Al - Qalam

55 years

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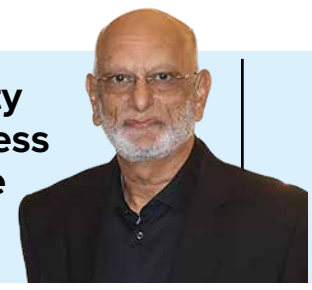
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The Muslim vote: accountability and moral responsibility

UUCSA's Political Party Report Card and the MJC's fatwa offer guidance on the responsibilities of Muslim voters. ***Fazlin Fransman Taliep*** *reports.*

With the 4 November local government elections days away, South Africa's Muslim voters face a question that cannot be answered by service delivery statistics alone: what happens when a political party's record in government conflicts with the moral principles of those being asked to vote for it?

Two interventions by the country's 'Ulama have brought that question into focus: the United Ulama Council of South Africa's (UUCSA) Political Party Report Card and a fatwa issued by the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC) on the religious consequences of supporting parties that endorse or justify unlawful killing.

Released on 26 October, the UUCSA Political Party Report Card assesses eight political parties: the African National Congress (ANC), Democratic Alliance (DA), Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), uMkhonto weSizwe (MK), Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), ActionSA, RISE Mzansi and Al Jama-ah. The assessment examines seven priorities identified through the June 2026 Civic Indaba: youth unemployment; public health; climate and environmental justice; corruption and procurement transparency; online gambling; crime and Islamophobia; and Palestine and foreign policy coherence.

Importantly, the Report Card distinguishes between policy commitments and implementation records, examining not only what political parties promise but what they have delivered.

UUCSA Political Strategy Committee chairperson Moulana Sulaimaan Ravat explained in a statement:

"Each assessment examines the party's policy positions, implementation record, arguments in favour of electoral support and reasons for withholding that support."

For voters confronting unemployment, deteriorating municipal services, housing shortages and rising living costs, the assessment provides a means of scrutinising political claims against demonstrated performance. Ravat was equally clear about the organisation's political independence. "The UUCSA Political Party Report Card does not endorse any political party or prescribe a single Muslim vote. Nor should differences in political judgement be used to question an individual's faith." On the inclusion of Palestine, Ravat stated: "The inclusion of Palestine is deliberate and principled. While foreign policy falls outside municipal jurisdiction, a political party's response to genocide remains relevant to evaluating its commitment to justice, human dignity and the sanctity of life."

When political support becomes a religious question

Separately, the MJC Fatwa Committee has issued a ruling addressing whether Muslims may knowingly support political parties that endorse, justify or materially assist the unlawful killing of human beings.

The ruling concludes: "Knowingly extending support, whether through votes, campaign efforts, financial aid, or public endorsement, would constitute prohibited cooperation and would be sinful."

Explaining the fatwa on behalf of the MJC, Moulana Zakariya Harneker identified two foundational Islamic principles: the sanctity of human life and the Qur'anic prohibition against cooperation in sin and aggression.



He referenced the Qur'anic teaching that killing a single innocent soul is akin to killing all humanity, alongside the injunction, "Wa la ta'awanu 'alal-ithmi wal-'udwan", which prohibits cooperation in sin and aggression. "It is haram to aid somebody in something that is haram, that is impermissible," he explained. Harneker argued that supporting a political party engaged in such conduct was no different in principle from supporting an individual responsible for the same wrongdoing.

Gaza and the limits of political endorsement

The application of the MJC fatwa to political statements concerning Gaza raises particularly consequential questions.

Continued on page 2

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TRIBUTE

Passing of 'Boeta Cass' (92) leaves void in Durban's Malay community

By Ismail Suder

The recent passing of Mohamed Cassim Jaffar, an icon of Durban's tight-knit Malay community, has left a void – he was 92.

"Boeta Cass" or "Oupa" as he was fondly known by his extended family, was a man who commanded great respect amongst the community at large. He led a full life, having spent the prime years of his life as an educator. Coming from a cricketing family, he naturally took to cricket and was passionate about the sport. He was a top wicketkeeper for the Rosslyns Cricket Club during the 50's and 70's.

Outside his teaching work, Boeta Cass dedicated himself to community and charitable work, – and also gave up time to counsel many people who sought his help.

To his four daughters, (the Late Nadia Jaffar Jogie, Fadeya Jaffar Mohanlall, Fazlin Jaffar Kola and Adeba Jaffar Sallie) he was a tower of strength. Sadly, his wife, Zubeida Mahomed (whom he married in 1936) passed away in 2004.

Adeba, his eldest daughter, told *Al-Qalam*, her father was a man of integrity and dignity. "He never ever said a nasty word to anyone," she said.

She remembers how his eight grandchildren would often gather around to listen to his interesting stories about life in the Casbah and in the Greyville areas of Durban.

"My father dedicated most of his life to teaching at high schools and at the Bechet Teachers Training College. "Everyone always spoke highly of 'Mr Jaffar' and that he was their best teacher – the best biology teacher. Everyone looked up to him.

"He played an integral part in the Malay Community. He was a founding member of the Cape Malay Vigilance Society. He often went out in the scorching heat during Ramadan collecting funds – and he also helped towards the current buildings in Keal Road which is now the A.M. Moola Hall. We were just little girls and my dad was always out driving with the late Mona Vahed and other members of the Trust. He served as the Chairman of the Islamic, Educational and Religious Trust for many years. "The fondest memories were always having our dad with us for every school holiday. And our road trips often included driving to Cape Town, Johannesburg, Kruger National Park and other places of interest in the then smallest of cars, a little Volkswagen Beetle.

"His proudest moments were watching his grandchildren excel academically at school and on the sports field, and seeing the older ones enter university and establish themselves in their chosen careers. He watched his great - grandchildren grow, and took an interest in everything they did up to his last days. He remembered everyone's birthdays, even



his sons-in-law and grandsons-in-law," she added.

He is buried at Riverside cemetery.

Continued from page 1

On 11 October 2023, the Democratic Alliance issued a statement declaring: "We recognize Israel's right to defend herself and protect her people."

Harneker was asked directly whether a political party making such a statement would meet the fatwa's criteria concerning the justification of unlawful killing. "Certainly, I would say so," he responded. "Everybody with a sane mind can recognise when a genocide is happening, when innocent people are being killed, when you are not simply attempting to defend yourself."

His response represents his application of the fatwa's principles to a specific political statement, rather than a separate formal ruling naming the DA. It is also distinct from UUCSA's independent political assessment.

The distinction is significant. The Report Card evaluates political parties across defined areas of public policy and governance, while the MJC fatwa establishes the religious principles governing support for parties that meet its stated criteria.

Shaykh Ihsaan Taliep, reflecting on the fatwa, challenged the argument that local government elections should be judged solely through service delivery. He contrasted potholes in South African streets with the bomb craters left in Gaza, questioning whether efficient municipal administration could outweigh fundamental questions of justice. Taliep also challenged claims of uniformly efficient service delivery in Cape Town, highlighting disparities between affluent suburbs and communities on the Cape Flats. For Taliep, voting itself carries religious significance.

"So, in the Islamic vocabulary, this is a form of Shahada," he explained, describing the ballot as testimony through which citizens delegate authority and empower political leadership.

"I'm not even only endorsing them. I'm giving them power."

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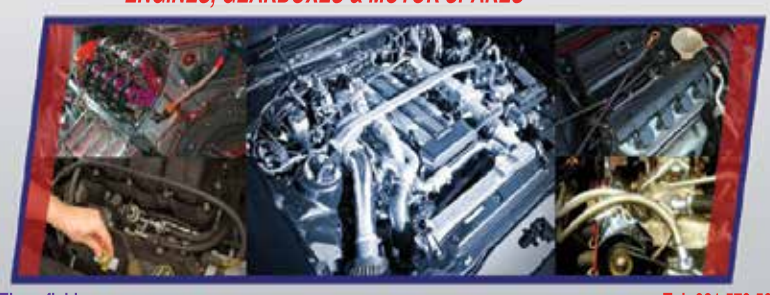
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‘SA must partner with Palestine schools’

By Neelam Rahim

Social Intifada founder Khalid Vawda says South African schools should partner with Palestinian schools to learn about each other’s community and history.

He was commenting on the furore that erupted after Emmarentia Primary School in Johannesburg erroneously displayed an Israeli flag during a concert – and which the school subsequently apologised.

The incident highlights how schools could get caught up in wider political disputes over Palestine.

The controversy raises questions about who gets to shape what children learn about human rights, history and the experiences of people beyond their own communities.

The Israel flag controversy unfolded against a broader disagreement over Palestine-related activities hosted at the school, with the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) criticising the school’s involvement in initiatives organised by Social Intifada.

Disagreement

Speaking to *Al-Qalam*, Vawda argued that the debate reflects competing ideas about what children should be taught and whether engaging with injustice is being unfairly framed as political indoctrination.

“Teaching kids about justice, teaching kids about injustice, teaching kids about standing up for the oppressed, this is not indoctrination. This is instilling values in children,” he said.

The disagreement raises a difficult question for schools: where does education end and political influence begin? Schools have a responsibility to provide age-appropriate learning environments, but they also help young people develop an understanding of history, society and the principles that underpin human rights. When an issue such as Palestine enters that space, those responsibilities can collide with deeply held political positions in the wider community, he said.



For Vawda, South Africa’s own history makes it difficult to separate the discussion of Palestine from the country’s struggle against apartheid. He pointed to the historical connections between Palestinian liberation movements and the anti-apartheid movement, arguing that young people should understand the relationships that shaped both histories. “Our kids need to learn their history and where they’ve come from,” he told *Al-Qalam*. Vawda proposed one way to move beyond the immediate dispute: ‘Establish partnerships between South African and Palestinian schools’. These could include exchanging letters, poetry and educational materials, as well as online meetings that allow pupils to learn about one another’s communities, he added. He believes such contact could challenge the distance created when people are known primarily through news reports of conflict.

“And what this does is it humanises a conflict. It humanises a war. It humanises people who have been actively dehumanised for decades now,” he said.

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LOCAL NEWS

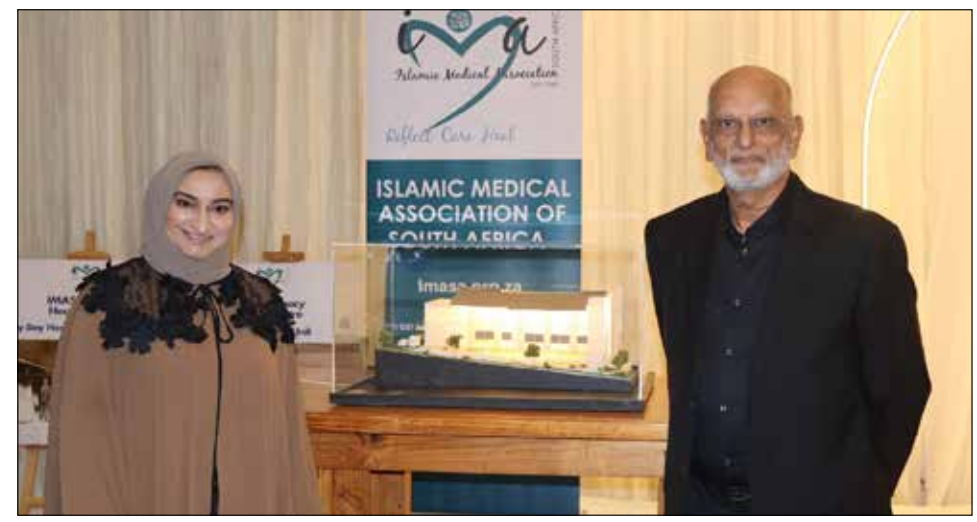
IMASA's medical facility to improve access to healthcare

The Durban facility will offer subsidised – and sometimes free treatment – to disadvantaged communities in KwaZulu-Natal, writes ***Azra Hoosen***

For patients who cannot afford private healthcare, accessing specialised treatment can be difficult, often compounded by long waiting lists in the public health system. A new healthcare project in Durban aims to help address this gap by bringing a range of medical services under one roof, with a focus on patients who might otherwise struggle to access care.

The Islamic Medical Association of South Africa (IMASA) has launched its Legacy Health Centre project in Mayville, Durban, which is planned as a multi-specialty day hospital providing subsidised and, where possible, free healthcare to disadvantaged communities across KwaZulu-Natal. Located on Deering Lane, adjacent to Ahmed Al Kadi Private Hospital, the centre is expected to offer renal dialysis, diagnostic imaging, surgery, physical rehabilitation and post-hospital recovery care. According to Solly Suleman, head of the IMA Baytul-Nur Trust and chairperson of IMASA, the project represents a long-standing vision to make specialised healthcare more accessible to those in need. "It's long overdue and a project for the pleasure of Allah, to help disadvantaged communities at large," said Suleman. He also highlighted the importance of doctors participating in the initiative to help ensure its success.

IMASA revisited the idea of a charity hospital in 2008 but found that running one independently would be too costly. It instead partnered with private investors to establish Ahmed Al Kadi Private Hospital, with the IMA Baytul-Nur Trust retaining a share in the hospital. This partnership helped build the experience and resources needed to work towards its original vision of providing charitable healthcare. The Legacy Health Centre will build on this foundation, combining subsidised and charitable services with income from paying patients to help keep the facility running in the long term.



Pictured: IMASA chair Mr Solly Suleman and vice chair (Durban branch) Yasiera Mahomed-Suliman at the launch event.

Services

The planned three-storey facility will include a six-bed charity day hospital with an operating theatre, a 22-bed step-down care unit, a 20-bed renal dialysis unit, a radiology unit, physical rehabilitation facilities and specialist consulting rooms. The basement will provide 90 parking bays.

The charity day hospital will serve indigent patients without medical scheme cover, while the step-down unit will provide recovery care, including wound management and rehabilitation, for patients who no longer require acute hospital treatment.

The new dialysis unit will increase capacity from 15 to 20 beds, expanding provision for patients who depend on regular treatment. The radiology unit will offer diagnostic imaging at reduced rates for eligible patients. Income from paying patients will help subsidise charitable services.

Plans also include healthcare training, public health education and community awareness programmes focused on kidney health, prevention and early detection.

Yasiera Mahomed-Suliman, vice-chairperson of IMASA Durban and an IMA-Baytul-Nur trustee, told *Al-Qalam* that her years working in underserved communities had given her firsthand insight into the barriers people face in accessing quality healthcare."You see the reality of people who stand in long queues at government hospitals and clinics, sometimes for hours, only to leave without receiving the care they desperately need.

Others simply cannot afford private healthcare and are left with very few options. Healthcare should never be a privilege reserved for those who can afford it; it is a fundamental human need," she said.

The project is estimated to cost R120 million. The properties have been acquired, plans finalised and a professional team appointed. Municipal and town-planning approvals and a healthcare licensing application have been submitted to the relevant authorities.

The project remains in the fundraising and preparation stage, with construction and the procurement of medical equipment still to come. No opening date has been confirmed.

"The IMASA Legacy Health Centre is particularly close to my heart because it's going to represent more than just a healthcare facility. Our vision is to create a sustainable legacy of compassionate, accessible and quality healthcare that will serve our communities for generations to come," said Suliman.





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Ibn Umar (r.a.) narrates the Nabi (SAW) said: "The place of prayer (salah) in religion is like the place of the head in the body."
Tabarani

OPINION

Muslims and Voting with Conscience

By Aslam Fataar

South Africa's local government elections on 4 November 2026 present voters with an ethical responsibility: deciding which political parties and ward candidates deserve their support. Beyond promises of efficient service delivery, these choices require consideration of justice, political integrity, human dignity, and the needs of vulnerable communities.

Three Islamic commitments offer guidance: dhikr that becomes ethical action, solidarity beyond our own communities, and responsible citizenship grounded in knowledge. Together, they provide a framework for voting with conscience.

Dhikr/Remembrance that moves into the streets

Dhikr extends beyond reciting Allah's names, sending salawat and inward reflection. The Qur'an reminds us that hearts find tranquillity in Allah's remembrance (13:28). For Imam al-Ghazali, remembrance must shape character and become visible in ethical conduct.

Active dhikr becomes palpable when neighbours feed hungry families, welcome refugees, protect women facing violence and mentor young people. It continues when residents challenge unfair budgets, organise around broken streetlights and participate in ward meetings. Remembrance becomes a practice of noticing, learning and acting. It also informs how we vote.

Solidarity beyond our own community

The Qur'an commands cooperation in righteousness, not wrongdoing and aggression (5:2). This principle of ta'awun, alongside ukhuwwa (brotherhood and sisterhood), makes solidarity a public responsibility. Charity matters, but cannot alone overcome the conditions producing poverty and exclusion.

Political judgment must therefore consider housing, unemployment, public safety and services, alongside parties' treatment of women, refugees and marginalised communities.

The Qur'an praises those who welcomed migrants despite their own hardship (59:9). The Prophet Muhammad's (s) community in Madinah exemplified hospitality towards displaced people. Populist political movements that exploit racial divisions, portray refugees as threatening outsiders or mobilise xenophobic hostility must be examined against this Prophetic ethic. Addressing local hardship must never require dehumanising strangers.

Citizenship as a public trust

Fiqh al-muwatana, the contemporary jurisprudence of citizenship, connects participation to amana (trust), 'adl (justice), shura (consultation) and maslaha (public welfare). The Qur'an commands believers to honour trusts and judge justly (4:58), while commending consultation (42:38). These principles provide an ethical foundation for informed voting and accountable governance.

Competent municipal administration matters, especially for working-class households. Reliable services and honest procurement are essential. Yet efficiency must be considered alongside justice, equitable resource distribution and human dignity.

Why efficiency cannot displace justice

In a September 2025 Mail & Guardian article, Imraan Buccus and I criticised Helen Zille's response to the genocide and mass killing of Palestinians in Gaza. We argued that her emphasis on administrative efficiency deflected attention from the moral question of political complicity in Israel's actions. Functioning traffic lights and reliable municipal services cannot provide moral cover for political support of those responsible for atrocities.

Good governance cannot be reduced to administrative performance while genocide, oppression and human dignity become secondary considerations. Justice is indispensable to legitimate governance. No administrative achievement can compensate for complicity in genocide or oppression.

My central voting principle follows: electoral support carries moral responsibilities, including the obligation to consider whether it implicates us in grave injustice. Parties' positions on genocide, unlawful killing and oppression therefore warrant serious scrutiny, alongside their municipal records. The same scrutiny applies to racial hatred, xenophobia and exclusion. Competence cannot erase fundamental ethical questions.

Putting conscience into practice at the ballot box

Voting with conscience requires examining evidence rather than relying on political slogans. Four questions can guide the decision.

First, ethical responsibility: What have parties actually said and done concerning genocide, oppression, racial division and refugees? Examine statements, policies, alliances and voting records, distinguishing documented conduct from allegations.

Second, governing performance: Have parties delivered water, sanitation, housing support and safe public spaces? Have they addressed corruption and distributed resources fairly, especially in poorer neighbourhoods?

Third, ward representation: Is the candidate accessible, trustworthy and active locally? Have they listened to residents, understood community problems and honoured commitments?

Fourth, verification: The Qur'an instructs believers to investigate reports before acting in ignorance and causing harm (49:6). This principle of tabayyun requires checking manifestos, credible reporting and candidates' records rather than accepting WhatsApp rumours or inherited party loyalties.

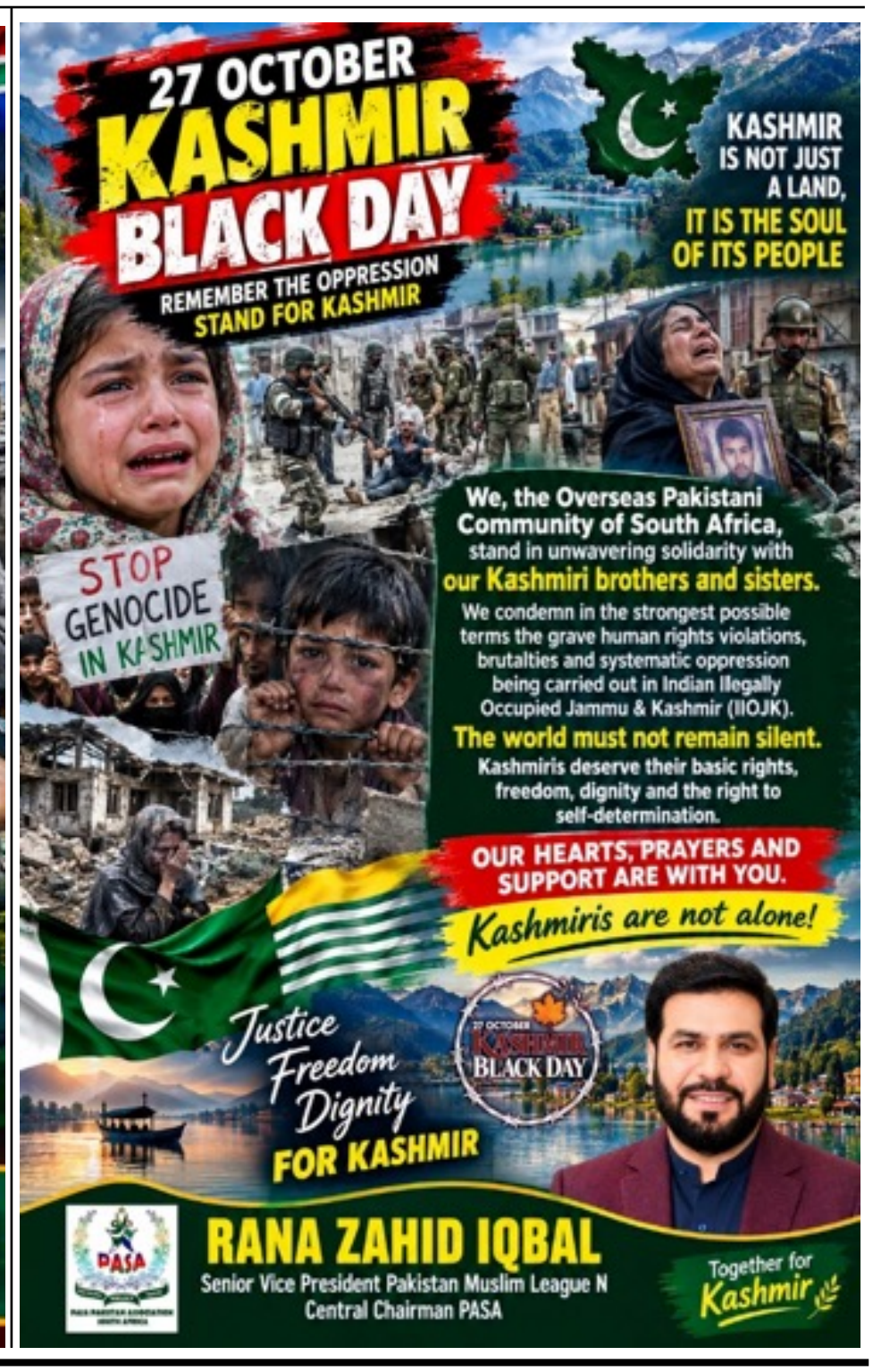
These questions bring ethical commitments, political conduct, municipal performance and local accountability into a considered electoral judgment.

Beyond election day

Citizenship continues through ward meetings, budget scrutiny, service-delivery monitoring and collective action against exclusion. Communities should recognise effective governance while holding representatives accountable. Dhikr, solidarity and voting belong together when remembrance cultivates conscience, conscience informs judgment, and judgment sustains public responsibility. Our commitment to justice must shape both our choices at the ballot box and the communities we build afterwards.

Prof Aslam Fataar is Research and Development Professor in Higher Education Transformation, Department of Education Policy Studies, Stellenbosch University. This article is based on a khutbah delivered in Cravenby, Cape Town, on 30 October 2026.





INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Kashmir Black Day – 27 October: A call for justice, human rights and self-determination



By Muhammad Zakria

Every year, 27 October is observed as Kashmir Black Day by Pakistan and Kashmiris around the world to remember the events of 1947 and highlight the unresolved Jammu and Kashmir dispute. For Kashmiris, the day symbolises decades of political uncertainty, human suffering and the continuing struggle for dignity, fundamental rights and the opportunity to determine their own future. On 27 October 1947, Indian troops landed in Srinagar following the signing of the Instrument of Accession by Maharaja Hari Singh. While India maintains that the accession was legally valid, Pakistan and many Kashmiri representatives dispute its legitimacy and argue that the wishes of the Kashmiri people were not adequately considered. The dispute subsequently became a major source of tension between India and Pakistan. The Kashmir question was brought before the United Nations in 1948, and several UN Security Council resolutions addressed the conflict, including Resolution 47, which proposed measures involving a plebiscite under specified conditions. However, no plebiscite has taken place, and the dispute remains unresolved. For many Kashmiris, the right to participate meaningfully in determining their political future remains a central concern.

Over the decades, the region has experienced conflict, political unrest, security restrictions and allegations of human rights violations.

Reports by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2018 and 2019 raised concerns about alleged abuses, arbitrary detention, restrictions on freedom of expression and accountability. These concerns underline the need to protect civilians, uphold the rule of law and ensure impartial investigations into credible allegations of violations.

Kashmir Black Day is not merely a remembrance of historical events; it is also a call for renewed international attention, peaceful dialogue and a just resolution. India and Pakistan should pursue diplomatic efforts to reduce tensions, while the international community should encourage respect for human rights, accountability and meaningful consideration of the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. The people of Kashmir deserve a future defined by peace, dignity, security and respect for their fundamental rights.

Lasting stability in South Asia requires constructive engagement, adherence to international law and a peaceful approach to long standing disputes. As 27 October is observed, the message remains clear: remembrance must lead to action, human rights must be protected, and the voices and aspirations of Kashmiris must remain central to the search for a lasting and peaceful settlement.



‘Courage required in gloomy economy’

By Ismail Suder

The anti-migrant unrest in Durban is affecting businesses, communities and eroding investor confidence, but despite the gloom, courageous entrepreneurs were still ploughing money into the economy, said Ebrahim Patel, President of the Minara Chamber of Commerce.

He was addressing guests at the glittering Business Recognition Awards 2026 and Gala Dinner, hosted by the Chamber and held at the NMJ Conference Centre in Durban recently.

The prestigious event recognised outstanding businesses and individuals whose achievements, innovation and dedication continue to contribute to South Africa’s economic growth and community development.

Top honours went to the following winners:

• **Business Entity of the Year –** Large: Woodford Group

• **Business Entity of the Year –** Medium: Minnies Food Enterprise

• **Business Entity of the Year –** Small: Daily Dippers

• **Businessperson of the Year:** Munir Jeeva, CEO of Afrisave Group

• **Businesswoman of the Year:** Mariam Galant-Diedericks

• **Young Achiever of the Year:** Waheed Amanjee, Co-Founder of Whizmed

• **Community Builder of the Year:** Sheikh Bilal Ismail, Community leader

• **Professional Achiever of the Year:** Professor Yahya Choonara

Patel emphasised the importance of building an inclusive economy through entrepreneurship, partnerships and opportunities for businesses of all sizes.

“Tonight, we celebrate the achievements of enterprises and individuals. More importantly, we celebrate what those achievements represent: the courage to recognise opportunity, the conviction to invest, the resilience to navigate uncertainty, and the leadership to create value for others and contribute to our economy.”

“We meet at a difficult moment in a world defined by extraordinary uncertainty. The relationship between economic power, technological capability and human capital is changing rapidly. Geopolitics is reshaping trade, technology and artificial intelligence are redefining productivity, and economic uncertainty is forcing governments, businesses and societies to reconsider what resilience truly means.

“These are not separate challenges. They are interconnected forces that are redefining our world – and they require a considered and collective response.”

He pointed out that across Europe, high fuel prices, the rising cost of living, housing shortages and pressure on public services have led to social unrest.

“These are the very pressures felt by our own citizens. What is our strategy to respond to these challenges? “In Durban, recent unrest has affected businesses, communities and investor confidence, while the images circulating internationally have sent concerning signals to investors and trading partners.

“As the local government elections approach, there is understandable anticipation and anxiety within the business community. Whatever the electoral outcome, our priorities must remain clear: effective governance, accountability and a constructive partnership between government and business. Our economy cannot afford prolonged uncertainty or delays in implementing the commitments made in election promises.

He said Government, business, labour and civil society must work together to restore confidence, strengthen social cohesion, widen economic participation and create conditions in which investment can flourish.

“At the global level, geopolitical tensions continue to reshape global markets. Trade is increasingly influenced by strategic rivalry, national security, industrial policy and geopolitical alignment. The escalating conflict involving the United States and Iran has pushed inflation higher and increased borrowing costs for businesses and consumers alike.

“For South African businesses already operating under pressure, the consequences are substantial. For households and consumers, it is financially devastating.:”

Patel said history has taught us that “uncertainty” was also the environment in which leadership was being tested. “It reminds us of an important truth: that in an interconnected world the nations and businesses that emerge stronger are not those that avoid disruption but those that adapt with speed, discipline and purpose.

“South Africa has overcome difficult chapters before. We have demonstrated the capacity to rebuild, to innovate and to find common purpose when the circumstances demand it – we must draw on that same capacity now,” he added.



Business Entity Medium: Reece Tifflin (Standard Bank); Shaazia Kolia (Director: Minnies Food Enterprise) ; Essa Hassim (Minara Director); Ibrahim Kolia (Director: Minnies Food enterprise)



Business Entity Large : Viloshan Naidoo (Standard Bank); Shamsudeen Moola (Woodford) ; Essa Suleman (CEO Woodford Group); Ebrahim Patel (Minara Chamber President)



OPINION

Social media, xenophobia and Islamophobia in South Africa



By Imraan Buccus

South Africa, like many other countries, is moving to the right at dizzying speed. As in the United States, Australia and Europe, the key issue being used to push society to the right has been xenophobia. The key mechanism to achieve this has been social media.

Now, following the playbook of the international right, the xenophobia that has been manufactured in South Africa is rapidly turning into Islamophobia. And, as we see elsewhere, this is being achieved via the use of social media.

The active cultivation of xenophobia and now Islamophobia via social media has already had disastrous results. At least 150,000 people were forced out of South Africa in a few weeks in June, inflicting huge suffering and doing massive damage to the country's international reputation. Documented people, including refugees, have been systematically targeted. We are now in a situation in which a mob can beat a man to death in central Durban with what appears, thus far, to be impunity. As well as being a horrific descent into social barbarism, this kind of thing also destroys South Africa's credibility to speak and act against the genocide in Palestine.

Now that a vicious form of Islamophobia is being cultivated by the same social media accounts and personalities that drove the xenophobic project, the widespread support for Palestine in South Africa can only be weakened. At the same time, the inclusive vision of the national liberation movement, and then the constitutional order, is under direct attack. If the online project to incite Islamophobia has the same success as the xenophobic project, Muslims will soon be in the same kind of position that Muslims face in India and much of Europe and the US, a position in which de jure citizenship is undermined by de facto exclusion, with the result that Muslims must keep a low profile and remain outside of public debates.

In this dangerous and rapidly escalating situation, it is imperative that we all understand that xenophobia did not become a key issue in South Africa via organic public sentiment. It was actively created online via a network of paid influencers, bots and fake accounts. This has been well documented. That same network is now starting to drive a coordinated Islamophobic project, with the ridiculous manufactured online panic about halal food being the latest move in the game.

The social media campaigns that have moved South African politics hard to the right, even to fascism in some cases, include a strong paid element. There are all kinds of rumours about who is paying for it. These rumours range from foreign states to local billionaires and political parties, but none have been confirmed by empirical evidence.

It is vital that the media rigorously investigate who is driving and paying for this online campaign. It is also incumbent on state intelligence to do the same, given that it is now a direct attack on the Constitution and social cohesion. It is also essential that we look at regulating social media to preclude brazen lying, incitement to violence and hate speech.

In this regard, we could learn a lesson from Brazil. While the right – often fuelled by xenophobia and Islamophobia – is storming ahead in much of the world, the left has triumphed in Brazil against the far right, backed to the hilt by Donald Trump. Like other right-wing extremists around the world, Flávio Bolsonaro largely built his campaign through disinformation on social media. On 14 October, ahead of the second round of voting on 25 October, Lula's campaign took legal action against Meta, the US technology giant that owns Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp, for manipulating its algorithms to restrict the circulation of Lula's election material while favouring his far-right opponent.



The Lula campaign also showed that Meta's artificial intelligence tools permitted the generation of campaign material supporting Bolsonaro while blocking similar material for Lula. On 15 October, Brazil's Superior Electoral Court ordered Meta to treat the candidates equally.

The legal challenge to Meta raised fundamental questions about democracy and digital sovereignty. When a handful of immensely wealthy US corporations control much of the digital infrastructure through which billions of people communicate, organise and participate in politics, they acquire extraordinary power over democratic life without corresponding democratic accountability.

This judgment won by the Lula campaign was a significant moment, but far more can be done to regulate social media. We cannot have a situation where the old forms of media – newspapers, radio, etc. – are regulated by the law and professional norms and standards while people can freely spread fake news, incite violence, defame others and even make open death threats on social media.

There are a number of examples of progress towards democratic regulation. One is the European Union's Digital Services Act, which came fully into force in February 2024. It requires major platforms such as Meta, X and TikTok to address illegal content, including unlawful hate speech and defamation, assess and reduce the risks of disinformation and electoral manipulation, and make their algorithms and content moderation practices more transparent. Companies that seriously violate the law can face fines of up to 6% of their worldwide annual turnover.

Crucially, the legislation seeks to hold powerful technology corporations accountable while protecting freedom of expression, rather than giving governments unrestricted power to determine what people can say online. There are principled people holding a line against the online cultivation of xenophobia and Islamophobia, including Zwelinzima Vavi, Redi Thlabi and Phumzile van Damme.

There are also various NGOs and social movements that hold the line.

But while these people and organisations deserve our respect, gratitude and support, we need structural intervention to subject social media to democratic regulation.

If we do not rapidly move to regulate social media, our constitutional democracy, founded on the principle that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, will soon be corroded from within in the same way that secular democracy in India has effectively been destroyed.

Dr Buccus is editor of Al-Qalam

OPINION

Tehran's defiance is a strategic blow to Tel Aviv'



By Iqbal Jassat

The recent confirmation by Mohsen Rezaei, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, that Tehran has deliberately withheld a response to US Vice President JD Vance's letter marks a profound moment of strategic clarity in Middle Eastern diplomacy.

By choosing calculated silence over a rushed concessions framework, Iran has demonstrated a level of sovereign resilience that firmly asserts its role as a regional heavyweight—one that refuses to buckle under the weight of American pressure.

This diplomatic stalemate does more than just safeguard Iranian sovereignty; it delivers a severe blow to the hardline security apparatus in Tel Aviv, exposing the stark limits of Israeli influence over American foreign policy.

For years, Israel's geopolitical doctrine has operated on a foundational premise: that it could seamlessly align Washington's immense military and economic power with its own regional security objectives.

The primary goal of this strategy has been the permanent neutralization of Iran's nuclear potential and regional command infrastructure through overwhelming, preemptive force.

Following intense joint US-Israeli kinetic operations earlier this year, the region appeared to be on the precipice of a full-scale war designed to bring Tehran to its knees.

Yet, instead of collapsing under the strain of an aggressive naval blockade and military strikes, Iran stood firm. This unyielding posture has effectively flipped the script, driving the Trump administration to seek a diplomatic off-ramp via Vice President Vance's quiet backchannel outreach.

By seeking a framework for peace negotiations rather than demanding unconditional surrender, the White House has signaled a pragmatic recognition that the policy of absolute capitulation has failed.

For Tel Aviv, this shift is a profound strategic setback. It effectively disrupts their "maximum escalation" strategy, revealing that the United States is acutely aware of the high costs of a protracted, unrestricted regional war and is actively looking for an exit.

Concurrently, this diplomatic development opens a noticeable wedge between the policy goals of Washington and Tel Aviv. Israel relies heavily on ironclad convergence with US foreign policy to sustain its escalatory deterrence cycles.

However, the contents of the Vance letter—which reportedly focuses on mutual national interests while acknowledging Iran's sovereignty—indicate that the White House is prioritizing its own geopolitical limits over Israel's maximalist demands.

When Washington opts for letters and tactical adjustments in tone, it underscores a reality that Tel Aviv has long sought to avoid: American and Israeli interests in the Middle East are not identical.

Furthermore, the pressure campaign championed by Israel has triggered an unintended and highly dangerous counter-reaction within Tehran's political architecture. Rather than forcing a nuclear capitulation, the aggression has instead sparked an active domestic within Iran regarding whether to formally revise its long-standing nuclear doctrine.

As Rezaei noted, because the Iranian public witnessed direct strikes on their soil, there is mounting internal pressure to abandon previous restrictions and openly debate the necessity of a nuclear deterrent. This directly backfires on Israel's long-term security goals, pushing Tehran closer to a threshold it might have otherwise avoided.

Finally, Iran's refusal to treat economic penalties as a point of submission is actively diluting the collective Western leverage that Israel relies upon.

By laying down seven strict conditions—including the full lifting of the naval blockade and the release of frozen assets—before any formal negotiations can resume or the Strait of Hormuz can be reopened, Iran is dictating the terms of engagement.

Because the US has reportedly shown a willingness to engage with these terms to restore vital maritime shipping lanes, the economic containment wall built around Iran is beginning to erode.

Ultimately, Tehran's firm stance has frozen Israel's primary mechanism of escalation. By refusing to enter a stacked negotiation room, Iran has forced both Washington and Tel Aviv to confront a shifting reality where coercion no longer yields automatic results, and where resilience has proven capable of altering the calculus of global powers. For nations of the Global South, particularly South Africa, Iran's defiance offers a compelling blueprint for navigating contemporary geopolitics.

As Pretoria increasingly finds itself in the crosshairs of Western diplomatic and economic pressure due to its independent foreign policy, it can draw inspiration from Tehran's unyielding approach.

By refusing to buckle under unilateral bullying and instead anchoring its position in national sovereignty, South Africa can similarly assert its right to define its own global partnerships, proving that collective resilience remains the ultimate shield against foreign dictate.

Iqbal Jassat is an Executive Member of Media Review Network, Johannesburg.



Bookings: 082 081 6902 | Email: adnaan@luckys.co.za | www.lakeglencairn.co.za

EDITORIAL



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

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

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Elections: 'Don't vote blindly'

As South Africa prepares to go to the polls, we must remember that democracy is more than the pursuit of political power. It is about values, integrity, accountability, justice and human dignity.

At a time when Palestine, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Yemen, Myanmar and other parts of the world endure occupation, war, displacement and political violence, we cannot afford to become indifferent to human suffering.

South Africa's history of apartheid and struggle for freedom places a responsibility on us to defend human rights, challenge injustice and stand against oppression wherever it occurs.

We call on political parties and candidates to address xenophobia, racism, discrimination and the protection of vulnerable communities.

Our Call To Action

To every eligible voter: Exercise your democratic right. Participate, make an informed choice and hold elected representatives accountable.

Question candidates. Examine their commitments. Demand accountability. Consider their positions on human rights, equality, social justice and service delivery.

Do not allow political differences to divide our communities or diminish our shared humanity.

Democracy does not end at the ballot box. It requires our continued participation, vigilance and accountability.

We cannot demand freedom for ourselves while remaining indifferent to the freedom of others.

As we exercise our democratic rights, let us also exercise our collective.

South African Palestinians and solidarity movements (SAPM)

Free Durban screening of Gaza doccie 'American Doctor'assistance'



The Essa and Fatima Moosa Foundation, in partnership with IMASA and Healthcare Workers for Palestine South Africa, are screening 'American Doctor', a compelling documentary following American medical professionals risking their lives to provide care in Gaza.

The screening will be followed by a powerful panel discussion exploring the realities facing healthcare workers in Gaza and the urgent need to protect those saving lives.

This screening supports #FreeDrHussamAbuSafiya campaign, raising awareness and funds towards his family's needs and legal expenses. The screening takes place on Sunday, 22 November, at 3pm, Nu Metro, Cornubia Mall.

Seats are limited and booking is essential

Book at: https://www.quicket.co.za/events/403848-american-doctor-durban-screening/

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Eisenkot urged to show 'courage' and form minority government with Palestinians

The Palestinian lawmaker says Arab parties are ready to back an Eisenkot-led minority government, arguing that cooperation is essential to ending Netanyahu's rule.

Palestinian lawmaker Ahmad Tibi has urged Israeli opposition leader Gadi Eisenkot to show political courage and work with Arab parties to end Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's rule.

In an interview with Middle East Eye on Friday, Tibi called on Eisenkot to summon "the courage of [former prime minister] Yitzhak Rabin".

In 1993, Rabin's minority government of 56 seats relied on Palestinian-led parties for parliamentary support, amid the push to advance the Oslo Accords.

Tibi, founder and leader of the Ta'al party (Arab Movement for Renewal), said there was no democratic justification for ruling out cooperation with Palestinian representatives in the Knesset, Israel's parliament, this time around.

"I hope Eisenkot will be courageous enough to go forward and form a minority government, which will end this government of Netanyahu immediately," Tibi said. A minority government occurs when the ruling coalition holds fewer than 61 of the Knesset's 120 seats. It survives by securing a "safety net" agreement, relying on outside parties to vote against opposition no-confidence motions without officially joining the cabinet.

Tibi's party is part of the Joint List, alongside two other Palestinian-led parties, Hadash and Balad. Together, they won 11 seats. Another Palestinian party, Ra'am, secured eight, giving the two slates a combined 19 seats - a record for Palestinian parties in parliament.

The results mean that neither a Netanyahu-led nor an Eisenkot-led bloc can secure a 61-seat majority without Palestinian parties. Tibi said the Joint List's strategy was to support anyone willing to remove Netanyahu from office and pave the way for an alternative government.

The veteran politician dismissed proposals for a national unity government. Such an arrangement could bring Netanyahu's Likud, the largest party in parliament, together with opposition parties to secure a majority, while excluding far-right figures such as Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben Gvir.

Tibi argued that this would allow Netanyahu's policies to continue while giving another political leader the task of presenting them more favourably to Western governments.

"We don't like a unity government, because one side will continue his brutal policy and the second will help him market this policy," he said.

"We prefer a new government by Eisenkot, as a minority government, and we are ready to help," he added.

Tibi hailed the Palestinian vote as decisive, saying unprecedented turnout had prevented Netanyahu from securing another majority.

Netanyahu's bloc won 64 seats in 2022, paving the way for what was widely described as one of the most right-wing governments in Israel's history. It won 53 seats in Tuesday's elections.

The outgoing government oversaw the genocide in Gaza, mass displacement and violence in the occupied West Bank, as well as a series of regional wars. Its tenure also saw a surge in discrimination and incitement against Palestinian citizens of Israel.

Palestinian citizens of Israel are descendants of the indigenous Arab population of historic Palestine. Their families survived the mass expulsion and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians by Zionist militia in 1948 and remained within the territory that became Israel. Today, they number around two million, accounting for roughly a fifth of Israel's population.

Tibi praised Palestinian citizens who turned out to vote despite old age, illness and mobility difficulties. He described their participation as a historic achievement.

He said the immediate priority was to use these electoral gains to bring down what he called Netanyahu's criminal government and improve the status of Palestinian citizens.

Tibi also dismissed allegations that Qatar had financed efforts to boost turnout among Palestinian citizens. He described the claims as politically motivated and predicted the controversy would quickly collapse, with no impact on the election results.

"Two, three, four, five days, everything will be relieved. It will be a minor issue; it will have zero effect on the results and on the process," he said.

He accused Netanyahu of using the allegations to intimidate Palestinian voters and discourage Eisenkot from cooperating with Palestinian parties.



Tibi defended the high turnout as an act of political self-defence against racism and incitement. He also rejected Netanyahu's attempts to question the legitimacy of the Arab vote, pointing instead to allegations of foreign financing surrounding the prime minister's own office.

"The only corrupted party here is the prime minister and the prime minister's office," he said.

Tibi also called on opposition parties to move quickly to replace Knesset Speaker Amir Ohana, a Likud lawmaker. He accused Ohana of turning parliament into a racist institution and fuelling hostility towards Palestinian lawmakers.

Netanyahu is going nowhere until Israel's Palestinians are taken seriously.

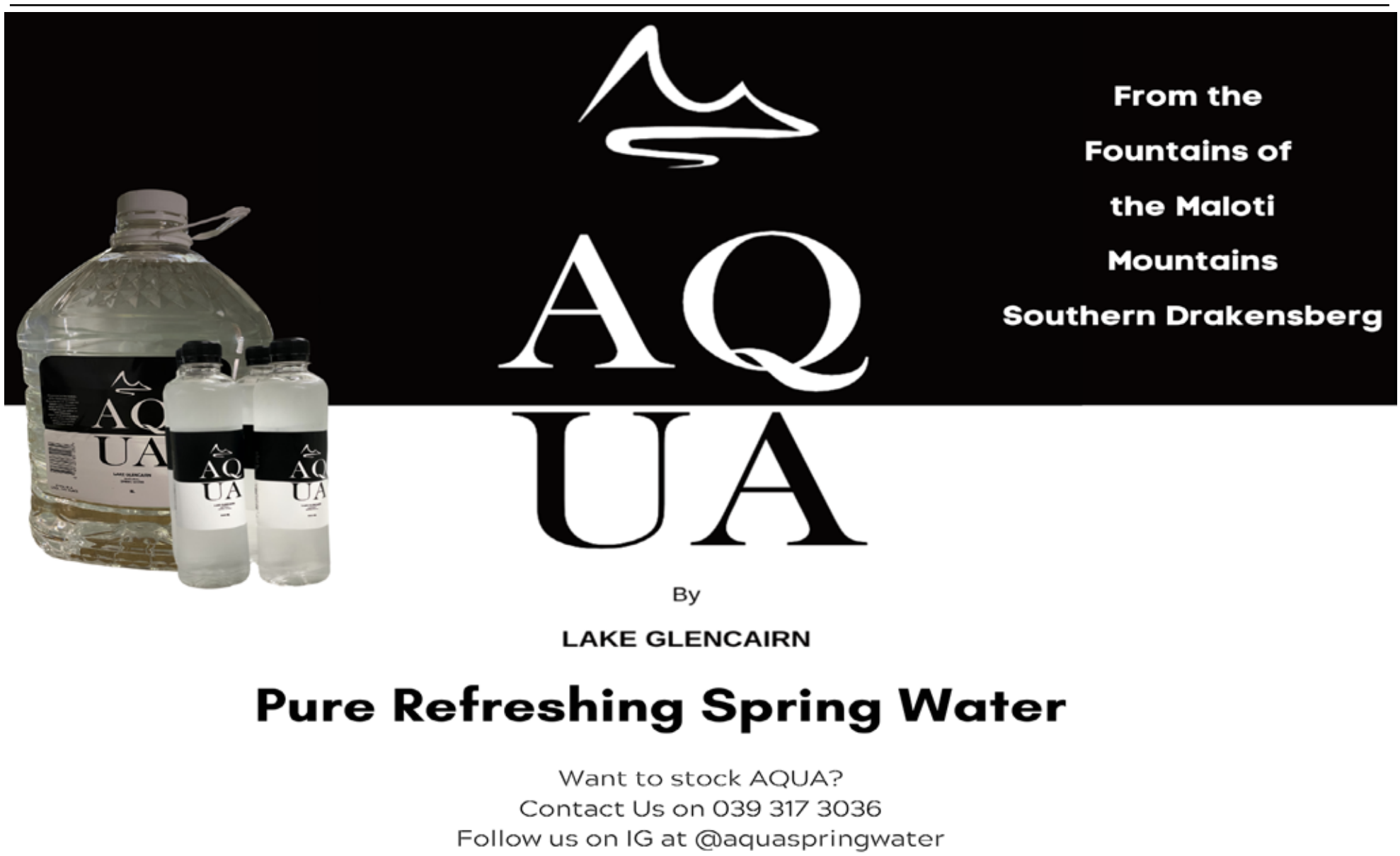
"Amir Ohana made the Knesset racist," Tibi said, describing him as a major factor in the deterioration of relations, particularly over Palestinian representation and its treatment in parliament.

He urged opposition parties to nominate a replacement, pledging that Palestinian lawmakers would support their candidate.

"The best practical step should be removing Amir Ohana, the speaker of the parliament, and voting for the candidate of the opposition. It should be done, no hesitation," he said.

Tibi said the opposition's 67 seats - including those of the Palestinian parties - represented a democratic majority.

He argued that Palestinian citizens, who make up around 20 percent of Israel's population, had a legitimate right to help determine the country's next government. - *Middle East Eye*



SPORT

Umpiring made cricketer, Mather, stay in the game

After 23 years as a player, a back injury led the Tongaat-born cricketer to a new role in the game, writes ***Azra Hoosen***

For 23 years, Dawood Mather lived and breathed cricket. Having first picked up a bat at the age of 11, he spent much of his life on the field. But when a back injury brought his playing career to an unexpected end, he faced the difficult prospect of leaving behind a game that had become such a big part of his life.

Rather than walk away, Mather found another way to stay in cricket – turning to umpiring and coaching that opened a new chapter in his sporting journey. "Staying away from the game was too much for me, so I decided to get into umpiring," he said.

His umpiring journey began in Pietermaritzburg under the mentorship of Muhammad Jooma, who was then head of umpires. Mather completed all three levels of umpiring examinations set by Cricket South Africa (CSA) before moving to the Dolphins.

The journey involved long hours and sacrifices, but his dedication paid off when he officiated his first professional match at Kingsmead Cricket Stadium in Durban. The women's match between the Dolphins and the Warriors saw him take on the role of on-field umpire. "The nerves were definitely there, but Alhamdulillah, I had a good friend and colleague who helped me through that stage," he said.

Mather told *Al-Qalam* that the opportunity was a moment of gratitude to Allah.

He is now preparing for another milestone: officiating at the U19 Khaya Majola National Week in Cape Town from December 16 to 20. While this will be his fourth national week as an umpire, it will be his first at the prestigious under-19 event. He previously officiated at national weeks involving younger age groups. "This appointment is every up-and-coming umpire's dream. All I can do is thank Allah," he said. Mather is quick to acknowledge the people who have supported him throughout his journey, particularly his family, whose encouragement and prayers have remained important to him. "It is almost impossible to name them all, but definitely my family who has been behind me all the way, my parents' duas for sure and friends and colleagues who stand by me and never forget to send messages and calls before any big occasion," he said.

He also thanked Hartley Road Primary School for supporting his ambitions and allowing him to pursue opportunities in cricket alongside his work as a coach. "Coaching at Hartley Road Primary isn't a job for me; it's a blessing, Alhamdulillah. I get to do what I love and I get to do it with those I love (the kids)," he said.

He believes Muslims should remain physically active so that they are fit to worship Allah, while recognising the responsibility to uphold good character both on and off the field. Beyond cricket, he wants them to understand the importance of perseverance, faith and trusting Allah's plan. "Never give up on pursuing your dreams and remember that Allah is in full control of the outcome," he said.



Pictured: Dawood Mather officiating his first professional match at Kingsmead Cricket Stadium in Durban.

Mather hopes to continue progressing in his umpiring career, taking each match as it comes and doing his best. Reaching the highest level remains an ambition, but he leaves the outcome in Allah's hands. "Every umpire loves to reach the highest level; if it's good for me, I ask Allah Ta'ala to grant it to me with ease, Insha'Allah," he said.

As he prepares to officiate at the U19 Khaya Majola National Week, Mather remains focused on the opportunities ahead and grateful for the journey that brought him here. "I request the duas of all who read this article, Insha'Allah," he said.



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