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LOCAL NEWS

SA Muslims open new school in Gaza

The Al Falaah College Gaza project was a community-driven initiative led by the Al Falaah College Alumni and Al Imdaad Foundation, writes Azra Hoosen

Excitement filled the air as children gathered outside the newly opened Al Falaah College Gaza School on 13 June 2026. For many learners, it marked a long-awaited return to structured education after months of disruption.

Located in Gaza City, North Gaza, the school was established in response to a growing education crisis, with many educational facilities across the territory damaged, destroyed or converted into shelters for displaced families.

The opening ceremony was a colourful and joyous occasion. Children participated in fun activities, families gathered to celebrate and a ribbon-cutting ceremony officially opened the school's doors.

Reflecting on the milestone, Moulana Mohammed Motala, Al Falaah College Alum-

ni member and Al-Imdaad Foundation international projects coordinator, told Al-Qalam that the project began with a simple request from the people of Gaza: "We need a school".

"We have been involved almost daily with projects in Gaza for nearly three years, providing food aid, medical support and shelter. Then a request came from the people of Gaza that they needed education for their children. They had been deprived of education and asked if something could be done," said Motala.

The initiative was funded entirely by former students of the school. "The beauty of this project is that it was done by the alumni. What began as a request from the Al Falaah College community for a school project in Gaza has today become a reality," explained Motala.

The school was established through the renovation of a damaged building, which was equipped with furniture, stationery and other educational resources needed to create a functional learning space. According to Motala,

approximately 900 learners have enrolled at the school. To ensure as many children as possible can access education, the school will operate in three cycles of 300 learners each over a six-day week, with boys and girls attending on alternate days.

The initiative extends beyond providing a classroom. The school caters primarily for vulnerable children, including orphans, displaced learners, households with little or no income and those affected by the trauma of war. Alongside academic subjects such as Arabic, Mathematics, English and Science, the programme incorporates psychosocial support, play-based learning activities and daily nutritional assistance, recognising that many children require both educational and emotional support.

For Motala, one of the most rewarding moments was witnessing the response from the community. "It was so heartwarming to see children and parents lining up on registration day and eventually seeing that classes have started," he said. He emphasised that rebuilding



communities requires more than emergency aid. "Aiding a community is not only giving food aid or shelter. It's rebuilding. One of the main components for rebuilding a community is educating them," said Motala.

The opening comes at a time when many educational institutions in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed. Motala believes the project sends a powerful message to the children of Gaza: "In

one line, I would say, this is a message to the children of Gaza that we have not forgotten you."

The school aims to help children regain a sense of normalcy while laying the foundation for a more self-sufficient future. "We don't want to continue giving them food and emergency supplies where they remain reliant on aid. Education will empower them so that they become self-suf-

ficient, earn their own living and become a generation that will not be receivers of aid," said Motala. The initiative has also opened the door to future collaboration, including the possibility of South African educators providing remote lessons and academic support to learners in Gaza.

Motala hopes the project will encourage other schools and communities to explore similar partnerships..

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‘Don’t worry, there will be no violence during march’, Ulama told

A shortage of buses is compounding the repatriation process of more than 10 000 undocumented Malawian nationals in Durban who are begging to go home, Is-mail Suder reports.

As South Africans hold their breath ahead of the “March and March” campaign against undocumented migrants on June 30, two of the group’s leaders have assured members of the United Ulama Council of South Africa (UUCSA) and a community leader that his people would remain disciplined and peaceful.

In a meeting held with the march leaders, well-known community leader, Moulana Muhammad Vanker told *Al-Qalam* that he privately met with two of the leaders of the anti-immigrant movement, Ngizwe Mchunu and Nkosikhona Ndabandaba in Durban. They assured him the marches across many parts of the country would be tightly controlled by its monitors. “Don’t worry, the march will be disciplined

and peaceful.”

The purpose of the meetings was to “better understand the motivations of the protest actions and the broader movement behind them; to dispel misconceptions about the Muslim community, and to help ease tensions ahead of the planned national shut-down of 30 June.

Moulana Vanker said he engaged the leaders about misconceptions and unsavory utterances made by some of their followers against Muslims.

He said the two “March and March” leaders had no idea that the Muslim community were always generous and at the forefront of alleviating poverty and hardships across all communities in the country. “They were clearly surprised when I pointed this out to them,” Moulana Vanker told *Al-Qalam*.

He said their gripe was mainly against undocumented foreigners – and those foreigners with forged documents. They explained

to Moulana Vanker that the movement was forced into taking drastic measures because the Government has refused to listen to them, even after explaining that undocumented migrants were draining resources meant for South Africans.

However, Moulana Vanker said he understood the group’s point of view, but informed them that the manner in which they were going about doing it was wrong.

Moulana Vanker has urged employers not to dump their foreign workers at refugee centres, but to instead purchase bus tickets so they could travel home without stress – and to give them enough money to help them settle in when they get to their home countries.

In a statement, Moulana Yusuf Patel of UUCSSA said March and March leader Ndabandaba provided assurances that every measure would be taken to avoid violence. “The demonstrations, he explained, are intended to mobilise the Government to

effectively enforce the laws of the country and to address growing concerns around lawlessness.”

Thousands of members of the police together with private security companies have been roped in to manage the marchers.

Meanwhile, at the secured repatriation camp in North Beach, Pastor George Nzenza – a representative of the Malawian Embassy who is overseeing the welfare of his fellow citizens – said he was extremely grateful to Gift of the Givers and the greater Muslim Community who pulled out all stops to provide food, sanitary wear, a mobile clinic and much more.

“They have never stopped helping us, and we will never forget” he added.

“Our citizens are here because they were harassed, beaten and chased from their places of work by vigilante gangs from March and March. Even when my countrymen sought refuge at a park in Sherwood, these



vigilantes came to attack our people in front of the police.

“On top of that, the Government of SA threatened bosses that if they continued to employ undocumented migrants, they would be fined up to R100 000, so understandably they had no choice but to release them. The tragedy is that when these estimated 15 000 migrants return home, they face a very bleak and uncertain future,” Mzenda said. He pleaded through *Al-Qalam* for communities to sponsor buses to take his people home to Malawi. Mzenda can be contacted

on 0616640819. The Palestinian Solidarity Alliance (PSA) has issued a scathing statement against the Government: “It read: “The real crisis in South Africa is not caused by poor and working-class people crossing borders. It is caused by a system that has failed the majority of people who live here. It is caused by unemployment, corruption, inequality, collapsing public services, landlessness, exploitation, and an economy still shaped by elites and capitalists who extract obscene profits while communities are left with hunger, debt and despair.”

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Behind the scenes of Malawi's largest Repatriation Effort

Al-Qalam was allowed exclusive access into the tightly controlled temporary repatriation centre in Durban's North Beach area where more than 10 000 Malawian refugees are being processed for their arduous journey back to Malawi. So far 9000 have already departed - but the process is painfully tedious. Here's some photos captured by our photographer.



This is what you will see, thousands of new arrivals camped on the street opposite the old drive-in site where Malawian migrants are being processed. This is a mere 400m from the Durban beachfront.



Pastor George Mzenda (with backback) who is coordinating the welfare of the migrants seen here with a displaced group waiting to be registered for their bus trip home.



Women and men queue in separate lines for their lunch meal.

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‘I prefer to starve than to be killed in SA’

Al-Qalam goes on a walkabout at the new migrant processing centre in Durban where thousands of Malawians have sought protection. Ismail Suder reports.

They come in waves upon waves to literally fall at the feet of their helpers at an open ground in Durban – tired, hungry and bedraggled.

Threatened with violence by vigilante mobs, the Malawians – who sought a better life in South Africa – are now fleeing with only the clothes on their backs.

“It’s a bottomless pit,” the Home Affairs Kwa-Zulu-Natal manager, Cyril Mncwabe, reportedly said.

And just opposite the fenced ground, thousands more are gathering in the street – an even mix of Muslims and Christians – who are waiting to be allowed in. It’s a dilemma for the authorities who are stretched to the limit. Dozens of buses have

already departed for Malawi but it’s no way nearly enough to move over 10 000 migrants back to their homeland.

When thousands of the fleeing Malawians first gathered in a park in Sherwood, Durban, recently, several charitable Muslim organisations, including Gift of the Givers, immediately stepped in to provide sustenance to the hungry men, women and children. After an uproar on social media which highlighted the filth and squalor they were living in, the Municipality eventually moved the Malawians to the old Drive-In site in the city, a large expanse of ground barricaded by a solid fence.

Reporters are barred from entering the highly fortified grounds, but after some tough negotiations with a tough-looking security team at the main gate, *Al-Qalam* was the only media allowed to enter, thanks to the timely intervention of Pastor George Mzenda, an associate from the Malawian Embassy

who is overseeing the welfare of his countrymen.

The place looked like a concentration camp, perhaps, best described as organized chaos. Long lines of men – 200m long – waited in a queue to be registered by both the South African and Malawian authorities for the long three-day bus journey home – an arduous 2250km trip to the city of Blantyre.

“We are tired, we just want to go home,” said Omar, who stood in line with his worn-out passport to be registered for the bus trip back to Malawi. He admitted to *Al-Qalam* that he illegally slipped into South Africa and made his way to Durban, earning about R3000 per month as a shop assistant.

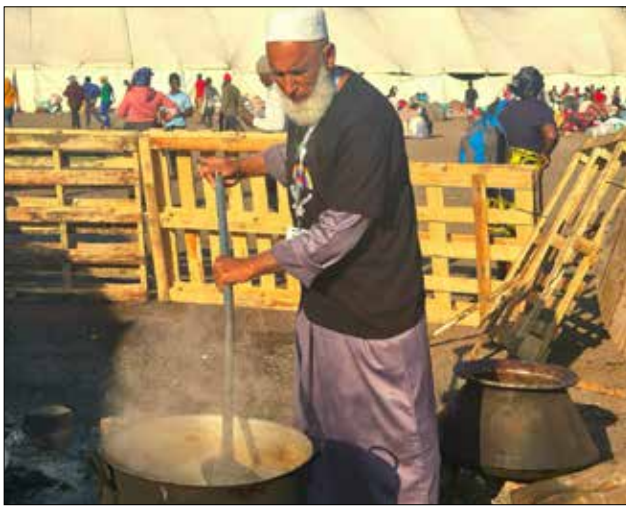
Asked what method he used to slip through the SA border, Omar refused to say, except to smile sheepishly. Another young man, Ismail, said he was thankful to be behind the security fence, knowing vigilante mobs from the March and March movements won’t

be able to penetrate the heavily guarded refugee centre to attack them.

In Pietermaritzburg, vigilantes have killed five Malawians. When news broke about the killings, the Malawian community – both documented and undocumented – fled to congregate at Sherwood Park.

Mohammed (27) said last week a mob came to his room that he rented in Overport and demanded that he leave the premises immediately. Terrified, he fled and hid in a thick bush the entire night. When he cautiously returned to his place the next day, it was ransacked and everything was stolen, including his bed.

In a walkabout through the grounds, *Al-Qalam* spotted a mobile clinic treating people with a variety of ailments, mainly flu symptoms. So far 15 babies were born within a week, Pastor Mzenda, tells me. “I’m no doctor, but I think the babies were born prematurely due to stress on



Br Farouk Mahomed stirs a large pot of tea for thousands of displaced Malawians who are being housed at the old drive-in site in North Beach, Durban. In the background, you can see the huge tents that have been erected to house them.

the mothers. One baby has sadly died,” he added.

In another tent, an Islamic charity group was dishing out steaming acknee from a large degh and a few steps away, brother Farouk Mahomed of Rainbow Food Relief, was stirring a large pot of tea for the migrants. Next to the large food tent, a little tented area served as a mussalah for five daily salaah. A young man was busy reading the Quran, oblivious of my presence.

At Asr, a muezzin was calling out the Azaan in a melodious voice that wafted across the camp. Dozens of

Muezzins across Kwa-Zulu-Natal have since joined the queue to return home.

In fear of their lives, many tearfully bid farewell to their masjids to save themselves from being lynched on June 30 when the March and March vigilantes have threatened to hunt them down.

Asked what he would do for a living when he returns to Malawi, Dawood (29) replied sadly: “There is no work there ...but it’s better for me to eat grass and die of starvation in Malawi than to be killed and buried in an unknown grave in South Africa.”



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EDITORIAL



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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.

'Zionism's victory narratives collapse despite billions spent on hasbara'

The Israeli government's attempt to market its war against Iran as a strategic success is colliding with a reality it can no longer control.

A new poll conducted by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Agam Institute reveals a profound disconnect between official claims and public perception.

Far from embracing war criminal Netanyahu's declarations of victory, a significant majority of Israelis clearly believe the opposite.

The figures are striking, adding to the woes of the settler colonial regime and its fanatical support base, including in South Africa. According to the survey of 3,644 participants, 92.1% believe Iran emerged as the winner of the conflict. A further 82.9% believe the war has weakened Israel's long term security. More than half, 56.4%, rated Netanyahu's handling of the war as poor or a failure, while 72.5% rejected claims that Israel had achieved significant gains or eliminated what officials repeatedly described as an existential threat.

The findings reveal more than the abject failure of its multi billion Hasbara (propaganda) campaigns, it exposes a humiliating widening credibility gap between political leadership and public opinion.

For months, Israeli officials, supported by sympathetic media outlets, Zionist funded NGOs parading as "think tanks" and a network of Western political allies, projected an image of military success.

Headlines focused on tactical achievements, targeted strikes and claims of restored deterrence. Absent from much of this coverage was a more fundamental question: did the Zionist apartheid regime's unprovoked war on the Islamic Republic of Iran actually make the colonial project safer?

The poll suggests that large sections of the Israeli public have already answered that question.

What is conveniently omitted from official narratives is the strategic cost of escalation. The conflict exposed vulnerabilities within Israel's security architecture, disrupted economic activity, generated domestic uncertainty and heightened fears of a broader regional confrontation. These realities cannot be concealed indefinitely through carefully managed messaging campaigns.

The beneficiaries of the false "victory" narrative extend beyond the Netanyahu regime's gang of baby killers and war criminals.

Media institutions, security establishments and political networks invested in maintaining an image of Israeli military dominance all have a stake in preserving the perception of success.

Public acknowledgement of failure would raise uncomfortable questions about the decisions that led to the war and the assumptions that justified it. It is a pattern we are familiar with having fresh memories of hate-filled unjust wars, invasions and occupation of a range of Muslim countries across West Asia and Africa.

From Iraq to Afghanistan, governments have repeatedly declared success while public confidence steadily eroded.

Official narratives emphasised tactical achievements while strategic realities told a different story.

Military power was presented as proof of effectiveness even as long term objectives remained unmet but at huge cost to millions of people displaced and mercilessly butchered.

We therefore ought not be surprised that the same logic appears to be unfolding once again. The significance of this poll lies not merely in Netanyahu's declining popularity. Political fortunes rise and fall.

What matters is the apparent collapse of public confidence in the official narrative itself.

When more than nine out of ten respondents believe the opposing side emerged stronger, claims of strategic victory become increasingly difficult to sustain. To the dismay of the regime and its "friends", the gap between propaganda and reality has narrowed.

The evidence speaks for itself even though agents of Hasbara foolishly seek to frame it differently.

Iqbal Jassat
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Xenophobia – An African Backlash to a Populist Feeding Frenzy



By Ebrahim Rassol
(Former Ambassador to the USA)

I have just returned from a three country African Mission with the Humaniti International Foundation. Zanzibar was our first stop where we delivered paediatric cardiology equipment to detect and diagnose heart defects in children, and will now commence with the req-

uisite training for optimal use. In Tanzania's Mwanza City we visited a facility in which 'born too soon' premature babies (some as small as 800 grams) are given a chance at life; while in war-torn Sudan we inaugurated 10 water distribution points for 5000 Internally Displaced Persons, while caring for orphans whose fathers perished in the war, and starting a process to rebuild the health system for mothers and children.

I provide this travelogue to contextualise firstly, that I travelled through Africa in the aftermath of perceived xenophobic aggression against other fellow Africans in South Africa, and while Bafana Bafana was playing in the FIFA World Cup in North America. Secondly, I explain my travels to highlight that much of the paediatric equipment and

training provided were funded through a Ramadan Campaign conducted in South Africa by Humaniti, and thus South Africans contributed to such health in Africa.

The juxtaposition of xenophobic aggression and humanitarian generosity was surprising, if not confusing, for many of the Africans we met: from high government officials and NGO leaders; to veterans who knew the ANC in Morogoro, Tanzania – and possess memories of children attending a school in Dakawa gifted to Tanzanians by the ANC; to ordinary citizens in a sports bar in Addis Ababa watching South Africa play in the FIFA World Cup; to refugees/IDP's in Port Sudan.

It was confusing because here was a South African generosity at work – the South Africa many said



they know historically – and yet, the images they carried on their devices showed fellow Africans being threatened, given ultimatums, sometimes assaulted, often blamed for South Africa's problems, caricatured as drug dealers

and criminals, and hounded out of communities. This was expected of Donald Trump and his ICE, not the land of Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela.

What they expected of the inheritors of such great

icons was human outrage, principled condemnation, political resolve, and legal protection – not moral equivocation, electoral posturing, and political fragility.

Continued on page 8



MUHARRAM

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OPINION

Continued from page 7

And so, defeat to Mexico was deemed South Africa's come-uppance for thinking we're better than other Africans. Some celebrated our defeat for forgetting the sacrifices Tanzanians made to accommodate us when white supremacists hounded us out of SA. Others wished our whole nation was red-carded for humiliating fellow Africans. There was little middle ground, but huge disappointment with great resentment. Other than blaming an impending election and the inevitable pack of populist hyenas who sense a feeding frenzy, what could SA have done better as the frenzy unfolded?

This question made me think back to when I was Premier of the Western Cape and we had the initial sparks by local South Africans against other African Nationals, which by 2008 turned into a national onslaught against fellow Africans. In 2008, the Western Cape had much displacement of African Nationals, but only one fatality, compared to other areas in South Africa. What did we do differently?

Firstly, we were determined not to have intelligence failures, whether in picking up early the signs of disquiet and resentment against other Africans, or in identifying the causes, potential hotspots, or critical figures, while maintaining surveillance on all three.

We convened the intelligence community regularly as an ANC-led Western Cape Cabinet to interpret the dangers in hate speech, the degree of mobilisation, the possibility of orchestration (domestic and foreign), and the probability of hotspots erupting. The question today is how much of this is being done, with what urgency is intelligence fed to the relevant Minister, and to what extent has the disquiet been placed before cabinet or the President for proactive defusing or real time combating? But clearly there has been intelligence negligence along this chain of command.

Secondly, we deployed soft power into the hotspots of Masiphumelele, Joe Slovo, and others in Cape Town to obviate the later use of hard power. We located this soft power

into a Unit for Social Cohesion in my office to deal with both intra-South African tensions as well as inter-African ones. The methods included dialogue to find a common definition of the problems and provocations, dealing with economic rivalry through workshops which shared retail insights and collaboration, managing social harmony by regulating the sale, for example, of RDP houses to foreign nationals. Again, these don't require elaborate national dialogues – they require political will.

Thirdly, we set up early warning systems through our Bambanani EPWP workers responsible for safety in communities. These Bambanani alerted us both to the flaring of hate speech as well as to criminality either by South Africans and other Africans – whether drug dealing or scamming – so that the rule of law could deal impartially and decisively with any crimes from any source to prevent the emergence of a culture of impunity.

Foreign nationals often follow the latitude in boundaries allowed for

South Africans to determine their degree of adherence to, or compliance with, the rule of law.

Fourthly, when we were alerted to 'xenophobic' flare-ups, we could deploy law enforcement early to prevent rather than combat; to identify and harness the interim infrastructure for temporary shelter; and to ensure a cooling off period, behind a law enforcement cordon, before attempting reintegration of communities. This cooling off period was also used to attend to 'agitators' who exploited the fears and anxieties of ordinary citizens and they were often working for local shopkeepers or taxis who were threatened by the success of other Africans in business.

Today, we may have to ask more international questions about these hidden hands who have interests in SA being unstable, distracted, and fragmented given that we are in the crosshairs of powerful forces.

Finally, we remained true to dignity of Africans, and resisted as much as what we could, when the DA-led City of Cape Town created



secondary trauma for victims of these attacks and located them on the cold, wet, far-flung beaches of Cape Town, ostensibly for their safety, but certainly at the expense of their dignity and work opportunity. In such cases, ANC leadership had the guts to sit in the sand with fellow Africans as a sign of disagreement with their isolation and solidarity with their plight. Displaying such moral courage may today be difficult for an ANC electorally besieged and

compromised in a GNU. But if we cannot stand on principle in Africa, we accelerate the erosion of our standing in Africa, and we forfeit the trust of even more citizens in SA.

We must learn to apply the rule of law as the only antidote to criminality from whichever source. Failure to do so enables the populist political hyenas, the unscrupulous businessperson who fails to compete, and ignites a fire that will consume us.



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MEXICAN CHICKEN

Recipe & pic credit:
Gorimas Facebook Page

Ingredients

- 500g Chicken fillet
- 1 tsp Garlic & ginger paste
- 1 Tbsp orange pepper spice
- 3 Tbsp Mexican Chicken Marinade
- Oil for cooking
- ¼ cup fresh cream
- 1 Tbsp parsley



Method

- Marinate the chicken with garlic and ginger paste and orange pepper spice.
- Add oil to a pot and cook the marinated chicken until done.
- Add the Mexican Chicken Marinade and fresh cream, then simmer for 5 minutes.
- Garnish with parsley and serve with savoury rice.

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OPINION

March and March, false claims and Zulu nationalism



By Imraan Buccus

For more than a year March and March has largely been reported in the media as a 'civil society organisation' or 'civic group' raising 'legitimate concerns' about migration. Jacinta Ngobese-Zuma, its leader, has often been treated as a celebrity and treated like a credible political actor in media interviews.

March and March is neither a 'civil society organisation' nor a 'civic group'. Its demands for mass deportations are directly at odds with our constitutional order, and the blockades it organises against hospitals and schools are criminal acts, as is the street thuggery for which it is notorious.

Of course peaceful protest is a constitutionally protected right and no one should be in a country illegally.

March and March has not been systematically held accountable for its false claims and dangerous myth making, the threats of violence and murder regularly made by its supporters or the violence, including at least one murder, that has accompanied its marches.

This has been fundamentally mistaken.

Calling different kinds of politics by the same name obscures what is actually happening. The distinction between a genuine civic organisation and an organisation engaging in open intimidation is one of the essential distinctions on which constitutional democracy depends.

Trade unions, churches, neighbourhood associations and genuine social movements seek to persuade, organise and mobilise. Organisations that rely on threats, coercion and the systematic targeting of vulnerable minorities are a fundamentally different kind of politics. Treating them as simply another voice in civil society grants legitimacy to methods and politics that are fundamentally at odds with constitutional democracy.

March and March is a clas-

sic 'astroturfed' pseudo-social movement created from above with celebrity leaders, slick marketing and a paid for social media campaign. For months the obvious question of who was funding March and March, and why, was left unasked. Now that the question is being asked it has not yet been satisfactorily answered although there is clear evidence of links to traditional authority, extortion networks and the milieu in and around Jacob Zuma's uMkhonto weSizwe Party (MKP).

Astroturf organisations manufacture the appearance of spontaneous public mobilisation while concealing the interests that organise, finance and ultimately benefit from that mobilisation. Their purpose is not only to influence public opinion but to shift the political centre of gravity, making previously extreme positions appear ordinary and legitimate. Once that happens established parties begin adapting themselves to the new political terrain rather than challenging it. South Africa has already travelled some distance down this path. The political question is no longer whether xenophobia will shape mainstream politics. It already does. The question is whether democratic politics will contest this or continue to accommodate it.

While March and March has attracted the support of Herman Mashaba, a far right populist, and his ActionSA party, which also supports Operation Dudula, it is deeply aligned to a dangerous resurgence of the kind of Zulu nationalism that led to a civil war in KwaZulu-Natal in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Just like in the period of Inkatha's violence the amabutho have been called out of the hostels and it has been made clear to Tsonga and Mpondo people that they can only expect, at best, a second class citizenship in Durban. Some Indian people fear that they will be next.

Both the Inkatha Freedom Party and the MKP have publicly associated themselves with March and March and its Zulu nationalism but it is the MKP that is so entangled with March and March that some analysts consider it a front organisation for the party.

The ANC and the state have failed to engage in effectively with March and March and have seemed to think that pandering to it would take the wind out of its sails. This is how Keir Starmer responded to Nigel Farage and Reform in the United Kingdom with the same results.



Pandering to the far right only legitimates it.

This strategy has become familiar internationally. Faced with growing support for the far right, established parties often conclude that they can neutralise it by adopting some of its language and some of its policy agenda.

The assumption is that voters attracted to anti-migrant politics will return once their concerns appear to have been recognised. Time and again that calculation has proved mistaken. Rather than marginalising the far right accommodating it legitimates its central claims and shifts the boundaries of acceptable public debate.

Across Europe established parties have repeatedly assumed that borrowing elements of the far right's language on migration would weaken it. The opposite invariably frequently happens. When mainstream politicians accept the central premise of the far right - that migrants are chiefly responsible for social and econom-

ic decline - they strengthen rather than diminish the movements that first advanced those claims. Voters looking for that politics generally prefer the original to the imitation.

In the UK Jeremy Corbyn and Zack Polanski have shown how to deal with far right mobilisation around migration. Zohran Mamdani has done the same in New York. The strategy is clear. First the myths of the far right must be directly contested. Secondly people must be offered an inclusive vision of social progress.

Today the country's attention is on what may or may not happen tomorrow. This is unsurprising. Many of the same actors that were involved in the 2021 riots, including the extortion networks and March and March leader, Nkosikhona Ndamabandaba, popularly known as Phakel'umthakathi.

We don't know what will happen tomorrow, and perhaps the R600 million that Firoz Cachalia has allocated to a policing strategy

will be effective. There are signs that various actors are scaling back their rhetoric in advance of the 'deadline' for migrants to leave, and the Zulu King has significantly moderated his discourse. The March and March leaders will probably want to avoid a confrontation.

The question that is not being asked in the media, though, is what happens after tomorrow. The MKP is set to be the biggest winner in the local government elections across KwaZulu-Natal, and will rule many of the municipalities across the province. It may also play a part in a coalition with ANC's own right-wing populists in Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni.

What happens if organisations built around ethnic mobilisation become embedded within local government? Municipalities control procurement, housing, land use, informal trading and many of the everyday points at which citizens encounter the state. If political authority and vigilante networks begin to overlap,

constitutional rights can be eroded long before they are formally abolished. Selective policing, intimidation and discrimination can become routine administrative practice rather than exceptional acts of violence.

What happens when a party directly opposed to the values of the Constitution, linked to extortion networks, brazenly organised around ethnic politics and arguably running a front organisation that has become notorious for unlawful actions and protests accompanied by thuggery and, in at least one case, a murder, begins exercising municipal power?

How will MKP local governments and associated networks be policed by national government? Will KwaZulu-Natal effectively become a province outside the Constitutional order? That is the question that will remain long after 30 June has passed.

Dr Buccus is research associate at UJ and editor of Al-Qalam.

'Board of Peace' to launch ' Hamas-free' camps as Israel tightens grip on Gaza

By MEE staff

US President Donald Trump's so-called Board of Peace is set to launch "Hamas-free humanitarian zones" in Gaza where Palestinians will be herded while the Israeli military expands its control on the rest of the territory, Israeli media is reporting.

Israeli newspaper Israel Hayom reported that the first site will open in Tel Sultan, near Rafah, "within weeks", and house civilians "with no weapons or affiliation with Hamas". It added that the zone will

be policed by a "multinational force", known as the International Stabilisation Force (ISF), which will be equipped with "non-lethal weapons" and operate from the Israeli Amitai Camp near Gaza under the command of the board. According to the report, while aid and temporary housing will be supplied to the areas, Board of Peace officials have pledged not to import concrete into Gaza.

The newspaper further reported that the board is seeking to establish "large logistics warehouses that will serve its efforts to regulate the humanitarian

shelters, including in communities near the border fence", and has begun identifying sites for this purpose. Meanwhile, it said that the Israeli army will continue expanding and consolidating its grip beyond the so-called "Yellow Line" - an area that Israel was expected to hold temporarily in the first stage of the ceasefire but has refused to relinquish as it has not proceeded with the second stage of the deal, which requires its withdrawal.

The buffer zone now encompasses about 70 per cent of the territory.

An unnamed official told Israel Hayom: "We are manoeuvring within the American constraints, increasing the pace of targeted killings while remaining below the threshold of international criticism - and this will continue as long as Hamas is unwilling to disarm."

The Board of Peace was established in January at Trump's initiative as part of efforts to reach a settlement in Gaza.

On Tuesday, the board announced that the first "tactical vehicles" had arrived at the ISF base.

"Tactical vehicles arrive at Logistics Support Area: Endurance," the board wrote on X, alongside photographs showing the arrival.

Hazem Qassem, a Hamas spokesperson, said the group hoped the move would mark "the beginning of implementing the tasks assigned to them", including separating Palestinians in Gaza from Israeli forces and working to halt Israeli violations.

"We call on the Board of Peace to begin the actual implementation of the provisions of the plan to end

the war on Gaza," Qassem said. Drop Site news reported in January that satellite imagery analysed by Forensic Architecture revealed Israeli forces razing land and compacting the ground in Rafah. According to the report, the scale of this activity was not visible anywhere else east of the Yellow Line.

In July last year, Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz unveiled plans to corral the entire population of Gaza into a "humanitarian city" near Rafah, where they would be subjected to security screening and barred from leaving.

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- 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.

Pilgrims and tourists detained in Saudi Arabia over online posts

People visiting Saudi Arabia for religious pilgrimages and tourism are being detained, subjected to unfair trials and sentenced to lengthy jail time over social media expression, according to a new report.

Amnesty International and Alqst published a report this week looking into the cases of at least nine people, mostly from Middle East and Global South countries of origin, detained over online posts.

The arrests took place between July 2022 and late last year.

One of the cases was that of Amr Abdelfattah, a French father of three, who was detained in June 2024 whilst performing the annual Hajj pilgrimage.

He was initially held for 11 months, before being put on trial in May 2025 over charges related to his online speech. Saudi authorities alleged that he had “insulted” the government and praised “prosecuted individuals”.

He was also charged over a visa discrepancy - which Amnesty and Alqst noted usually only carried a fine or deportation, but not jail time.

“My husband was arrested after falling victim to a common visa scam,” Abdelfattah’s wife told Middle East Eye.

“Instead of being fined and deported, he has spent two years in detention, where he

has endured repeated abuse and faces additional charges over peaceful expression. “It’s time for this ordeal to end and for our family to be reunited.”

MEE has reached out to the Saudi embassy in London for comment.

Another case relates to Ahmed al-Doush, a British national serving five years in a Saudi jail over his social media usage.

Doush, who was working for Bank of America at the time, was arrested in August 2024 at Riyadh airport as he was set to return to the UK after visiting Saudi Arabia with his then-pregnant wife and children.

He was detained over social media posts he had published before travelling to Saudi Arabia.

Not allowed to discuss case or conditions

As MEE reported last year, Doush had no history of political activism.

His wife said that she was left alone with her three young children and gave birth to their fourth child during his detention. “Ahmed was taken from me and the children without warning or explanation. His absence has been deeply distressing to me and my children,” Amaher Nour said.

“Our fourth child arrived only about a week ago and Ahmed wasn’t able to be there, I couldn’t even speak to him on the phone. My



children and I just want him home as soon as possible, and seek the active support and help of the UK government to protect his rights.” Despite repeated requests, Saudi authorities have not shared court documents with Doush’s family or his lawyer in the UK.

Doush told his wife that he could only speak to her about the family’s wellbeing, and that any discussion about the conditions of his detention, his health, the legal proceedings or the charges against him would result in the call ending and further punishment.

His family said that he was recently denied contact with them because he had spoken in English to his children.

Abdelfattah’s family have also said that whenever he has spoken about his treatment or the trial, calls have been cut off. He is not allowed to speak in French; he is only permitted to speak in Arabic so that calls can be monitored. Alqst reported that Abdelfattah was subjected to beatings by prison guards.

Other cases include Fahd Ramadhan, a Dutch-Yemeni detained in November 2023 and held arbitrarily for 18 months.

He was never formally charged, but Ramadhan believes his detainment was over online posts sympathising with a critic of the Saudi royal family. Saudi interrogators asked

him to sign a document which had listed four posts he had made on X. He was eventually released in June last year.

The report noted that some of those detained have been made to sign documents in Arabic that they do not understand.

Four of those detained were performing either the Hajj or Umrah pilgrimages, whilst the other five were visiting Saudi Arabia with their families.

One unnamed individual was arrested in Mecca whilst performing Umrah over social media posts criticising Saudi authorities that he had made a few hours earlier. The posts were sub-

sequently deleted. The individual was detained for 20 months without trial, before being released.

Another person was detained and released after one year for holding up a piece of paper during Umrah, calling for the release of a political prisoner held in another country.

Meanwhile, Haidar Slim, a Lebanese national, was detained in 2022 during Hajj after he filmed himself chanting a Shia religious slogan.

He was sentenced to five years in prison and a fine of 10,000 Saudi riyals. Following a diplomatic intervention, he was released in March 2025. - MEE

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Yusuf Cassim appointed deputy minister of Higher Education and Training

By Al-Qalam Reporter

The Democratic Alliance (DA) in the Eastern Cape has congratulated its Provincial Chairperson, Yusuf Cassim, on his appointment as Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training.

At just 36 years old, Yusuf's appointment marks the culmination of a 17-year commitment to advancing opportunities for young South Africans through education.

In a statement put out by Andrew Whitfield MP – DA EC Provincial Leader, said Yusuf was the right candidate for the job.

"Since 2023, he has served as the DA's Eastern Cape Provincial Chairperson, after serving two terms as Deputy Provincial Chairperson. He was elected to the Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature in 2019 and was appointed Chief Whip of

the Official Opposition in 2024. Higher education has been Yusuf's passion since his student days. In 2009, while studying at "Nelson Mandela University, he was a founding member of the DA Student Organisation (DASO) on campus. Under his leadership, DASO gained official recognition in 2010 and secured four seats in its first Student Representative Council (SRC) election in 2011. In 2012, DASO made history by winning the SRC election, with Yusuf elected as the organisation's first SRC President.

"Although he studied to become a chartered accountant, Yusuf soon realised that his true calling lay in expanding access to higher education and ensuring that students from disadvantaged backgrounds receive the support and opportunities they need to succeed."

Whitfield said in 2013, Cassim was elected Federal Chairperson of the DA Youth and, a year later, en-

tered Parliament as South Africa's youngest Member of Parliament at the age of 24. "His primary objective was to serve on the Higher Education Portfolio Committee, where he fought for the interests of students, universities, TVET colleges and the SETA sector. He also played a role in the legislative process that resulted in the Higher Education Amendment Act.

"In 2014, Yusuf also pioneered the very first DASO Constituency in the country and was appointed DASO Constituency Leader in the Eastern Cape. Under his leadership, DASO regained control of the NMU SRC, won historic victories at the University of Fort Hare and took DASO into governance at PE College and Lovedale TVET College.

"During this period, he also served as DASO Federal Leader and DA Youth Federal Leader. "As Deputy Minister, Yusuf brings a clear vision for reform. He strongly

believes in devolving powers and decision-making as close as possible to the beneficiaries of the education system. Whether it relates to NSFAS or other support services, he believes institutions on the ground are often best positioned to respond to the needs of students and communities. "His priorities include strengthening accountability within NSFAS, improving the relevance and quality of TVET education, reforming the SETA sector to deliver meaningful skills development, and expanding nationally recognised certification for learners attending Schools of Skills.

"He has consistently argued that the billions of rands invested in skills development must translate into real opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship and economic participation.

"He also believes that learners attending Schools of Skills should receive nationally recognised qualifications that improve their



prospects and allow them to participate meaningfully in the economy. "Beyond education, Yusuf remains deeply committed to the people of the Northern Areas of Nelson Mandela Bay, where he serves as constituency leader. He has long fought for greater attention to communities such as the Northern Areas that have been overlooked by government, particularly where young people are vulnerable to gang activity, unemployment and poverty.

"Yusuf believes govern-

ment should create an environment in which every South African can realise their dreams and aspirations based on hard work and talent, rather than circumstance.

"This commitment to opportunity, accountability and empowerment will continue to guide his work as Deputy Minister." He said the DA was confident that Yusuf's experience, energy and unwavering commitment to educational opportunity will serve South Africa well in this important role.



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SPORT

Orient volleyball team makes history with third consecutive league title

By Azra Hoosen

Orient Islamic School's girls' volleyball team has secured a historic third consecutive league title after being crowned U19 champions at the Girls' Schools Volleyball League hosted by Westville Girls' High School.

The victory extends an unbeaten run that began in the U16 division, where the team won back-to-back league titles before moving into the open category and claiming the U19 championship this season.

Playing before a home crowd in Westville, Orient navigated a highly competitive knockout stage to retain their title. The team defeated Danville Park Girls' High School in the semi-final before overcoming hosts Westville Girls' High School in the final. Coaches described the atmosphere as intense. Some players received indi-

vidual recognition for their great performances.

15-year-old Sanaa Habiba Nakooda, received three of the league's top individual awards: Best Server, Best Attacker and Most Valuable Player (MVP) in the U19 division.

Sanaa has also been selected to represent the Umlazi District Volleyball Team at the Winter Games Tournament in Gauteng next month, where she will compete against players from districts and provinces across South Africa.

Speaking about the sport, Sanaa told *Al-Qalam* that teamwork remained one of the aspects she enjoyed most. "What I enjoy most about volleyball is the connection we build as teammates. Whether we win a point or lose one, we continue encouraging each other and keeping the energy alive. That's what makes this sport so special," she said. The championship was

particularly significant for matric learner Atiyyah Amojee, who played her final match for the school after representing the volleyball team since Grade 8.

Her mother, Munirah Docrat, described the victory as an emotional moment for the team. "The girls have built an amazing bond despite the age differences between them. This was Atiyyah's final match for the school, so winning the title made it even more special," said Docrat.

Head of Sport, A.R. Hyder, said that winning three consecutive league titles reflected the dedication shown by the players over several years.

"These young learners have shown tremendous dedication, discipline and character throughout their volleyball journey. They continue to raise the standard of excellence in school sport and have created a legacy that future generations of Ori-

ent athletes can aspire to. We are immensely proud of their achievement and the manner in which they have represented the school," he said.

The girls' sports coach, Aisha Bhatti, attributed the success to the team's commitment and unity. "Their success is built on hard work, sacrifice and a shared belief in one another, and we could not be prouder of what they have achieved together," she said.

Bhatti also noted that the final stages of the competition tested the team's resilience and unity. "The atmosphere was intense as volleyball can be anyone's game on the day. There were moments when the girls' confidence dropped, but they continued encouraging one another and fighting for every point. Their ability to trust each other and work collectively towards one goal ultimately helped them maintain their status as undefeated champions," she said.



The players and coaches also acknowledged the support of the school's healthcare partner, Ahmed Al-Kadi Private Hospital and Executive Headmaster Imtiaz Saib, whose backing of the volleyball programme contributed to the team's successful season.

The achievement marks a rare milestone for the

school's volleyball programme, with the team maintaining its championship status across two age categories while continuing to produce players capable of competing at the district level.

As the celebrations continue, the players now turn their attention to future competitions.



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