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LOCAL NEWS

Local Muslimah– including refugees and migrants – form sisterhood of support

By Azra Hoosen

A Durban Muslimah organisation this week brought together local Muslim women, migrants and refugees to empower them to cope with the many challenges they face in the country.

The Radiance Project, hosted by The Tha'alabah Sisterhood, was held at the Suleman Lockhat Auditorium on July 18. Its aim is to equip women with general knowledge while strengthening the bonds of sisterhood through practical workshops, open discussions and shared experiences.

The women engaged in a series of sessions on women's health, self-defence, personal safety and understanding the law.

Ayesha Milanzi, Founder of Tha'alabah, attorney and Regent Business School lecturer, explained that the Radiance Project was created to respond to issues affecting both local and migrant

Muslim communities. "It was a day to acknowledge and address the elephant in the room. Currently, many individuals, whether migrant or local Muslims, are affected by recent protests, so we curated a programme to equip attendees with the necessary medical, legal and self-defence techniques they might need," she added.

Milanzi said the overwhelming turnout exceeded expectations, with attendees actively engaging in discussions, asking questions and connecting with one another throughout the day.

Medical practitioner Dr Ganiat Abisola spoke about recognising fatigue, caring for one's physical and mental wellbeing, and what women should do in the event of sexual assault or abuse.

Milanzi presented a session explaining the legal differences between refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented foreigners, as well as the laws surrounding citizenship and citizen's arrests.

Mohamad Yumnoos of Slimz187 Dojo then demonstrated practical self-defence techniques, emphasising that personal safety and escaping danger should always come first.

She added that the programme also encouraged women to remember their responsibility towards others: "As a community we have a two-fold duty: first as Muslims to be kind and law-abiding citizens, and second as human beings to care for and treat everyone around us fairly, constantly remembering that we are each answerable for our comments and actions."

For Milanzi, one of the highlights of the event was seeing women engage with one another beyond the formal programme.

"The ladies asked questions, socialised, and that in itself was enough of a positive response for us. It genuinely was beautiful to see so many of them open up and become free," she said. Since its inception, the or-



ganisation has hosted more than 10 educational and empowerment programmes, with plans to expand into community initiatives such as feeding schemes, skills training and improving facilities for women at Masajid.

Milanzi stressed that the aim of The Tha'alabah Sisterhood is "not just to host events but to maintain relationships with attendees and help each other out."

That sense of belonging was echoed by many of the participants.

Rabia Kela told Al-Qalam that the sisterhood has given her a sense of belonging and empowerment. "It reminded me that as women, it is not selfish to put ourselves first sometimes. The sisterhood also created awareness around important issues like GBV, teaching us that it affects both males and females, and that we have a

role in standing for justice and dignity," she said. Kela added that she finds inspiration in seeing women successfully balance their deen and dunya.

For Rahma Nasarie Ally, joining The Tha'alabah Sisterhood was the best choice she had made. "Whether you are the founder or sponsor, we are all one. Once you participate, you become one of the sisters too - you become family," she added.

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‘Muslims saved us’ says Malawi official

In the face of xenophobic attacks against Malawian migrants, two humanitarian groups immediately stepped up to help, Ismail Suder reports.

The Malawian people and I will forever be grateful to the Muslim community of Durban and elsewhere who came to our rescue as migrants fled for their lives”, said Pastor George Mzenda, a Malawian Government official in an interview with *Al-Qalam*.

Pastor Mzenda was commenting on threats by vigilante groups who gave undocumented migrants until June 30 to leave South Africa or face violence.

“I can tell you one thing, if it wasn’t for the rapid actions of the Muslims, many of my people would have died in the open grounds of Sherwood Park where they were huddled in the cold – and from terror. I would like to meet our generous benefactors some day and thank them personally for what they have done for us – God bless them,” he said.

Pastor Mzenda was refer-

ring to two Muslim humanitarian organisations that were the first responders to their plight – the Caring Sisters Network (CSN) and the Islamic Medical Association (IMA, Durban branch).

As thousands sought refuge at the park in Sherwood – including hundreds of terrified mothers with their children – the humanitarian groups swung into action, firstly providing hot meals, blankets, baby milk and other basic necessities. Then they brought out the fully-equipped IMA mobile clinic manned by volunteer doctors and nurses who immediately began treating scores of sickly people.

This week both the IMA and CSN met to evaluate their efforts during the “Displaced Foreign Nationals Crisis” at three points in the city – the Sherwood Camp, the North Beach Drive-In site and the Che Guevara Road (Moore Road) site.

Yasiera Mahomed-Suliman, the Overall Coordinator (Humanitarian Medical Response) said: “The humanitarian response brought together Muslim and non-Muslim volunteer doctors, nurses, pharmacists

and allied healthcare professionals, reflecting a shared commitment to serving humanity.

“Alhamdulillah, while co-ordinating an emergency humanitarian response of this nature is demanding, exhausting and time-consuming – and often requires long hours and late nights – it is always a privilege to answer the call when there is a need.

“Being part of the overall humanitarian coordination team through CSN, where we were simultaneously coordinating food, water, blankets and other relief efforts, enabled us to identify medical needs rapidly and respond efficiently to emergencies as they arose. This close collaboration greatly strengthened the medical response and ensured that patient care remained a priority throughout the operation”.

But she emphasised that they could not have done it alone. Throughout the medical response, IMASA worked alongside the Department of Health, eThekweni Health, and the South African Red Cross Society. The Department of Health

was present during the final two days at Sherwood Park from 8am to 4pm only, while the Department of Health, eThekweni Health and the Red Cross provided support at the Drive-In site, primarily during office hours only.

“IMASA volunteers largely covered the after-hours service, remaining on site until midnight and, on many occasions, until 1:00/2:00 am. Volunteers also covered full-day weekend shifts, together with selected early morning sessions, ensuring continuity of medical care throughout the operation.

In her estimation, the medical teams attended to between 400–500 patients daily. The most common conditions managed included: Upper respiratory tract infections, colds and influenza; Pneumonia; Gastroenteritis, gastritis and abdominal cramps; Dehydration and heat exhaustion; Scabies and lice associated with overcrowding; Headaches, body aches and fever; Anxiety, stress and insomnia related to trauma and displacement, poorly controlled chronic illnesses, including hypertension and diabetes. The teams had



their hands full, including attending to many pregnant women. There were two births at Sherwood Park and three births at the Drive-In site.

“Throughout the emergency response, medication to the value of approximately R100,000 was procured and dispensed through a collaborative effort. This included: R63,000 funded through IMASA Lillah contributions. R12,000 sponsored by Caring Sisters Network (CSN) to procure urgently required medication, in-

cluding chronic medication. “The remaining balance was generously sponsored by volunteer doctors, individual donors and supporting partners, including Gift of the Givers (GOTG) and Sparkport Overport, ensuring uninterrupted access to essential medication throughout the humanitarian response.

“Alhamdulillah, we thank Allah (SWT) for granting us the opportunity and ability to be of service during this humanitarian crisis,” she concluded.

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LOCAL NEWS

Abused sisters find refuge at Kenilworth Respite Centre

By Azra Hoosen

For years, Ayesha (36), a mother of three endured physical, emotional, financial and sexual abuse, believing she had to stay in the marriage for the sake of her children. After seeing their mother often crying, they urged her to leave – and she did.

Ayesha (not her real name) sought refuge at Durban’s Kenilworth Respite Centre to escape her painful life. Months later, she felt she was strong enough to leave the Centre after finding employment and her own home to rebuild her life.

Ayesha’s story is one of many that reflect the quiet but vital work being done at the Kenilworth Respite Centre Trust where women and children escaping domestic violence are given not only refuge, but the opportunity to begin afresh.

KRC was established after years of experience gained by professionals, volunteers

and spiritual leaders working with survivors of domestic violence. Guided by an Islamic ethos of compassion, dignity and service, the organisation was created in response to a growing need for a place where women could find safety, recover from trauma and rebuild their lives.

The head and primary social worker at KRC, Sabera Timol, told *Al-Qalam* that they wanted to create a place that offers comprehensive care. “Domestic violence knows no boundaries. It is a social illness that affects the affluent, professionals and low-income families alike,” she said

Timol explained that a needs assessment in Kwa-Zulu-Natal found that women leaving abusive relationships often required more than emergency accommodation. They needed temporary care, counselling and practical support to develop the confidence and skills necessary to regain their independence and, where possible, reintegrate into their

families and communities.

The centre also recognises that domestic violence extends far beyond physical assault.

Women often experience emotional manipulation, verbal humiliation, financial control and psychological abuse. Increasingly, substance abuse and the influence of social media have become contributing factors in family conflict.

Timol emphasised that children are often the overlooked victims: “The trauma experienced by children frequently goes unnoticed, yet they are often the primary and secondary victims of domestic violence.”

Despite the abuse, leaving is seldom straightforward. Many women remain because of financial dependence, low self-esteem, concern for their children, limited family support or fear of stigma within their communities. Abusive relationships often follow a cycle of escalating tension,

violence and remorse, making it difficult for victims to leave permanently.

Where appropriate and only when it is safe to do so, the centre facilitates family reconciliation through counselling. In other cases, the focus is on helping women regain their independence.

Timol noted that the centre has witnessed many lives transformed. One woman, who sought refuge with her young daughter after years of domestic violence and instability, rebuilt her beauty business during her stay at the centre. Through counselling and budgeting support, she regained financial independence while restoring fractured family relationships.

In another case, a young mother who had repeatedly left and returned to her marital home because of ongoing conflict with her in-laws found stability through counselling, legal support and mediation. After her husband secured employment and separate



accommodation, the family reunited in healthier circumstances, while she enrolled to study nursing.

Beyond assisting survivors of domestic violence, the organisation has expanded its work to include long-term accommodation for elderly women experiencing neglect or abuse within their own families. A residence in Cowies Hill provides older women with a safe environment where they live independently while supporting one another.

Timol believes faith should be part of the solution, not a reason for women to remain trapped. She encourages women to seek knowledge and remember that injustice has no place in Islam. “Islam

honours women with dignity. We need to educate ourselves, learn from the examples of the women of Jannah and stand together against injustice,” she said. For those witnessing domestic violence, Timol’s message is equally clear: “If you know someone experiencing domestic violence, reach out. Give them the number of an organisation that can help. Reassure them that they are not alone.”

For women experiencing abuse, or for anyone seeking assistance on behalf of a family member or friend, or who would like to provide support, the Kenilworth Respite Centre Trust can be contacted on 031 207 6483, or by email at socialworker@kenilworthrc.org.za.



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5 AUGUST
YOUM-E-ISTEHSAL
5 AUGUST 2019
DARK DAY FOR KASHMIR

A DAY OF SORROW, RESISTANCE & SOLIDARITY

On 5th August 2019, the illegal and unilateral actions of the Government of India revoked Articles 370 & 35A, stripping Jammu & Kashmir of its special autonomous status and turning the region into the world's largest militarized zone.

WHAT HAPPENED ON 5TH AUGUST 2019?

- Revocation of Articles 370 & 35A
- Abolition of Jammu & Kashmir's special status
- Imposition of communications blackout
- Massive deployment of Indian troops
- Arbitrary arrests of political politicians and activists
- Suppression of peaceful voices
- Human rights violations and everyday brutality

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Listening Before Leading: What Young Muslims Taught Me About Becoming Ambassadors for Change



By Aslam Fataar

I had the privilege of addressing the Muslim Youth Movement’s (MYM) ‘Ambassadors for Change’ Youth Conference in Durban on 11 July 2026. The conference marked the culmination of the MYM’s five-year Ambassadors for Change youth development programme while laying the foundation for its ongoing work to nurture ethically grounded young Muslim leaders. Its theme, “It is in the hands of the youth to give the world a more humane face,” reflected both the urgency and hope that characterised the gathering. As I walked into

the conference hall, I carried a quiet sense of nervousness. Many years have passed since I served as Deputy President of the MYM, and I wondered whether there was now too great a generational distance between myself and the young people before me. They inhabit digital, social and political worlds profoundly different from those in which my generation came of age.

Those concerns quickly disappeared. The day reminded me that one of the greatest responsibilities of older generations is not first to speak but to listen. The Qur’an praises those “who listen to the word and follow the best of it” (Qur’an 39:18). Listening is itself an ethical act and, I believe, the starting point for meaningful intergenerational engagement.

The First Responsibility: Listen

I attended not only as a speaker but also as an academic leader of Stellenbosch University’s Dialogue, Democracy and Development

project, which seeks to cultivate dialogue across social, cultural and political differences. Throughout the day, I listened carefully to every presentation, filling pages with notes as these young Muslims spoke honestly about artificial intelligence, social media, mental health, leadership, conflict and their search for meaningful lives rooted in faith.

I learnt tremendously from this process of listening. I left convinced that careful listening must become a cornerstone of our ethical engagement with Muslim youth. Too often, adults speak about young people before genuinely listening to how they understand the worlds in which they are mired and how they seek to exercise their God-given human agency.

The conference itself reflected years of patient educational work. Organised for and by the MYM’s youth organisers, it represented the fruit of sustained investment in ethical leadership. I particularly wish to acknowledge Asif Essop, whose



longstanding commitment to the MYM and to youth development made him a central part of this remarkable initiative.

The Fires of Our Age

My own presentation drew on the central framework of my recently edited volume, ‘Prophet Muhammad at 1500: His Prophetic Legacy,

Ethical Vision and Contemporary Resonance’ (Fataar, 2026). The book argues that the Prophetic legacy offers an enduring ethical grammar for responding to the moral, social and political challenges of our age. I invited the audience to reflect on what I called ‘Niran al-‘Alam’ – the fires consuming our world. These fires are visible in Gaza, Sudan,

Yemen and Ukraine. They are also present in racism, xenophobia, structural poverty, ecological destruction, loneliness, misinformation and the distortions produced by social media and artificial intelligence. Although these crises appear different, they are connected by a deeper moral condition.

Continued on page 6



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LOCAL NEWS

Continued from page 5

The Qur'an asks us to look beneath visible events towards the human heart. Allah speaks of "the kindled Fire of Allah, which rises over the hearts" (Qur'an 104:6-7). Before societies fracture, hearts fracture. Before injustice becomes institutional, it begins as arrogance, greed, hatred, prejudice and indifference. The deepest crises of our age are therefore political, social, moral and spiritual all at once.

This insight changes how we understand responsibility. We cannot respond to injustice only through slogans, ideology or anger. Political commitment must be accompanied by the ethical formation of the human person. The Qur'an reminds us that we live in 'Dar al-Ibtila', a world of testing: "Indeed, We created the human being from a mingled drop, testing him" (Qur'an 76:2). This testing is not intended to crush us but to cultivate compassion, courage, honesty and hope.

This is precisely what it means to become an ambassador for change. An ambassador represents something greater than themselves. Young Muslims represent

Islam through the quality of their conduct in classrooms, workplaces, neighbourhoods, families and digital platforms. Their honesty, kindness, humility and intellectual integrity become forms of da'wah long before any formal preaching begins.

The Prophet Muhammad lived through persecution, migration, poverty, exclusion and war. Yet hardship never extinguished his mercy. He answered violence with moral courage, injustice with principled action and hostility with compassion. Allah describes him simply as "a mercy to all the worlds" (Qur'an 21:107). His Prophetic legacy teaches us to combine justice with mercy, courage with humility, leadership with service and hope with action. Ethical civilisation begins with ethically formed people.

Becoming Ambassadors for Change

Throughout the conference, I was repeatedly struck by the seriousness with which these young people wrestled with their world. They spoke openly about digital overload, fractured identities, mental health and political uncertainty. Yet they also spoke with hope, curi-

osity and a genuine desire to build rather than merely to criticise. Their questions were not signs of weak faith but of a generation seeking to live Islam ethically amid unprecedented complexity.

Sometimes older generations underestimate young people. We criticise social media while forgetting that they did not create the digital environment into which they were born. Rather than dismissing their world, we need educational spaces where young Muslims can think deeply, ask difficult questions and cultivate ethical judgement grounded in the Qur'an and Sunnah. This requires adults who accompany before they prescribe, listen before they lecture and mentor before they judge.

Allah commands us to "co-operate with one another in righteousness and God-consciousness" (Qur'an 5:2). Such cooperation begins with genuine intergenerational dialogue. It requires older people to respect the experiences of the young while young people remain open to the wisdom and sacrifices of those who came before them.

One of the conference's recurring messages was that leadership is no longer

simply about holding positions of authority. It is about creating positive influence wherever one stands. Our communities need young Muslims who carry mercy into conflict, justice into inequality, hope into despair and beauty into broken relationships. We need ethical users of technology who protect human dignity, resist racism and xenophobia, build bridges across differences, and serve others with humility.

The Qur'an captures this calling in a single declaration: "Indeed, Allah commands justice and excellence" (Qur'an 16:90). Justice and 'ihsan' remain the twin pillars of Muslim public life. Justice calls us to resist oppression, while ihsan shapes the beauty, compassion and integrity with which we pursue that struggle.

As I travelled home from Durban, I reflected less on what I had said than on what I had heard. These young Muslims reminded me that every generation must discover anew how to live faithfully within its own historical moment. Our responsibility is not simply to hand them ready-made answers but to help cultivate the ethical imagination, spiritual



depth and intellectual confidence needed to respond wisely to the questions their age presents.

The future of our community will not be secured by louder arguments or greater outrage. It will be shaped by young Muslims whose hearts are formed by the Qur'an, whose character reflects the Sunnah, whose minds seek wisdom and whose hands remain ready to serve.

The Qur'an therefore leaves us with a fitting challenge: "So race one another towards goodness" (Qur'an 2:148; 5:48). After spending a day listening to these

young ambassadors, I returned home convinced that this race towards goodness has already begun.

Aslam Fataar is Research Professor of Higher Education and Transformation in the Department of Education Policy Studies at Stellenbosch University. He served as the Deputy President of the Muslim Youth Movement of South Africa, 1991-1993. He is the editor of the recently published book, Prophet Muhammad at 1500: His Prophetic Legacy, Ethical Vision and Contemporary Resonance. Cape Town: Prophetic Legacy Commission and Awqaf SA, 2026



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5 AUGUST 2019
YOUM-E-ISTEHSAL KASHMIR
A DAY OF SORROW, RESISTANCE & SOLIDARITY

On 5th August 2019, the Government of India illegally revoked Articles 370 & 35A, stripped Jammu & Kashmir of its special autonomous status and turned the region into the world's largest militarized zone.

WHAT HAPPENED ON 5TH AUGUST 2019?

- Revocation of Articles 370 & 35A
- End of special autonomous status
- Communication blackout and media restrictions
- Massive military lockdown and curfew
- Arbitrary arrests and suppression of voices



HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS CONTINUE

- Extrajudicial killings
- Illegal detentions
- Torture and ill-treatment
- Freedom restrictions
- Silencing of journalists and activists
- Violence against civilians

WE STAND IN SOLIDARITY

The Pakistani community in South Africa stands united with the people of Kashmir. We strongly condemn the illegal actions of 5th August 2019 and the ongoing human rights violations in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir. We support the right to self-determination in accordance with UN resolutions.

KASHMIR IS NOT INDIA

STAND WITH KASHMIR



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TOGETHER FOR A PEACEFUL, JUST & FREE KASHMIR
LET THE WORLD HEAR THE VOICE OF KASHMIR

FROM: PAKISTANI COMMUNITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

Youm-e-Istehsal (5 August): A Day of Resistance Against Injustice in Kashmir

By Salman I Khan

Every year, 5 August is observed as Youm-e-Istehsal (Day of Exploitation) to commemorate the unilateral actions taken by the Government of India on 5 August 2019, when it revoked the special constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir. This move was widely criticized for being implemented without the consent of the Kashmiri people and under an unprecedented military lockdown, communication blackout, and severe restrictions on civil liberties.

From a South African perspective, the Kashmir issue resonates deeply with the historical struggle against apartheid, political exclusion, and the denial of a people's right to determine their own future. South Africans understand that

lasting peace cannot be built through force, demographic engineering, or the suppression of political voices. The principles of justice, equality, and self-determination that guided South Africa's liberation struggle remain equally relevant to Kashmir today.

The constitutional amendments of 5 August 2019 altered the internationally recognised disputed status of Jammu and Kashmir.

Critics argue that these measures violated the spirit of United Nations Security Council resolutions which recognize Kashmir as a disputed territory whose future should be determined through the will of its people.

Furthermore, the subsequent changes to domicile and land laws have raised concerns regarding demographic transforma-

tion and the erosion of the region's political and cultural identity. International human rights organizations have repeatedly expressed concern over restrictions on freedom of expression, arbitrary detentions, media censorship, and limitations on political activity in the region. Such measures undermine fundamental rights protected under international human rights law and democratic norms.

On Youm-e-Istehsal, people around the world reaffirm their solidarity with the people of Kashmir and call for a peaceful, just, and durable resolution of the dispute in accordance with international law and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. The observance serves as a reminder that peace is inseparable from justice, and that the voices of oppressed communities must never be silenced.

5 AUGUST

YOUM-E-ISTEHSAL

KASHMIR'S STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM & DIGNITY

5 AUGUST 2019 – THE DAY INDIA UNILATERALLY REVOKED THE SPECIAL STATUS OF JAMMU & KASHMIR AND IMPOSED MILITARY LOCKDOWN, COMMUNICATION BLACKOUT AND RESTRICTIONS ON FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS.

 COMMUNICATION BLACKOUT

 MASS DETENTIONS & ARBITRARY ARRESTS

 MEDIA CENSORSHIP & SILENCING OF VOICES

 RESTRICTIONS ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSEMBLY & MOVEMENT

 AMENDMENTS TO DOMICILE & LAND LAWS – THREATENING DEMOGRAPHIC BALANCE

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By Ebrahim Rassol
(Former Ambassador to the USA)

On July 15, 2026, my flow of birthday wishes was interrupted with news more consequential, but mournfully sad: John Louis Esposito, at the age of 86, was no more. Sombreness overwhelmed me, and I counted back the almost four decades since I first encountered him, as one of those who were curiously excited about the South African transition, the presidency of Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu's witness, and the prospects for a new future free from all discriminations following the travesty of apartheid.

In the last decade I had the wonderful privilege and honour (for two years) to encounter him up close at Georgetown University in the USA. He had accepted to host me as Distinguished Scholar in Residence in the Al Waleed bin Talal Center for Muslim Christian Understanding (ACMCU), following my stint as South African Ambassador to the USA under President Obama. Up to that moment, we had encountered each other regularly across the world, in conferences and seminars, at think tanks during the halcyon years of the Arab Spring, and anywhere else where Islam and its shadow, islamophobia, were on the agenda.

Most memorably, in 2012, John Esposito and I were two of probably only 15 par-

ticipants in Doha with key leaders of the Arab Spring who were gathered to consider Constitution-Making and Statecraft in what we hoped would be a qualitative leap out of authoritarianism. He was the only one who was not Muslim among eminent scholars like Yusuf al Qardawi, Hassan al Turabi, Jasser Auda, Tariq Ramadan, Hashim Kamali, and others.

While the Muslims were cautiously optimistic, Esposito doubted that the Empire and their minions could accept a Muslim world with an alternative liberatory statecraft, and without the confirmation bias of Muslims being – without cause – naturally extreme and therefore, in need of strong authoritarian law and order regimes. These were the critical informants to a pervasive islamophobia.

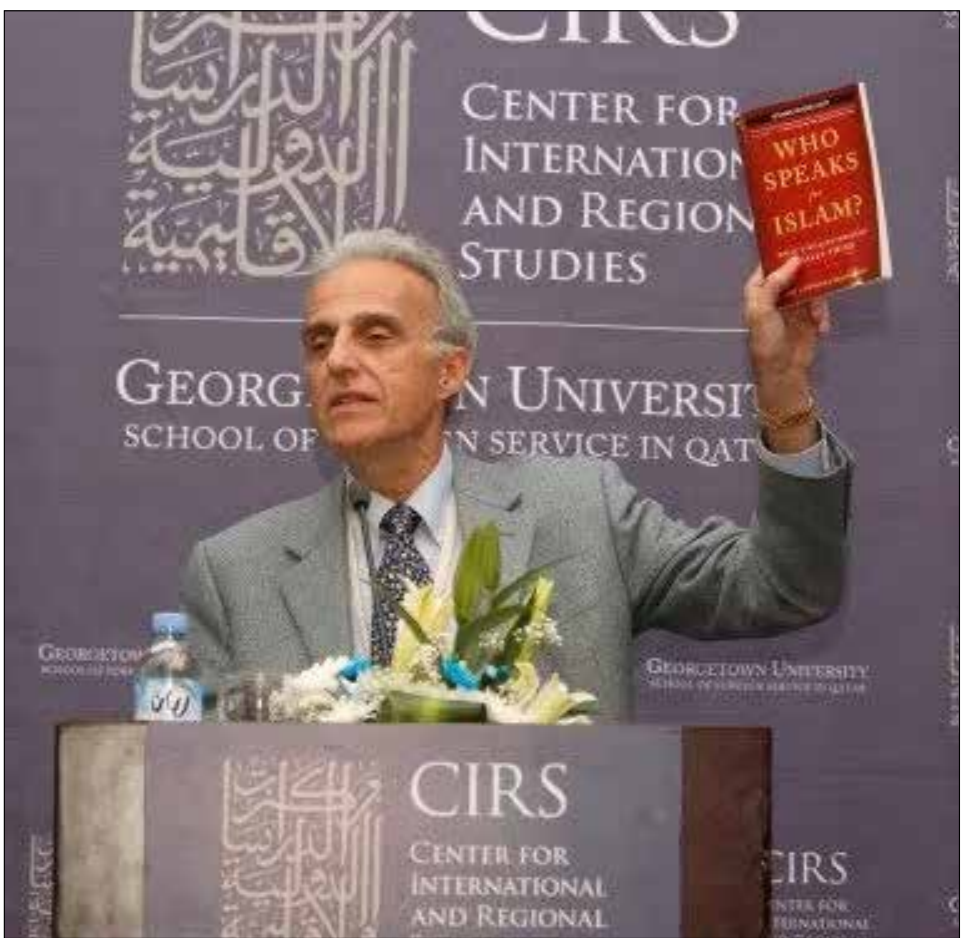
It was this dual insight – the yearning of Muslims to live with dignity, as well as the fundamental, if not deliberate, Western distortion of Islam, Islamism, and the Muslim – that made John Esposito different. He was a different Christian, a different American, a different academic, a different human being!

These identities did not make an aberration of John Esposito. He would insist that because he was Christian, American, an academic, and a human being, he needed to testify to the truth inherent in each of those identities: his own faith made him recognise the profound faithfulness of Muslims; his own Americanness made him desire freedom, democracy and rights for Muslims under authoritarianism or extremism; his academic training made him uncompromising on rigour and evidence; and his humaneness created in him a deep well of human empathy and compassion. By this definition, right-wing evangelicals were the

aberration; American support for tyranny and war-mongering was the aberration; moral clarity produced by academic scholarship without the requisite moral courage to act was the aberration; and human silence and complicity in atrocity were the aberrations in the human condition.

In his scholarship of Islam and Muslims, in his development and mentoring of Muslim scholars, in his friendship with Muslim leaders, in his writing of over 50 books about Islam and Muslims, in his activism against islamophobia, in his advocacy for a shift in policy and law about Muslims, and in his institution-building like the Bridge Initiative, John Esposito was neither oracle nor orientalist. He was neither our source of guidance and wisdom, nor were we the exotic other to study. He did not speak for us, or about us without us. But his scholarship gave him the insight and understanding of Islam and Muslims, the sincere representation of which, gave him the credibility of an insider-outsider both for Muslims and most non-Muslims. Because he studied with rigour, he understood with empathy, and he could interpret with integrity, free of the emotion that comes too easily to victims of history. So, he did not infantilise Muslims.

But neither did he idealise us. He was a witness to the battle for the narrative and interpretation of the Quran and Sunnah; for their appropriation either for the middle ground or the extremes; and for their application under conditions of minority or majority – believing firmly that application may change but the Maqasid, the intents, remain unshakeable! Because he applied academic rigour and stood on evidence, he could dispassionately critique Muslims about the management of our own unresolved demons and ambiguities ranging from the



'other' to gender to politics to sectarianism. But always as the sensitive and compassionate outsider-insider.

But he was also a thorough insider to all things Christian and American. He shared their rituals and celebrations, but he also knew their suppositions and presumptions about Islam and Muslims. The most pernicious of these excused occupation and genocide; gave license and arms to authoritarians; allowed islamophobia to fashion travel bans and unspeakable bigotry, especially after 9.11; and wage a forever war on the Muslim heartlands. All because the theory espoused was one of the modernisation of the Muslim 'other' – which Esposito vigorously critiqued – because its corollary, secularisation, the stripping of religious sensibility from the Muslim, was not only misplaced, but would invite resentment and

blowback, and thus breed the next generation of extremists. All of this made John Esposito dangerous to the empire and the superpower. He was constantly attacked by detractors in the western conservative ranks for seemingly endorsing our fault lines and for acting as a trojan horse for bringing Muslim scholars to the USA where they flourished without the burdens of violent occupation, authoritarian surveillance, and stultifying orthodoxy.

Deservedly, tributes have poured in for John Esposito and messages of condolences for his beloved Jean and their dogs. All of these have fulsomely recognised his contribution to Islam, Muslims, and humanity. These have focussed on his writing and his bridge-building. Muslim tributes have cautiously tried to manage the fine line between an instinctive desire to recog-

nise in him one worthy of the highest honour in this world and the next while managing the strictures of soteriology – the theology of salvation – which inhibits us from showering even a fraction of our prayers on those imbued with absolute nobility and impact. Yet the tributes have touched the fine line: Many have invoked the Quranic formula that we originate with Allah and we return to Allah; Anwar Ibrahim describes him as a 'true friend of the Muslim World'; Arsalan Iftikhar muses that John Esposito '... did more for educating the world about Islam than most of our two billion Muslims...'; and Jonathan Brown, who succeeded Esposito at the ACMCU, prays 'May God grant his soul mercy.'

Ebrahim Rasool is the Former Ambassador to the USA and Senior Fellow at Georgetown University)



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FOOD



Hearty Chicken Stew

Credit: Recipe and images courtesy of Gorima's Facebook Page

INGREDIENTS

- 500g Chicken fillet
- 1 Onion, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon Crushed garlic
- 2 Medium potatoes, diced
- 2 tablespoons Corn flour
- 1/4 cup Warm water
- 250g Frozen stew mix
- Salt to taste
- 4 Sprigs fresh thyme
- 3 tablespoons Gorima's Stew Mix



METHOD

- Marinate chicken with Gorima's Stew Mix and set aside.
- Heat oil in a deep pot, add chicken and cook until lightly browned. Remove and set aside.
- In the same pot, add onions and crushed garlic. Sauté until translucent.
- Add frozen stew mix, diced potatoes, fresh thyme, and 1 cup warm water. Allow to cook for 15 minutes.
- Add chicken and corn flour mixture to thicken. Add salt to taste.

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LOCAL NEWS

South Africa finds itself at a deeply troubling crossroad

By Salim Mohamed Badat

Across various parts of the country, self appointed groups are entering businesses, questioning employers, inspecting workplaces, identifying foreign workers, and demanding to know who is legally employed.

Regardless of the names these organisations give themselves, one question rises above all others: who has authorised them to enforce the law?

There is no denying that illegal immigration is a legitimate national concern. Every sovereign nation has the right, and indeed the duty, to protect its borders, regulate immigration, and ensure that those living and working within its territory comply with the law. South Africans are equally entitled to expect that these laws are enforced fairly and consistently.

Yet the responsibility for doing so has always rested with the state. The ANC government since 1994 has failed to adequately secure the country's borders and enforce immigration laws. This has fuelled public frustration and a growing sense that the government has neglected one of its most fundamental responsibilities.

That failure, is not an invitation for private citizens to become law enforcement officers. Border security, immigration enforcement, and the lawful deportation of undocumented foreign nationals are constitutional functions of the state. When government fails to act decisively, it creates a vacuum, and vacuums are often filled by self-appointed groups.

This is precisely where South Africa now finds itself.

The grievances expressed by many of these groups are understandable. Citizens are concerned about unemployment, pressure on public services, crime, and the perception that immigration laws are not being enforced. These concerns deserve to be heard. But legitimate concerns cannot justify illegitimate methods.

When private groups enter businesses without lawful authority, interrogate workers, intimidate employers, and conduct what amount to their own immigration inspections, they move beyond civic activism into an area that threatens the rule of law.

The Constitution was never intended to permit citizens to appoint themselves as immigration officials or police officers. Our democracy depends upon due process, lawful authority, and equal protection under the law.

Once those principles begin to erode, the consequences become increasingly difficult to contain.

Today it may be businesses employing foreign nationals, tomorrow it could be farms. The next day it could be factories, schools, shopping centres, or any institution targeted by whichever group believes it has the authority to intervene.

History shows that vigilantism rarely remains confined to its original purpose. Once groups become accustomed to exercising power without legal accountability, that power often expands. An equally serious concern follows naturally. If businesses become accustomed



to groups arriving unannounced and demanding access, what prevents future groups from demanding payment instead?

What stops criminal syndicates from presenting themselves as community organisations? How long before intimidation evolves into organised extortion?

These are not hypothetical fears. They are risks that emerge whenever lawful authority is gradually replaced by informal power.

The silence from the government has only intensified public concern. Many South Africans are asking: Where is President Cyril Ramaphosa? During periods of heightened public tension, citizens reasonably expect visible leadership, clear communication, and decisive action. When that lead-

ership appears absent, uncertainty grows, confidence weakens, and speculation inevitably fills the void. Government now carries a dual responsibility. First, it must urgently restore public confidence by strengthening border security, improving immigration administration, enforcing existing laws, and lawfully deporting those who have no legal right to remain in the country.

Secondly, it must make it unmistakably clear that no private group, regardless of its motives, may assume the powers of the state or take the law into its own hands.

South Africa's Constitution protects the rights of businesses as well as individuals. Inspections and enforcement actions must be carried out by authorised officials acting within the law, not by self appointed

groups demanding access to private premises.

The Freedom Charter envisioned a South Africa founded upon justice, equality, dignity, and the rule of law. Our constitutional democracy cannot allow parallel systems of enforcement to emerge simply because public frustration has reached breaking point.

South Africa stands at a defining moment. If we excuse vigilantism because we agree with its immediate objective, we may one day discover that the same methods are being used for very different purposes.

The issue before us is larger than immigration. It is about whether we remain a constitutional democracy governed by law, or gradually become a society where organised groups exercise

authority simply because they can.

Government must take responsibility for the conditions that have contributed to this moment.

It must address the legitimate concerns of its citizens through effective governance, economic growth, secure borders, and the consistent application of the law.

But it must do so within the framework of the Constitution, because once the rule of law gives way to the rule of the crowd, everyone, citizen and non-citizen alike, ultimately becomes less secure.

The choice South Africa makes now will shape not only its immigration policy, but the future character of its democracy.

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Karim Khan and the ICC: Victimisation Implicates Israel, US and Western Allies



By Iqbal Jassat

The dismissal of Karim Khan as the ICC prosecutor is perhaps the most significant event in the 24-year-long institutional history of the ICC,” says Sergey Vasiliev, professor of international law at Open University in the Netherlands, “and the greatest setback to the Court’s efforts to pursue justice in situations implicating major powers and their allies not party to the Court, including the US, Israel, and Russia.”

There cannot be any doubt that the credibility of international justice is measured not by how it treats the weak, but by what happens

when it is manipulated by the rich and powerful. A close scrutiny of the Israeli-led campaign surrounding ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan exposes a familiar pattern. Institutions celebrated as guardians of the rules based international order become targets of political pressure the moment they threaten the interests of states that enjoy Western protection.

Regrettably, absent from much of the media coverage is the chronology that transformed Khan from a respected international prosecutor into a political liability.

The same can be argued about the absence of the global South to ensure an impartial probe, even at this late hour to determine what apparently is driven by a highly-charged Zionist political agenda.

For years, the International Criminal Court was embraced when it pursued African leaders, Balkan figures and, more recently, Russian officials.

That consensus fractured after Khan sought arrest warrants against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former De-

fence Minister Yoav Gallant over alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza.

From that moment, the court itself became the subject of sustained political attacks.

The allegations of workplace misconduct against Khan deserve to be investigated independently and fairly. No public official should be immune from scrutiny.

Equally, those allegations cannot be used to erase the wider political context. Both realities can exist simultaneously. An investigation into personal conduct does not negate the documented efforts by governments and lobbying networks to obstruct the ICC’s Palestine investigation.

Reducing the entire issue to Khan’s personal conduct conveniently diverts attention from the institution he represents and the cases it is pursuing.

The beneficiaries of this narrative are clear. Governments determined to shield Israel from international accountability have consistently challenged the legitimacy

of the court whenever its investigations touched Israeli officials. Political leaders, influential lobbying organisations and sections of the Western media have increasingly portrayed the ICC as overreaching, despite previously defending its authority in other conflicts.

The objective is larger than one prosecutor. It is to weaken the credibility of any institution capable of holding powerful allies to the same legal standards imposed on others.

This pattern is neither new nor unique. International law has repeatedly encountered fierce resistance whenever it challenges geopolitical interests.

From Iraq to Afghanistan, from Libya to Palestine, the principle remains remarkably consistent.

However, what we face is that accountability is welcomed only when directed at adversaries but resisted when it reaches allies.

Double standards and hypocrisy is a blatant trademark for Western imperialism. The language of a rules based international



order becomes conditional, dependent not on law but on political convenience.

Media coverage has largely reinforced this selective framing. To any independent observer able to read between the lines, it is pretty clear that headlines have focused on Khan as an individual while giving far less attention to the sustained political campaign against the ICC itself.

The real issue has never been Karim Khan alone. It is whether international law can survive when its reach extends beyond the politically expendable and touches those protected by geopolitical power.

Hence the question: Does the legitimacy of the ICC de-

pend on the identity of those it investigates?

In pointing out the back-drop, Sergey Vasiliev says is “US sanctions against ICC senior officials and its campaign to dismantle the institution, as well as the Israeli government’s long-term interference and its most recent efforts to exert influence on States Parties to oust Khan”.

Vasiliev finds himself “truly worried about the future of the Court and whether States Parties will be willing and able genuinely to protect its independence and ensure its recovery after this ‘decapitation’,“ as he calls it.

Iqbal Jassat, Executive Member, MEDIA REVIEW NETWORK



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FEATURE



MYMSA Ambassadors for Change Youth Conference





The Ambassadors for Change Youth Conference, hosted by the MYM on Saturday, 11 July 2026, at Coastlands Hotel in Durban, was

a tremendous success, attracting 100 delegates. Centered on the theme, “It is in the hands of the youth to give the world a more

humane face,” the conference featured an engaging programme of paper presentations, poetry, nasheeds and interactive discussions, inspiring participants to embrace

their role as catalysts for positive change. Key addresses included MYM President Thandile Kona, Prof. Aslam Fataar on global injustice, Dr. Amina

Ngubane on mental health, and sessions on leadership, social media, and digital humanity by Ambassadors Suhail Shubrati, Salma Mather, Sana Mulla, Asma Khan and Afsa

Makangila. The conference marked 5 years of the Ambassadors for Change course and highlighted the role of youth as change makers in building a more compassionate world.

Activists ‘harassed’ outside SADC Summit

By Al-Qalam Reporter

The South African Palestine Movement say they were harassed by police this week when they peacefully protested outside the Durban International Convention where the SADC Summit was being held.

A small group of just 10 peaceful activists gathered to exercise their constitutional right to peaceful assembly and to raise concerns about xenophobia, Afrophobia, and the protection of human rights across the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) region.

“Instead of facilitating this lawful and peaceful picket, protesters were confronted by an overwhelming police presence.

There were approximately four times as many police officers as protesters, creating an atmosphere of

intimidation rather than one of protection.

“The role of the police is to safeguard the rights of peaceful demonstrators, not to intimidate or discourage lawful civic participation.

Such disproportionate policing risks undermining the constitutional rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and protest.

“We call on the relevant authorities to ensure that all law enforcement officers uphold the Constitution and respect the rights of those who engage in peaceful, non-violent protest. Democracy is strengthened when peaceful voices are protected, not silenced.

“Peaceful protest is not a threat—it is a cornerstone of a democratic society. From the Durban ICC we moved to the ANC offices - and again the police asked us to move,” the statement added.



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SPORT

How the Qur'an keeps Hafidhah Ruqaya Ismail grounded in competition

By Neelam Rahim

When South African national fencer Hafidhah Ruqaya Ismail steps onto the fencing strip at the Commonwealth Fencing Championships in Nigeria later this month, she will be carrying more than her country's colours. She will also embody the idea that faith and elite sport are not competing paths, but complementary ones.

The tournament marks a historic first for the sport, with the senior Commonwealth Fencing Championships being held on African soil for the first time. For the Johannesburg-based Blues Fencing Club athlete, it will also be her international debut.

Ismail says the discipline that underpins her sporting career was shaped long before she entered a fencing hall. As a Hafidhah, she believes memorising the Qur'an instilled the resili-

ence and consistency that now define her approach to competition.

"My faith and sport, fencing, keep each other balanced," she told *Al-Qalam*.

"As a Hafidha, Alhamdulillah, the Quran taught me discipline, patience, and mostly consistency, lots and lots of consistency, and showing up even when things don't really feel the best. That's exactly what fencing demands as well."

Those lessons become most evident when nerves begin to set in before a bout.

"And when I feel anxious or scared, that consistency that I've learned is already ingrained. So even though I'm scared or I'm feeling nervous, I push through it."

She says prayer has become an equally important part of preparing to compete.

"I sometimes have issues with anxiety, but I've done like the work and, you know,

like just to pray and try to integrate my religion into knowing that Allah has my back, and I think that really keeps me grounded as well."

For Ismail, fencing has taught her to care for the body Allah entrusted to her, while the Qur'an continually reminds her to protect her intentions.

"Sport taught me how to use my body as an amanah. And the Qur'an taught me how to guard my heart and my intentions while I do whatever I'm doing."

Her journey into fencing began through a Blues Fencing Club outreach programme at her school. Captivated by the sport's tactical nature and welcoming environment, she continued training and now also serves as a full coach's assistant, helping younger fencers develop their skills.

She says fencing has equipped her with lessons that reach far beyond competition. "It did teach me

about protecting myself, not physically, but mentally, knowing my distance, setting my boundaries, when to attack, when to hold back."

Competing in hijab has presented few barriers, something she credits to the supportive culture within the sport. The occasional challenges she has faced, she says, have usually arisen from unfamiliarity rather than prejudice.

Away from the fencing strip, Ismail maintains a routine of daily Qur'an revision (dur) and regular dhikr. Both have become essential to managing the mental demands of competition.

"My coach recommended this to me because I used to freak out a lot. So I just recite Zikr to keep myself grounded."

"It's like an anchor for not only my emotional self, but also me performing."

Although she hopes to perform well in Nigeria, Ismail



says her focus is on gaining experience, representing South Africa with good character and embracing the opportunity to compete at the highest level.

"I'm really proud and grateful that I got this opportunity, because this is my first international competition."

She also hopes her journey will encourage other young Muslim girls to pursue their ambitions without feeling they must compromise their faith.

"You don't have to choose. You really, really don't. You

can do both."

Looking beyond the Commonwealth Championships, Ismail hopes to compete at more major international events while continuing to strengthen her relationship with the Qur'an and mentor young athletes through Blues Fencing Club.

Her advice to the next generation reflects the balance she has found between faith and ambition. "We don't have to shrink ourselves to fit in. We can wear a hijab and hold on to our deen and still chase our big dreams," she said.



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