dignity and serving humanity. Every mother, every newborn child, every healthcare worker and every patient who depends on reliable access to clean water will benefit from this project. This is the spirit of Waqf – creating lasting public benefit through sustainable charitable giving."

Cajee said the project continues a long tradition of supporting community infrastructure through Islamic philanthropy. "For centuries, Waqf institutions have helped establish



hospitals, schools, clinics, water systems and other public services that continue to benefit communities long after they are built. Access to reliable water remains fundamental to safe healthcare, infection prevention and human dignity." He thanked the donors whose generosity

made the project possible and acknowledged the dedication of the hospital's leadership and staff.

"This project demonstrates what can be achieved when civil society and public institutions work together in service of our communities. We hope

it inspires similar partnerships across South Africa."

The water extension forms part of Awqaf SA's broader programme of water projects supporting schools, healthcare facilities, places of worship and vulnerable communities across South Africa.





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LAKE GLENCAIRN

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# Islamophobia in SA - When manufactured fear becomes political currency



By Iqbal Jassat

Islamophobia in South Africa can no longer be dismissed as the work of a few misguided individuals or isolated extremists.

The evidence points to something far more organised. Anti-Muslim prejudice is being shaped by an ecosystem of media narratives, political opportunism, imported ideological networks and social media disinformation that increasingly defines Muslims as outsiders, regardless of their history, citizenship or contribution to the country.

The recent intervention by South Africa's Film and Publication Board following the circulation of a grotesque Facebook post depicting the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, in a vile and hateful manner illustrates both the seriousness of the problem and the urgency of confronting it. The Board correctly recognised that the material amounted to advocacy of hatred based on religion and warned that it had the potential to incite harm.

The episode exposed more than one hateful individual. It exposed an environment in which anti Muslim hatred has become normalised.

That environment was on full display following President Cyril Ramaphosa's Cabinet reshuffle, when Yusuf Cassim was appointed Deputy Minister of Higher Education. Within hours, a South African citizen whose family has deep roots in the country was being labelled a foreigner, terrorist, suicide bomber and associated with Boko Haram, Al Qaeda and Hamas simply because he is a young South African of Indian Muslim heritage.

Though Cassim belongs to a political party, the Democratic Alliance (DA), whose policies on Palestine we find reprehensible due to its bias in favour of the settler colonial regime, we find the abuse was not based on facts. It was based on identity.

The campaign against Cassim demonstrated how quickly political appointments can become vehicles for racial, religious and

ethnic scapegoating. What should have been a debate about governance became an attack on whether a Muslim belongs in South Africa at all.

Veteran journalist Max du Preez warned that the intensity of the hatred reflected levels of ethnic and religious bigotry not witnessed since the democratic transition in 1994.

Absent from much of the public discussion was the fact that Yusuf Cassim is not an immigrant. He is a South African citizen who has participated in the country's democratic institutions for years. Yet the facts mattered little because the objective was never accuracy. It was narrative construction.

The architecture of Islamophobia depends precisely on this process. Muslims are first portrayed as perpetual outsiders. Once that perception takes hold, citizenship, history and constitutional rights become secondary to prejudice.

This process did not begin in South Africa.

Following the attacks of September 11, Muslims across the world became associated with extremism, terrorism and violence through relentless media stereotyping. Entire communities were judged through the actions of fringe organisations while the overwhelming majority of Muslims disappeared from public consciousness except when viewed through the prism of security.

These portrayals reflected more than poor journalism. Israeli aligned think tanks, lobbying organisations, intelligence networks and politically connected research institutions supplied narratives that were amplified by sections of the media. Anonymous intelligence briefings, speculative research and unverified claims became accepted truths through constant repetition. Those same reports were later cited as evidence to reinforce the original assumptions.

Manufactured consent evolved into manufactured suspicion. South Africa has not been immune to these influences. Years ago, sensational reporting claiming widespread ISIS recruitment in South Africa illustrated how irresponsible journalism can reinforce anti Muslim prejudice.

Emotionally loaded language blurred the distinction between criminal organisations and ordinary Muslim communities. The effect was to encourage readers to associate Islam itself with



terrorism rather than to understand the complexities of violent extremism.

The same mechanisms continue today.

During the recent surge in anti immigrant protests, fuelled by economic hardship, unemployment and failures in border management, Muslim organisations appealed for calm, rejected vigilantism and warned against Xenophobia, Afro-phobia and Islamophobia. Humanitarian organisations provided emergency assistance to displaced migrants facing threats of violence, consistent with their long-standing charitable obligations.

Yet these humanitarian efforts were immediately recast by nationalist voices as evidence that Muslims were siding with foreigners against South Africans.

The accusation reveals how humanitarian action itself has become politicised.

Muslim organisations were criticised for assisting vul-

nerable migrants while simultaneously being accused of divided loyalties, foreign influence and hostility towards Black South Africans. Support for refugees was deliberately conflated with support for illegal immigration. Calls for peaceful and lawful responses were reframed as opposition to South African interests.

This narrative serves a broader political purpose.

It redirects legitimate public frustration over unemployment, crime, corruption and ineffective immigration policies away from state failures and towards visible minority communities. Muslims become convenient symbols through which wider anxieties are channelled.

History demonstrates the dangers of such politics.

Apartheid relied upon narratives that identified certain communities as permanent threats requiring exceptional treatment. Different populations were targeted, yet the underlying logic remains

unchanged. Social problems are personalised, minorities are blamed, fear is amplified and discrimination is presented as common sense.

The beneficiaries of this process extend well beyond fringe activists. Political opportunists, media platforms driven by outrage, lobbying networks, ideological movements and foreign influence operations all benefit when society becomes polarised along religious and ethnic lines.

Once Muslims are portrayed as outsiders, the definition of who belongs continues to narrow. Today the target may be Muslims. Tomorrow it may be another minority community. The machinery of exclusion rarely confines itself to one group.

South Africa's constitutional democracy was built upon the rejection of precisely this politics of exclusion.

Confronting Islamophobia therefore requires more than prosecuting hate speech after it occurs.

It requires exposing the institutions that manufacture prejudice, challenging media narratives that normalise suspicion, scrutinising imported ideological campaigns that inflame division and refusing attempts to weaponise economic hardship against vulnerable communities. The Film and Publication Board demonstrated that institutions can recognise explicit religious hatred.

Equal vigilance is required against the more sophisticated forms of prejudice that operate through political rhetoric, media framing and digital disinformation.

The silence surrounding these deeper forces is not accidental.

It reflects an ecosystem in which prejudice is manufactured, misinformation is legitimised and political interests profit from keeping Muslims under perpetual suspicion.

*Iqbal Jassat is an Executive Member of the Media Review Network.*

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.

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# ‘Our communities face escalating threats – urgent need for action’

Our communities face escalating threats. We have seen violent attacks on musallees, desecrations of masjids, and coordinated Islamophobic campaigns amplified through social media, etc.

In view of these threats, SAMNET proposes the formation of an Association of Masjid/Musallah Trustees.

Our trustees have a wealth of knowledge and experience with: Rezoning and land issues; Building plans; Architecture and design; Vendors; Type and suitability of carpets; Sound equipment; Fundraising, finance, and maintenance issues and security.

This knowledge can be shared, especially where new projects are envisioned and with communities that do not have this expertise and experience.

At present, when one mosque faces a threat,

trustees in other communities may not be aware of it. There is no rapid alert system. Each community often responds in isolation, without the benefit of what others have learned. Protocols, security resources, and best practices are not shared nationally.

The Association of Masjid Trustees creates the infrastructure for collaboration. It is a nonpartisan (not affiliated to any madhab, group, body) national network where trustees can share threat intelligence in real time, coordinate emergency responses, pool resources, and develop tested protocols.

The association does not replace or compete with the imam or the ulema group that a masjid may be affiliated with. It is not intended for fiqh issues, etc. That remains the expertise of the resident imam and ulama.

The association is a practical tool for trustee col-



laboration on security, safety, and community protection.

It enables faster response to emerging threats; shared learning across communities; Joint advocacy with law enforcement; Coordinated resource deployment;

Trustees working together as a national network rather than in isolation

We would like to start by creating a database and WhatsApp group to facilitate this and, from there, progress towards a memorandum, association, office bearers, etc.

This is purely voluntary. We propose two trustees from each institution.

The following information is required: Name of masjid/musallah; Chairman of the masjid board; Physical address; Email and telephone numbers; Proposed names and

contact details of two trustees; If interested, please send your information to the following: [Info@samnet.co.za](mailto:Info@samnet.co.za) or on WhatsApp: 084 333 3979

South African  
Muslim Network  
(SAMNET)  
Durban

# UN inquiry urges release of Palestinian doctor jailed by Israel

*The inquiry commission urges Israel to release Hussam Abu Safia, citing credible reports he has suffered 'severe abuse'. This report by Al Jazeera Staff and Reuters*

A United Nations inquiry commission has called for Israel to immediately release a Palestinian doctor it has jailed without charge for more than 18 months.

The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory made the appeal on Wednesday for Hussam Abu Safia, the 52-year-old director of Gaza's Kamal Adwan Hospital, saying there are credible reports he has faced "continued and severe abuse". Abu Safia's lawyer Nasser Odeh has warned

that the doctor's health is in grave danger as he faces daily abuse. Rights groups and his family say he shows signs of having been regularly tortured.

During a recent visit, Abu Safia was found so severely wounded that Odeh struggled to recognise him, according to the rights group Physicians for Human Rights Israel.

Last month, footage of Abu Safia appearing via videolink before an Israeli court showed him looking noticeably thinner in his face and around his abdomen.

"The Commission calls for the immediate, unconditional and safe release of Dr. Abu Safiya and of all medical personnel held in arbitrary detention by Israel," the commission said in a statement, using a slight-

ly different spelling of the doctor's name. "It also urges the Israeli authorities to provide immediate independent medical care for Dr. Abu Safiya."

Israeli authorities detained Abu Safia along with other medical staff and patients in December 2024.

They classified him as an "unlawful combatant", a designation Israel has used to hold Palestinians for prolonged periods without trial.

In the statement urging his release, the commission said Israeli authorities' reported conduct towards Abu Safia reflects a broader pattern of violations that it identified in previous reports.

"The actions of the Israeli Prison Service guards towards Palestinian detainees raise grave concerns of

violations of international law that likely amount to international crimes. Dr. Abu Safiya's medical condition is the direct result of these actions."

The Reuters news agency quoted an Israel Prison Service (IPS) spokesperson as rejecting the inquiry commission's claims as "false, outrageous, and entirely without factual basis".

The spokesperson did not specifically mention Abu Safia, although the IPS has previously rejected allegations that he or other doctors have faced mistreatment in prison.

In September 2025, the commission said Israeli authorities had committed genocide by targeting the healthcare system and medical professionals in Gaza since October 2023.



On Monday, a separate UN rights body termed Abu Safia's detention "arbitrary" and called for his immediate release.

In its finding, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention said Israel's actions contravened multiple articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as the International Cove-

nant on Civil and Political Rights. Abu Safia is one of 14 Palestinian doctors from Gaza currently held by Israel without charge.

Prior to his detention, he had been a prominent voice highlighting Gaza's decimated healthcare sector and continued to work despite the death of one of his sons in an Israeli drone attack.



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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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INTERNATIONAL NEWS

# 12 arrested over UK Ijtimia terror plot

By Independent Press

**T**welve people have been arrested over an alleged “extreme right-wing terrorism” plot targeting an Islamic event in Suffolk following an investigation by Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP) London.

The arrests came after police identified what they described as a “potential serious threat” to the UK Ijtimia gathering at Shrubland Hall, which ran from July 9 to 13. Organizers were advised to end the event slightly earlier than planned as a precaution, and police said all 15,000 attendees left the site safely.

Those arrested include a 27-year-old man in Ipswich, a 35-year-old man in Greater Manchester, two 42-year-old men in Essex, five men in Surrey aged 27, 29, 55, 60 and 82, a 33-year-old man in Southeast London, and a 31-year-old man and a 48-year-old woman in East

London. Three of the men, aged 55, 60 and 82, were arrested on suspicion of conspiracy to commit murder. The 82-year-old has since been released on bail.

The 48-year-old woman was arrested on suspicion of assisting an offender.

Eight of the men were arrested under section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000 and remain in police custody.

“After becoming aware of a potential serious threat towards the Islamic event in Suffolk, we have moved extremely quickly to make a number of arrests in various locations across the country,” Commander Helen Flanagan, head of CTP London, said in a statement on Monday. She added: “I know this news may be concerning to the public and particularly those in the Muslim community, given that we believe the intended target was an Islamic event. But as we have shown, we will not hesitate to act if there is any poten-



tial threat, no matter who or what the potential target may be.” Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood said the police response to what she described as a “credi-

ble threat” to the UK Ijtimia festival had “undoubtedly saved lives.”

“I know this is deeply concerning news for British

Muslims,” she said. “We must stand against hatred and we must unite around our shared belief in a country that is open, generous and tolerant to all our com-

munities.” Police are carrying out several searches across the country in connection to the arrests.



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# Ulama says police showed no respect for mosque during immigration operation

By Al-Qalam Reporter

*The United Ulama Council of South Africa (UUCSA) has written a letter of concern to Professor Firoz Cachalia, MP, Acting Minister of Police complaining about "SAPS Immigration enforcements operations in the vicinity of mosques."*

Assalaamu 'Alaikum

Honourable Professor Cachalia:

**T**he United Ulama Council of South Africa (UUCSA) a national umbrella body representing some of the major Muslim theological councils of South Africa, writes to express its profound concern regarding recent South African Police Service (SAPS) operations conducted in and around mosques for the purpose of profiling, questioning, and arresting individuals suspected of being undocumented migrants.

UUCSA fully recognises and supports the constitutional responsibility of SAPS to uphold the law, maintain public order, and protect the security of the Republic. We do not advocate for noncompliance with South Africa's immigration laws, nor do we seek to impede legitimate law enforcement operations. Our concern lies solely with the manner, location, and apparent targeting of places of worship for such operations.

Our concern has been heightened by the events that unfolded in Pietermaritzburg on Friday, 10 July 2026. During immigration enforcement op-

erations in the Northdale and Raisethorpe areas, accompanied by heightened public mobilisation against undocumented migrants, reports indicate that a procession attempted to gain access to a mosque on Vanker Road while SAPS maintained a significant presence in the vicinity. Regardless of the operational objectives, these events caused considerable anxiety among congregants and reinforced the perception that places of worship were becoming focal points for immigration-related enforcement activities.

These developments raise several serious concerns.

## 1. The Sanctity of Places of Worship

Mosques occupy a unique position within our constitutional democracy. They are sacred spaces dedicated to worship, spiritual reflection, education, and community service. Conducting, or appearing to conduct, immigration enforcement operations within or immediately adjacent to these institutions compromises their sanctity and undermines the peaceful environment that they are intended to provide.

## 2. An Atmosphere of Fear and Intimidation

The visible deployment of police officers around mosques for immigration enforcement creates anxiety among congregants, including South African citizens, lawful permanent residents, refugees, asylum seekers, and visitors. Individuals should be able to attend places of worship without fearing that doing



so may expose them to profiling, questioning, or unnecessary intimidation.

## 3. Erosion of Community Trust

For many years, Muslim communities across South Africa have worked constructively with SAPS, Community Policing Forums, and local authorities in promoting public safety and combating crime. Operations that appear to single out mosques as enforcement locations risk undermining this long standing relationship and diminishing public confidence in law enforcement.

South Africa's Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, human dignity, equality before the law, and freedom and security of the person. While these

rights do not exempt any individual from lawful investigation or arrest, they do require that law enforcement exercises its powers in a manner that is reasonable, proportionate, and respectful of constitutionally protected spaces and activities.

UUCSA respectfully submits that immigration enforcement can be carried out effectively through operational methods that do not place places of worship at the centre of enforcement activities or create the perception that religious institutions are being used as convenient locations for surveillance or arrests.

## Our Request

In the spirit of constructive engagement, we re-

spectfully request that your office:

- Issue appropriate guidance to SAPS leadership to avoid, wherever reasonably possible, conducting immigration enforcement operations within or immediately adjacent to mosques and other places of worship, except where operationally unavoidable or where there is specific intelligence relating to criminal activity.

- Encourage operational practices that preserve the dignity and sanctity of religious institutions while enabling SAPS to fulfil its lawful mandate.

- Facilitate a meeting between representatives of your Ministry, SAPS leadership, and UUCSA to discuss practical measures

that safeguard both public safety and the constitutional rights of religious communities.

UUCSA remains committed to supporting lawful governance, promoting social cohesion, and maintaining constructive relationships with law enforcement agencies. We trust that this matter will receive your urgent attention and that, together, we can ensure that the enforcement of the law is carried out in a manner that strengthens rather than weakens the trust between government and the communities it serves. We thank you for your consideration and look forward to your favourable response. Yours faithfully,

Y Patel (Moulana)  
Secretary General

# Al-Qalam

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# EU unveils \$1bn fund for Gaza recovery

*The \$1bn scheme falls critically short of the \$71bn reportedly needed for Gaza's recovery over the next 10 years, writes Al Jazeera Staff, AFP and Reuters*

The European Commission has announced a billion-dollar aid and reconstruction fund aimed at helping the recovery of Gaza from more than two years of devastating war. The “Team Gaza Initiative” launched on Monday at a meeting of donors in Brussels. The scheme will support projects such as restoring water and sanitation infrastructure, removing debris and re-establishing health infrastructure, an EU Commission statement said.

However, the size of the fund falls critically short of the tens of billions estimated to be needed to rebuild the Palestinian enclave amid Israel’s genocidal war, which continues to

kill Palestinians and create dire humanitarian conditions.

Spain, France, Denmark, the UK, Germany, Norway, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Japan, Switzerland, Sweden and Belgium, the World Bank and the European Investment Bank are taking part in the initiative, along with the Commission itself, the statement said. Australia and Canada are also expected to join.

“We will present the initial package today of almost 900 million euros or one billion dollars,” Dubravka Suica, EU commissioner for the Mediterranean, said ahead of the donor meeting. “Our objective is clear: to help build hope, resilience and a better future for the Palestinian people.”

The funding is intended to assist in providing the population with basic water and sanitation facilities, clearing and disposing of rubble and rubbish, as well as restoring health, energy, agricultural and food systems. No breakdown of how much each partner would contribute was provided. Suica said donors “want to start with so-called early recovery, and it is very important to show that we are willing to do it.” “We now need the conditions on the ground that will allow the support to reach the people in Gaza,” she added.



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# Israel wants a foothold in SA's energy sector – We should be worried!



By Iqbal Jassat

*The proposed acquisition by Israeli energy company Navitas Petroleum of a major stake in offshore oil and gas exploration off South Africa's West Coast has exposed a contradiction that cannot be ignored, writes Iqbal Jassat*

South Africa has earned international recognition for taking Israel before the International Court of Justice on allegations of genocide in Gaza. It has consistently presented itself as a defender of international law, accountability and human rights. Yet those principles appear increasingly difficult to

reconcile with the prospect of granting strategic commercial opportunities to Israeli corporations operating in sectors of national importance.

Absent from much of the discussion is the broader question of policy consistency. If South Africa believes that Israel's conduct warrants legal scrutiny before the world's highest court, what framework governs commercial engagement with Israeli companies seeking access to South African natural resources?

The silence surrounding this question reflects an uncomfortable gap between diplomatic rhetoric and economic practice.

The issue extends beyond a single energy licence. Strategic sectors such as energy are never purely commercial. They carry geopolitical significance, influence national security and shape long term economic relationships. Decisions affecting these sectors should therefore be

subject to the same ethical and legal standards that inform South Africa's foreign policy.

The Green Connection has rightly called for transparency. Its request is not simply about one company or one exploration block. It seeks clarity on whether South Africa has developed a coherent policy governing commercial relations with Israeli entities while simultaneously pursuing legal action against the Israeli state.

Such a policy should already exist if foreign policy principles are to carry practical meaning.

This debate also unfolds against the backdrop of South Africa's commitment to a Just Energy Transition. Expanding offshore fossil fuel exploration raises questions that reach well beyond geopolitics.

Coastal communities, marine ecosystems and long term environmental sustainability deserve

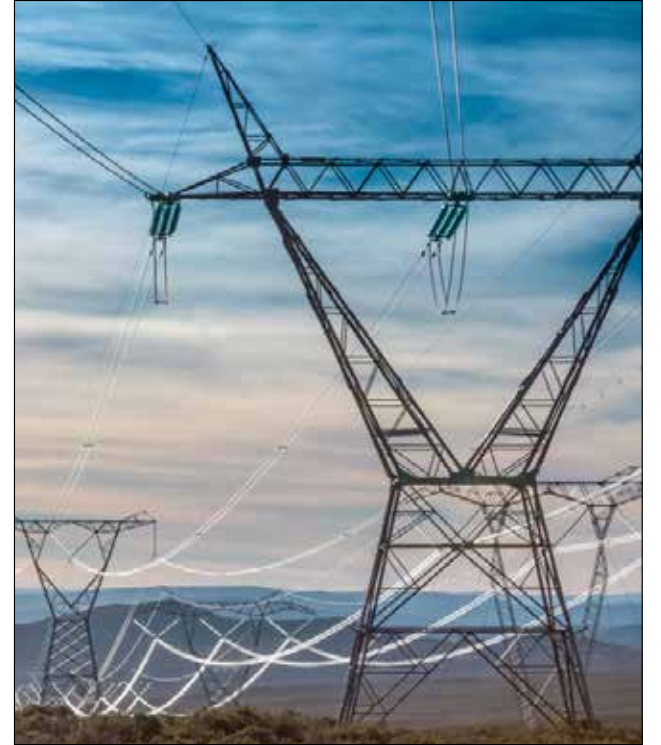
consideration alongside commercial opportunity. These concerns cannot be separated from the political dimensions of the transaction.

The beneficiaries of ambiguity are rarely the public. Corporate interests, international investors and political decision makers all benefit when strategic decisions are made without transparent public scrutiny.

Democratic accountability demands that approvals involving critical national assets be accompanied by clear explanations of the principles guiding those decisions.

South Africa has consistently argued that international law must apply equally to all states. That principle carries obligations at home as well as abroad.

Foreign policy credibility depends not only on speeches delivered before international tribunals, but on whether domestic decisions reflect the same



commitment to justice and consistency.

The proposed Navitas transaction therefore represents more than an investment decision. It is a test of whether South Africa's commitment to international law is a guiding principle or merely a dip-

lomatic position. Unless steps are taken to halt it, the glaring contradiction will point to South Africa's dubious inconsistency, adding to the troubling question of coal supply.

*\*Iqbal Jassat is an Executive Member of the Media Review Network*

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SPORT

# Israeli strike kills World Cup screening organiser in Gaza

By Al-Qalam reporter

Mohamed al-Wahidi, an official with Egypt's relief arm in Gaza, turned what was supposed to be a moment of celebration — the live screening Tuesday of a potential upset against Argentina by an Arab team — into a reminder of how the near-daily Israeli strikes are continuing to kill civilians despite a truce reached in October.

In the months since the ceasefire, Israeli attacks have killed 1,084 people, including nine killed by strikes and gunfire across Gaza on Wednesday, according to local health officials. Among the dead were two children, as well as a truck driver who was gunned down at a roadblock along the Philadelphi Corridor, an

Israeli-controlled strip of land that runs along Gaza's border with Egypt. The Israeli military said it shot the truck driver after he "ran towards the troops." Another man was killed on the street by a drone in Gaza City.

The strike that killed Wahidi on Tuesday hit a car in the Sabra neighborhood of Gaza City at dusk, according to Dr. Mohamed Abu Selmiya, the director of Shifa Hospital. He said three others were killed in the attack, including the driver, Ahmed Daghmush, 33, and two brothers, 10-year-old Hamza al-Deri and 8-year-old Fari.

The Israeli military said Wahidi, who helped organize the soccer screenings in Gaza on Tuesday, was not a target of the strike. It said the attack was



aimed at a Hamas militant and that it was checking whether Daghmush was the target. Abu Selmiya said he was a taxi driver without any known links to militant groups. The committee for which



Wahidi worked is the relief arm of the Egyptian government, which provides food, shelter and other assistance to Palestinians in Gaza. Many in the Palestinian diaspora live across the border in

Egypt, which was a key mediator of the Israel-Hamas ceasefire. Team Egypt's Gaza fan base has only grown since the start of the tournament, with coach Hossam Hassan spotlighting the plight

of the Palestinian people in press briefings and on the pitch. He dedicated his team's victory over Australia on Friday to both Egyptians and Palestinians and waved a Palestinian flag.



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